

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE
LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT
WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY

Prepared for

Ms. Deb Brown, District Administrator

Mr. Mario Friedel, District Administrator

Mr. Christopher (Chris) Nelson, District Administrator

and

School Boards

School District of Bruce

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District

Weyerhaeuser Area School District

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CHAPTER I

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

1.0 Purpose of the Study

The District Administrator of the School District of Bruce, Ms. Deb Brown, the District Administrator of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, Mr. Mario Friedel, the District Administrator of Weyerhaeuser Area School District, Mr. Christopher (Chris) Nelson, and the School Boards of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District determined it was in the collective best interests of their school organizations and communities to commission a **Consolidation Feasibility Study** to assess the status of their respective organizations, identify pressing organizational needs, develop viable alternatives for addressing those organizational needs, including the possibility of school district restructuring, and assist in fashioning a comprehensive plan of action to strengthen the organizations' enrollments, finances, programs, services, staffing, facilities, and other operational components. Toward that end, the school districts sought and received funding from the State of Wisconsin to partially cost underwrite the engagement of the services of an independent third party neutral firm to conduct a **Consolidation Feasibility Study**.

The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District engaged the services of Roger Worner Associates, Inc. to conduct the **Consolidation Feasibility Study**. The Project Consultants were Drs. Roger and Kay Worner, President and Vice-President of Roger Worner Associates, Inc., Cedar, Minnesota. Drs. Roger and Kay Worner have served as principal investigators in over 300 studies

of P-K-12 school districts (involving nearly 1,000 school districts), including numerous multi-school district studies in which participating school organizations considered enhanced collaboration/cooperation, restructuring, or consolidation as viable options for preserving and protecting school, community, student, program and service, staffing, and facility assets.

It was determined the **Consolidation Feasibility Study** would include analyses of the school districts' enrollments, enrollment trends, programs, services, staffing, facilities, and related organizational components. The study was designed to gather and analyze multi-school district data, present findings, draw conclusions, identify alternatives, and prepare recommendations that would be valuable for the District Administrators and School Boards of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District in delineating preferred courses of action for the future.

The timetable for the **Consolidation Feasibility Study** spanned approximately 4½ months, commencing on or about July 30, 2008 and concluding on or about December 15, 2008. (It is to be noted that the contract document was not executed until August 11, 2008 and the first meeting with the school districts' leaderships did not occur until August 20, 2008).

1.1 Need for the Study

The leadership of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District recognize that, as a result of the organizations' small critical masses by State of Wisconsin standards,

past student enrollment declines, persistent cost escalations, past budget reductions, probable future budget reductions, and the inherent losses of programs, services, and staffing, there is value in considering the merits (and demerits) of structuring a more collaborative and cooperative working relationship among the three school districts—including the possibility of consolidation—in the future. In order to facilitate effective decision-making on the part of the three School Boards and District Administrators, there is a significant need for and value in commissioning a **Consolidation Feasibility Study** by an experienced, school-based, independent third party neutral firm.

It is to be noted that the status of Weyerhaeuser Area School District is particularly precarious, given the organization's diminutive critical student mass (district size) and history of continuous student enrollment decline. As a consequence, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's District Administrator and School Board have enthusiastically agreed to participate, simultaneously, in two **Consolidation Feasibility Study** projects involving—in the first instance—the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District and—in the second instance—the School District of Chetek and Weyerhaeuser Area School District.

Roger Worner Associates, Inc. determined that the School Boards and District Administrators were in a position to verify that the needs of the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's **Consolidation Feasibility Study** also included the following:

- ❖ The school districts have a need to provide programs, services, staffing, and facilities that are cost/effectively operated within the financial parameters of the school districts' budgets.
- ❖ The school districts have a need to insure that programs, services, staffing, organizational configurations, methodologies, delivery systems, and facilities will be enhancing to the teaching/learning processes in the future and increase the probability the organizations will retain or, if possible, expand their marketshares of mobile families, parents, and students who choose to locate/reside in the school districts and their communities.
- ❖ The school districts have a need to provide quality programs, services, staffing, and facilities that will accommodate the short-term and long-term educational (academic), extra-curricular, co-curricular, recreational, social, and support programs and services for and fulfill the needs, expectations, and interests of the communities' pre-school, school-aged, and adult populations.
- ❖ The school districts have a need to preserve and protect vestiges of a comprehensive array of programs, services, staffing, and facilities during a span of time when both student enrollments and community populations are experiencing decline.

1.2 Methodology

At the time of the initiation of the **Consolidation Feasibility Study**, the Project Consultants delineated methodological procedures to address the

purpose and needs of the study. Salient components of the study's methodology were as follows:

- ❖ Interview the District Administrators.
- ❖ Interview members of the School Boards.
- ❖ Interview key district-level administrators.
- ❖ Interview districts' Principals.
- ❖ Interview a (small) sampling of key community patrons or conduct individual community focus groups.
- ❖ Interview key governmental officials.
- ❖ Analyze area demographic data/trends.
- ❖ Analyze current P-K-12 enrollment data.
- ❖ Analyze enrollment trend (past) data.
- ❖ Analyze projected enrollment data.
- ❖ Analyze open enrollment, non-resident agreement, parochial, and home school data.

- ❖ Analyze financial trend data.
- ❖ Prepare financial projections.
- ❖ Analyze class size data.
- ❖ Analyze school schedules.
- ❖ Analyze programs and services and extracurricular programs.
- ❖ Analyze course offerings.
- ❖ Analyze Community Education programming.
- ❖ Analyze Special Education staffing, programs, and services.
- ❖ Analyze facility ages, square footages, and square footage/student data.
- ❖ Analyze facility operating costs.
- ❖ Analyze conditions/status of facilities.
- ❖ Analyze educational adequacy of facilities.
- ❖ Analyze bonded indebtedness.

- ❖ Analyze transportation contracts.
- ❖ Analyze curriculum adoption/development processes.
- ❖ Analyze staff development processes/focuses.
- ❖ Analyze achievement test data.
- ❖ Confer with a public finance advisor.
- ❖ Confer with a construction management firm.
- ❖ Confer with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
- ❖ Gather/analyze other data as may be warranted.
- ❖ Prepare the **Consolidation Feasibility Study** final document.
- ❖ Present the **Consolidation Feasibility Study** final document, including conclusions, alternatives, and recommendations, to the School Boards and District Administrators.

1.3 Geographic Setting

The School District of Bruce is a rural school organization that encompasses 270.91 square miles in northwest Wisconsin. The school district's largest community is the Village of Bruce with a population of 787. In addition to the Village of Bruce, the school district is comprised of 11

additional municipalities. The School District of Bruce is located in Rusk County.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District is a rural school organization that spans 191.56 square miles in northwest Wisconsin. The school district's largest community is the City of Ladysmith with a population of 3,932. In addition to the City of Ladysmith, the school district is comprised of all or parts of 11 other municipalities/jurisdictions, the largest of which are the Town of Flambeau (1,067 residents), Town of Grant (767 residents), Town of Thornapple (811 residents), Town of Willard (539 residents), Town of Grow (473 residents)—all located only partially in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District—and the Village of Hawkins (317 residents). It should be noted that the property of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District is not entirely contiguous with Flambeau School District positioned between the City of Ladysmith and the Village of Hawkins.

The City of Ladysmith is the Rusk County county seat. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District is located in Rusk and Price Counties.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District is also a rural school organization that spans 118.16 square miles in northwest Wisconsin. The school district is situated almost entirely in Rusk County with a diminutive amount of property in Barron County. Weyerhaeuser Area School District's largest community is Weyerhaeuser with a population of 353 residents.

The Village of Weyerhaeuser is located 7 miles southwest of the Village of Bruce and 15 miles southwest of the City of Ladysmith along Highway 8. The Village of Bruce is situated 7 miles northeast of the Village of

Weyerhaeuser and 8 miles west of the City of Ladysmith along Highway 8. The Village of Hawkins is located 20 miles east of the City of Ladysmith along Highway 8. Additionally, the Village of Bruce is situated approximately 30 miles south and east of the City of Rice Lake along Highway 53 and Highway 8 and approximately 69 miles north of the City of Eau Claire along Highway 53 and Highway 8.

Six school districts are contiguous to the School District of Bruce: Lake Holcombe (south), New Auburn (south), Weyerhaeuser Area (west), Birchwood (northwest), Winter (north), and Ladysmith-Hawkins (east). Four school districts are contiguous to Ladysmith-Hawkins School District (excluding Hawkins community): Lake Holcombe (south), Bruce (west), Winter (north), and Flambeau (east).

Ms. Deb Brown serves as the District Administrator of the School District of Bruce. The School District of Bruce is headquartered in the Bruce Elementary/Secondary School facility at 107 West Washington Avenue, Bruce, Wisconsin 54819.

Mr. Mario Friedel serves as District Administrator of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District is headquartered in the Ladysmith High School facility at 1700 Edgewood Avenue East, Ladysmith, Wisconsin 54848.

Mr. Christopher (Chris) Nelson serves as District Administrator of Weyerhaeuser Area School District. The headquarters for Weyerhaeuser Area School District is in the Weyerhaeuser Elementary/Secondary School at 402 North Second Street, Weyerhaeuser, Wisconsin 54895.

Agriculture, agri-business, recreation, forestry/lumber, manufacturing, commercial/industrial, small retail/commercial, education, and nursing are the primary sources of employment for residents of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District. Many residents commute to other communities for employment.

The largest employers in the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District include Weather Shield Manufacturing (wood window and door), Jeld-Wen Windows and Doors (wood window and door), County of Rusk (government), Rockwell Automation, Inc. (relay and industrial control manufacturing), Ladysmith-Hawkins School District (education), School District of Bruce (education), Indianhead Community Action Agency (social advocacy), Artisans, Inc. (commercial screen printing), all with 100 or more employees.



Provided above is a map cross-section to provide a perspective on the geographic relationship of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District and the three

school districts' location/relationships with/to other communities in the surrounding area.

1.4 Questions of the Study

During the conduct of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District **Consolidation Feasibility Study**, the Project Consultants identified select questions to aid in investigating the purpose of and needs for the study. Subsequently, the Project Consultants gathered and analyzed data which would permit the development of findings, conclusions, alternatives, and recommendations for review and consideration by the School Boards and District Administrators of the participating school district organizations.

The specific questions prepared to guide the Project Consultants and furnish substantial content for the **Consolidation Feasibility Study** document were as follows:

- ❖ What is the current status of each school district's enrollment, enrollment trends, finances, programs, services, staffing, organizational configuration, facilities, and related issues?

- ❖ Is there probable cause for either/both of the school districts to consider the possibility of future consolidation?

- ❖ What conclusions may be drawn about future program and service benefits and opportunities for students served if the original school districts were to consider consolidation?

- ❖ What conclusions may be drawn about the cost/effectiveness of the resulting school district if the original school districts were to consider consolidation?
- ❖ What conclusions may be drawn about long-term merits/demerits for the taxpayers if the original school districts were to consider consolidation?
- ❖ What recommendations do the Project Consultants tender to the School Boards and District Administrators of the participating school districts regarding improvement of the organizations' statuses and/or consideration of the possibility of future consolidation?

1.5 Assumptions

The Project Consultants identified specific, operating assumptions that would facilitate the qualitative conduct of the **Consolidation Feasibility Study** for the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District. As a precursor to actually gathering and analyzing comprehensive data, drawing conclusions, weighing alternatives, and tendering recommendations, the Project Consultants identified the following operating assumptions:

- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District are small critical student mass school districts—and will continue to be so—by State of Wisconsin standards.

- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District have experienced student enrollment decline in recent years and, unless countervailing measures are instituted, will continue to experience enrollment decline in the future.

- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District—as a result of their small critical student masses and current/future student enrollment decline—have begun to display (or significantly display) evidence of cost/ineffectiveness.

- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District maintain a quality array of programs and services for their pre-school, school-aged, and adult populations.

- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District engage in minimal program, service, staffing, and other collaboration and cooperation.

- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District have substantial differences in school organization, communities, staffing, programs, services, and other components which may have a bearing on one or more of the school district's willingness to participate in a consolidation endeavor.

- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District have been fiscally well-managed organizations, though as a result of declining enrollment they have been forced—of necessity—to embrace increasing levels of cost/ineffectiveness.
- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District parents and patrons desire that quality, modern-day programs, services, teaching methodologies, delivery systems, organizational configurations, and teaching/learning processes be made available to the school district’s children and young adults.
- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District parents and patrons are committed to providing high-quality, cost/effective programs, services, staffing, methodologies, delivery systems, organizational configurations, and facilities that best meet the needs of the young people and adults served by the school districts.
- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District parents, patrons, and community leaders believe that their school district is the “centerpiece” of the area and essential to the vitality of their respective communities.
- ❖ The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District parents and patrons will support improvements in and/or changes to the organization, components of

the organization, and, indeed, the structure of the three school districts to preserve and protect the quality and reputation of offerings and opportunities provided to the communities' children and young people to ensure the short-term and long-term financial viability of one (or more) school enterprise.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's **Consolidation Feasibility Study** is organized in a six chapter format. Chapter I contains the study's design, including purpose, need, methodology, geographic setting, questions, assumptions, and organization. Chapters II-V present data regarding the school districts' enrollment and enrollment trends; finances; class sizes, programs, services, staffing, teaching/learning methodologies, delivery systems, organizational configurations, and the like; and facilities. Chapter VI offers the Project Consultants' conclusions, alternatives, and recommendations for deliberation and future action by the District Administrators, School Boards, parents, patrons, and administrative and teaching staffs of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District.

CHAPTER II

DISTRICT SIZE AND ENROLLMENT TRENDS

2.0 Introduction

School district size and enrollment trends represent the two most significant variables which impact the long-term financial and programmatic viability of educational enterprises, whether large, urban school districts, wealthy, suburban school districts, large, rural educational enterprises, or remote, small school districts. Consequently, it was most logical that the Project Consultants would begin the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District **Consolidation Feasibility Study** by gathering and analyzing actual past and current student enrollments, projected enrollments, non-public school student enrollments, in-migration and out-migration student data, and related information. It was anticipated that, with the aforementioned information in hand, the Project Consultants, District Administrators, School Boards, and school district staffs would be in a position to identify the need for instituting “course corrections” in the school districts’ organizations (including the possibility of consolidation), finances, staffing, programs and services, grade level configurations, facilities, and a range of other operating policies, procedures, and practices.

District size provides a critical perspective on the status of any given school enterprise. While some exceptions will be noted, small school districts tend to have fewer staff members, smaller budgets, less course offerings, fewer services, teachers involved in more course preparations, greater percentages of cost/ineffective courses or class section sizes, proportionately smaller fund balances, more frequent problems with the

adequacy of their school facilities, and less bonded indebtedness. Larger-sized school districts typically enjoy larger budgets, greater and more diversified staffs, less teacher preparations, more expansive course offerings, a greater array of services, more updated (but not necessarily state-of-the-art) facilities, and a higher level of cost/effectiveness, but they typically encounter, as well, higher tax rates, greater bonded indebtedness, larger class sizes (though more cost/effective than their smaller district counterparts), and much more.

One critical disadvantage experienced by low critical (student) mass school districts (those smaller than the average size of school districts in the State) is the lesser flexibility or capability of recovering from unanticipated downturns, unplanned events, or conditions that could jeopardize the organization's long-term survival, such as high inflation, meager (or no) increases in educational funding from the State level, increases in unfunded mandates, enrollment decline through weakening birth rates, loss of enrollment to other school districts, changes in local economic conditions, statutory changes, unnatural calamity (fire), or the like. As an example, an enrollment drop of 40 students in two school districts—one of 200 students and the other of 2,000 students—represents a problem of the same magnitude (loss of 40 students each) but one of dramatically different proportionate magnitude (20% compared to 2% loss of students). In the former case, the loss of students could very well be devastating to the existence of the school district, while in the latter case, the loss of students is a challenging problem, but it is one which can be dealt with as a part of a standard budget reduction process. Indeed, district size is a crucial variable for any school district to consider in planning its future options. The Project Consultants note the importance of the district size variable to the

School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District.

A school district's enrollment trend is a second and equally vital variable for the organization to consider in mapping the future. Enrollment is the variable which drives the funding of school districts in the State of Wisconsin and virtually every other state. Enrollment trends (growth, stability, and decline) are the harbingers of change in a school district's budget, budget reserves, tax rates, staffing, programs and services, facility needs/utilization, cost/effectiveness, and the organization's ability to respond to changes in State requirements, needs, interests, and expectations (of students, parents, and patrons), as well as many other operational conditions. It is a certainty that smaller school districts—experiencing long-term moderate or steep enrollment decline—are much more vulnerable than school districts able to boast a large critical mass of students and experiencing stable or increasing enrollment.

2.1 District Size

The School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 2008-09 grade level enrollments are reported, respectively, in Tables 1-B, 1-LH, and 1-W below.

Table 1-B reports that 511 students were enrolled in the School District of Bruce in grades P-K-12 during the 2008-09 school year. The school district's critical student mass would rank it below the mid-point of size of all school districts in the State of Wisconsin during the 2008-09 school year. (In 2007-08, the School District of Bruce ranked 318th in size among Wisconsin's 445 school districts). By State of Wisconsin standards, the

School District of Bruce would be classified as a **small critical student mass school district**.

An examination of Table 1-B data affirmed that 28 students were enrolled in 4-year-old kindergarten, 35 students were enrolled in 5-year-old kindergarten, 170 students were enrolled in grades 1-5, 124 students were enrolled in grades 6-8, and 195 students were enrolled in grades 9-12 during the 2008-09 organizational year. The school district's largest grade level enrollments in 2008-09 were found in grade 11 (60 students), grade 9 (53 students), grade 10 (46 students), and grade 6 (45 students). The school district's smallest grade level enrollments during the same school year appeared in kindergarten (4) (28 students), grade 1 (29 students), grade 3 (32 students), and grades 2 and 4 (34 students each).

The school district's largest three-grade level enrollment span occurred in grades 9-11 with 159 students enrolled during the 2008-09 organizational year. The school district's smallest three-grade level enrollment span was recorded in grades K(4)-1 with 91 students enrolled during that year.

The Project Consultants concluded that the 2008-09 student enrollment in grades K(4)-1, the school district's smallest three-grade level enrollment span, was -68 students or -42.8% less than the grades 9-11 enrollment (159 students), the largest three-grade level enrollment span in the School District of Bruce.

**TABLE 1-B
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE
ENROLLMENT
2008-09**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Rank by Size</u>
K (4)	28	14
K (5)	35 (-1)	9
1	29	13
2	34	10-11
3	32	12
4	34	10-11
5	41	5
6	45	4
7	39	7
8	40	6
9	53	2
10	46	3
11	60	1
12	36	8
Total	551	
K (4)	28	
K (5)	35 (-1)	
1-5	170	
6-8	124	
9-12	195	
Total	551	
Largest three-grade level enrollment span: grades 9-11 = 159 students		
Smallest three-grade level enrollment span: grades K(4)-1 = 91 students		

The average grade level enrollment size in the School District of Bruce during the 2008-09 school year was 39.4 students. That figure amounts, on average, to the equivalent of approximately 2.0 sections of approximately 20 students/section. Assuming section sizes of approximately 20 students/section, the number of grade level sections in

the School District of Bruce during the 2008-09 school year would range from 3.0 (grade 11) to 1.5 (K(4) and grade 1).

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce's student enrollment by grade level in 2008-09 offered current and future challenges for achieving cost/effective staffing and balancing class section sizes in grades K-3 (SAGE classrooms) and, increasingly, at the intermediate, middle school, and high school levels. Over time and with continuing declining enrollment, the School District of Bruce will be faced with greater difficulties in achieving balanced class section sizes and staffing cost/effectiveness.

Table 1-LH reports that 990 students enrolled in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District in grades P-K-12 during the 2008-09 school year. The school's critical student mass would rank it near the mid-point by size of all school districts in the State of Wisconsin during the 2008-09 school year. (In 2007-08, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District ranked 216th in size among Wisconsin's 445 school districts). By State of Wisconsin standards, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District would be classified as a **mid-size critical student mass school organization**.

An examination of Table 1-LH data confirmed that 64 students were enrolled in the 4-year-old kindergarten (an additional 3 students were enrolled in pre-school programming), 73 students were enrolled in the 5-year-old kindergarten, 263 students were enrolled in grades 1-4, 250 students were enrolled in grades 5-8, and 337 students were enrolled in grades 9-12 during the 2008-09 organizational year. The school district's largest grade level enrollments in 2008-09 were found in grade 12 (93

**TABLE 1-LH
LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT
ENROLLMENT
2008-09**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Rank by Size</u>
EC	3	-
K (4)	64	10-11
K (5)	73	4
1	72	5
2	60	12
3	67	7-8
4	64	10-11
5	69	6
6	57	13-14
7	57	13-14
8	67	7-8
9	89	2-3
10	66	9
11	89	2-3
12	93	1
Total	990	
EC	3	
K (4)	64	
K (5)	73	
1-4	263	
5-8	250	
9-12	337	
Total	990	

Largest three-grade level enrollment span: grades 10-12 = 248 students
Smallest three-grade level enrollment span: grades 6-8 = 181 students

students), grades 9 and 11 (89 students each), K(5) (73 students), and grade 1 (72 students). The school district's smallest grade level enrollments during the same school year appeared in grades 6 and 7 (57

students each), grade 2 (60 students), and grade K(4) and grade 4 (64 students each).

The school district's largest three-grade level enrollment span occurred in grades 10-12 with 248 students enrolled during the 2008-09 organizational year. The school district's smallest three-grade level enrollment span was recorded in grades 6-8 with 181 students enrolled during that year.

The Project Consultants concluded that the 2008-09 student enrollment in grades 6-8, the school district's smallest three-grade level enrollment span, was -67 students or -27.0% smaller than the grades 10-12 enrollment (248 students), the largest three-grade level enrollment span in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District.

The average grade level enrollment size in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District during the 2008-09 school year was 70.7 students. That figure amounts, on average, to the equivalent of approximately 3.5 sections of approximately 20 students/section. Assuming section sizes of approximately 20 students/section, the number of grade level sections in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District during the 2008-09 school year would range from 4.5 (grade 12) to 3.0 (grades 6, 7, 2, K(4), and 4).

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's student enrollment by grade level in 2008-09 offered adequate current and future potential for achieving cost/effective staffing and balancing class section sizes in grades K-3 (SAGE classrooms) and, indeed for the present time, achieving cost/effective staffing in balancing class section sizes at the intermediate (elementary) and middle school

levels. Over time, however, and with continuing declining enrollment, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District will experience increasing difficulties in achieving balanced class section sizes and staffing cost/effectiveness at all levels (and, particularly, at the high school level).

Table 1-W delineates that Weyerhaeuser Area School District enrolled 159 students in grades K(4)-12 during the 2008-09 organizational year. The school's critical student mass would place it among the smallest 5% of all school districts in the State of Wisconsin during the 2008-09 school year. (According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Weyerhaeuser Area School District was ranked 420th among the State of Wisconsin's 445 school districts in 2007-08). By State of Wisconsin standards, Weyerhaeuser Area School District would be classified as a **small critical student mass school organization**.

An examination of Table 1-W data revealed that 4 students were enrolled in the 4-year-old kindergarten, 9 students were enrolled in the 5-year-old kindergarten, 38 students were enrolled in grades 1-5, 33 students were enrolled in grades 6-8, and 73 students were enrolled in grades 9-12. The school district's largest grade level enrollments in 2008-09 occurred in grades 10 and 11 (19 students each), grade 12 (18 students), grade 9 (17 students), and grade 8 (15 students). The school district's smallest grade level enrollments during the same school year were found in 4-year-old kindergarten (4 students), grades 4 and 5 (5 students each), and grades 1 and 3 (8 students each).

The school district's largest three-grade level enrollment span occurred at grades 10-12 with 56 students enrolled during the 2008-09 organizational

year. The school district's smallest three-grade level enrollment span appeared in grades 3-5 with 18 students enrolled during that year.

The Project Consultants computed that the student enrollment during the 2008-09 organizational year in grades 3-5 (18 students), the school district's smallest three-grade level enrollment span, was -38 students or -67.9% smaller than the grades 10-12 enrollment (56 students), the largest three-grade level enrollment span in Weyerhaeuser Area School District.

The average grade level enrollment size in Weyerhaeuser Area School District during the 2008-09 school year was 11.4 students. That figure amounts, on average, to the equivalent of .5 sections of approximately 20 students/section. Assuming section sizes of approximately 20 students/section, the number of grade level sections in Weyerhaeuser Area School District during the 2008-09 school year would range from approximately 1.0 (grades 10, 11, and 12) to .25 (K(4) and grades 4 and 5).

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's student enrollment by grade level in 2008-09 is operated—of necessity—at a cost/ineffective level. To the credit of Weyerhaeuser Area School District's leadership, compensatory adjustments for small grade level sizes have been partly counterbalanced through the creation of one multi-age/grade level section (combination classroom) at the elementary school level.

**TABLE 1-W
WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
ENROLLMENT
2008-09**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Rank by Size</u>
K (4)	4 (+2)	14
K (5)	9	7-8-9
1	8	10-11
2	12	6
3	8	10-11
4	5	12-13
5	5	12-13
6	9	7-8-9
7	9	7-8-9
8	15	5
9	17	4
10	19	1-2
11	19	1-2
12	18	3
Total	159 (157 +2)	
K (4)	4 (+2)	
K (5)	9	
1-5	38	
6-8	33	
9-12	73	
Total	159 (157 +2)	
Largest three-grade level enrollment span: grades 10-12 = 56 students		
Smallest three-grade level enrollment span: grades 3-5 = 18 students		

The Project Consultants further concluded that, with the passage of time the obvious erosion of enrollment at the elementary school level, achieving cost/effective staffing and/or balancing class section sizes in the future will prove to be impossible without substantial changes in organizational

configuration and modifications to the delivery of the teaching/learning process.

2.2 Enrollment Trends: Actual

Actual past enrollment trends for the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District are presented in Tables 2-B, 2-LH, and 2-W for the school years from 1998-99 through 2008-09 as reported by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District documents. (It should be noted that the Project Consultants employed documentation from three different sources in gathering and/or reporting school district trend data. Their sources included the school district; the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; and the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance **SchoolFacts**. It was not infrequent that data reported from the three sources varied—though generally slightly—on a regular basis). The data permit the reader to evaluate changes in enrollment conditions over a ten year span of time and facilitate estimating and/or projecting changes that did or did not occur in the school districts' funding, staffing, programs and services, and facility usage and cost/effectiveness.

The School District of Bruce reported a third Friday of September average daily membership of 666 students in 1998-99 and 551 students in 2008-09, a net loss of -115 students or -17.3% over the ten year span of time.

The school district's enrollment "low-water mark" between 1998-99 and 2008-09 was in 2008-09 when 551 students were enrolled in the school district's K(4)-12 programs. The "high-water mark" enrollment for the

school district for the same eleven years was in 1998-99 when 666 students were enrolled in grades K(4)-12. From the base year (1998-99) enrollment figure, the School District of Bruce experienced student enrollment decline on seven occasions and student enrollment increase on two occasions. Since 2004-05, the School District of Bruce's student enrollment has decreased three consecutive years.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce would be profiled as a **declining enrollment school district**.

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE 2-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE ACTUAL PAST ENROLLMENT 1998-99 / 2007-08</p>										
<u>District</u>	<u>98-99</u>	<u>00-01</u>	<u>01-02</u>	<u>02-03</u>	<u>03-04</u>	<u>04-05</u>	<u>05-06</u>	<u>06-07</u>	<u>07-08</u>	<u>08-09</u>
Bruce	666	632	626	620	626	601	603	582	559	551

Actual past enrollment trends for Ladysmith-Hawkins School District are recorded in Table 2-LH for the ten year span of time from 1998-99 through 2008-09.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District enrolled an average daily membership of 1,158 students in 1998-99 and 990 students in 2008-09, a net loss of -168 students or -14.5% over the ten year span of time.

The school district's "low-water mark" enrollment figure was 960 students in 2006-07. The organization's "high-water mark" student enrollment was 1,181 students in 2000-01. From the base year (1998-99), Ladysmith-Hawkins School District experienced school enrollment decline on six

occasions and student enrollment growth on three occasions. Over the course of the past two years (2007-08 and 2008-09), Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has experienced student enrollment growth which—according to the school district’s administrative staff—is attributable to the implementation of new program initiatives and more aggressive marketing.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District would be profiled as a **minimally declining enrollment school district** (despite recent student enrollment gains).

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE 2-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT ACTUAL PAST ENROLLMENT 1998-99 / 2008-09</p>										
<u>District</u>	<u>98-99</u>	<u>00-01</u>	<u>01-02</u>	<u>02-03</u>	<u>03-04</u>	<u>04-05</u>	<u>05-06</u>	<u>06-07</u>	<u>07-08</u>	<u>08-09</u>
Ladysmith - Hawkins	1,158	1,181	1,148	1,094	1,053	1,030	974	960	970	990

Actual past enrollment trends for Weyerhaeuser Area School District are recorded in Table 2-W for the ten year span of time from 1998-99 through 2008-09.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District enrolled an average daily membership of 241 students in 1998-99 and 159 students in 2008-09, a net loss of -82 students or -34.0% over the ten year span of time.

The school district’s “low-water mark” enrollment figure was 159 students in 2008-09. The organization’s “high-water mark” student enrollment was 260 students in 2001-02. From the base year (1998-99), Weyerhaeuser Area School District experienced school enrollment decline on six occasions and

student enrollment growth on four occasions. Since the 2001-02 organizational year, Weyerhaeuser Area School District has realized student enrollment decline on six occasions and student enrollment growth on a single occasion.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District would be profiled as a **declining enrollment school district**.

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE 2-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ACTUAL PAST ENROLLMENT 1998-99 / 2008-09</p>											
<u>District</u>	<u>98-99</u>	<u>99-00</u>	<u>00-01*</u>	<u>01-02</u>	<u>02-03</u>	<u>03-04</u>	<u>04-05</u>	<u>05-06</u>	<u>06-07</u>	<u>07-08</u>	<u>08-09</u>
Weyerhaeuser	241	246	250	260	249	225	212	194	177	190	159
*Enrollment figures, 2001-01/2007-08 from WDPI source.											

2.3 Enrollment Trends: Projected

School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District administrators provided the Project Consultants with enrollment projections for the three year span of time from 2008-09 (current and base year) through 2011-12.

As detailed in Table 3-B, School District of Bruce’s administrators projected the organization’s student enrollment would decrease from 551 students in 2008-09 to 510 students in 2011-12, a net loss of -41 students or -7.4%.

TABLE 3-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS 2008-09 / 2011-12				
<u>District</u>	<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>
Bruce	551	545	526	510

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce could anticipate continued enrollment decline, precipitating further reductions in programs, services, and staffing in the future as a result of decreasing resident (and non-resident) student enrollment.

TABLE 3-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS 2008-09 / 2011-12				
<u>District</u>	<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	990	980	975	994

As detailed in Table 3-LH, the Project Consultants projected the organization’s student enrollment would increase from 990 students in 2008-09 to 994 students in 2011-12, a net increase of +4 students or +.4%. (The Project Consultants did not receive projections on future student enrollment from the administration of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District and, therefore, undertook their own projections. It should be noted that the Project Consultants do not claim to be demographers but did incorporate multiple trend factors into their three year student enrollment projections).

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District could anticipate relatively stable student enrollment over the course of the next three years. This judgment is predicated on assumptions that the school district's trends in elementary school enrollment, parochial school matriculation, non-resident student in-migration, and open enrollment in-migration/out-migration remain consistent with patterns that have unfolded over the past three years. The Project Consultants anticipate modest reductions in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's programs, services, and staffing in the near future as a result of changes in student enrollment.

Table 3-W reports that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's student enrollment will decrease from 159 students in 2008-09 to 125 students in 2011-12, a net loss of -34 students or -21.4% over the three year span of time.

TABLE 3-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS 2008-09 / 2011-12				
<u>District</u>	<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>
Weyerhaeuser	159	157	142	125

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District should anticipate continuing loss of programs, services, and staffing in the future as a result of student enrollment decline, further jeopardizing the organization's viability.

2.4 Changes in Average Daily Membership

Average daily membership trends between 1998-99 and 2011-12 are reported for the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School

District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District, respectively, in Tables 4-B, 4-LH, and 4-W.

TABLE 4-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE TRENDS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP 1998-99 / 2011-2012			
<u>District</u>	<u>Actual Change</u> <u>1998-99 / 2008-09</u>	<u>Projected Change</u> <u>2008-09 / 2011-12</u>	<u>Gain/Loss</u>
Bruce	-115	-41	-156

According to Table 4-B, over the 14 year span of time from 1998-99 through 2011-12, the School District of Bruce's enrollment (actual and projected) displays a loss of -156 students or -23.4% from the base year (1998-99) enrollment figure of 666 students in grades K(4)-12.

TABLE 4-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT TRENDS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP 1998-99 / 2011-2012			
<u>District</u>	<u>Actual Change</u> <u>1998-99 / 2008-09</u>	<u>Projected Change</u> <u>2008-09 / 2011-12</u>	<u>Gain/Loss</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	-168	+4	-164

As revealed in 4-LH, over the 14 year span of time from 1998-99 through 2011-12, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's enrollment (actual and projected) displays a loss of -164 students or -14.2% from the base year (1998-99) enrollment figure of 1,158 students in grades K(4)-12.

In Table 4-W, the average daily membership trends for Weyerhaeuser Area School District are reported over the 14 year span of time from 1998-99 through 2011-12. Table data reveal that the school district's enrollment (actual and projected) have decreased and will continue to decrease by -116 students or -48.1% from the base year (1998-99) enrollment figure of 241 students in K(4)-12.

TABLE 4-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT TRENDS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP 1998-99 / 2011-2012			
<u>District</u>	<u>Actual Change</u> <u>1998-99 / 2008-09</u>	<u>Projected Change</u> <u>2008-09 / 2011-12</u>	<u>Gain/Loss</u>
Weyerhaeuser	-82	-34	-116

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce's student enrollment will decline modestly in the future, and student losses will require continuing, persistent oversight accompanied by continuous reduction in school district staffing, programs, services, and budget.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's enrollment will remain comparatively stable over the next three years as a result of the continuing matriculation of approximately 10 students/year from Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School, a net increase of non-resident students (3 non-resident agreements), visibly strong elementary school enrollments, new (innovative) program implementation (e.g. Health Care Academy and others), and a favorable relationship between in-migrating non-resident students and out-migrating resident

students through open enrollment. The school district's leadership has undertaken (and continues to) measures to reverse the school district's more historical declining enrollment trends, and as of late, those strategies have created an "up-tick" in student enrollment.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's student enrollment decline will plummet at the same (or greater) rate in the next several years as has characterized student enrollment decline over the ten year span of time from 1998-99 through 2008-09. In the short term, the school district's future will be secured as a result of the generosity of taxpayers who, recently, elevated the organization's revenue cap and strengthened the school district's funding. The long-term survival of the school district is dependent upon maintaining—if not improving—student enrollment, however. It would appear to the Project Consultants a virtual certainty that outcome will not be achieved. Hence, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's leadership can anticipate further, future, student enrollment decline, accompanied by budgetary, staffing, program, and service reductions.

2.5 Enrollment Attrition

The Project Consultants examined the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's grade level enrollments for each of the 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 school years to ascertain whether or not enrollment decline—faced by all of the school districts in the past—was mostly or entirely attributable to in-coming kindergarten classes with enrollments that were smaller when compared to larger, departing (graduating) grade 12 classes or, perhaps, to persistent, broad-based loss of students through attrition

(non-resident agreements; open enrollment; home schooling; non-public school attendance; family relocation; or the like) or a combination of both.

The Project Consultants found in examining the School District of Bruce's grade level enrollments over a multi-year time span that enrollment losses are occurring as a result of a comparatively smaller in-coming kindergarten class—coupled with a larger departing grade 12 class—and attritional losses in students at several grade levels from one year to the next.

When examining Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's grade level enrollments over a multi-year time span, the Project Consultants found that enrollment losses are occurring as a result of comparatively smaller in-coming kindergarten classes and larger departing grade 12 classes. The Project Consultants did not note significant attritional losses as students progress from one grade level to the next in succeeding years. In part, those attritional losses have been offset by apparent student in-migration, whether through move-ins, non-resident agreements, open enrollment, and/or parochial school matriculation.

The Project Consultants found in examining Weyerhaeuser Area School District's grade level enrollments over a multi-year time span that enrollment losses are occurring as a result of a comparatively smaller in-coming kindergarten class—coupled with a larger departing grade 12 class—and attritional losses in students at several grade levels from one year to the next.

The Project Consultants further conclude that, as student enrollment decline continues in the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District and, as a result, programs and services—of necessity—decline, the leadership of the two school districts (Ladysmith-Hawkins School District is not currently so classified) can anticipate that there will be heightened losses of students through attrition in the future. Attritional losses of students, in turn, will confound School Boards and District Administrators in accurately projecting a subsequent year’s enrollment, staffing, and budgeting.

2.6 Open Enrollment

Open enrollment is a variable that can significantly impact the short-term and long-term enrollment, financial, program and service, and staffing viability of Wisconsin school districts and, as a result, was examined by the Project Consultants in conducting the **Consolidation Feasibility Study**.

The State of Wisconsin authorizes parents to enroll their youngsters in an alternative school district to the one in which they reside—providing there is sufficient space available in the receiving school district to accept such in-migrating students. If a school district experiences a larger number of “out-migrating students” than “in-migrating students,” the school district’s future could be jeopardized through losses in enrollment, finances, staffing, and programs and services.

Based on information provided by the school district’s administration, the Project Consultants learned that, in 2007-08, the School District of Bruce currently enrolled +7 non-resident students who had “in-migrated” from other school districts and reported -40 resident students had “out-migrated”

to other school districts through open enrollment. Table 4a-B reveals that the School District of Bruce's net balance on open enrollment in 2007-08 was -33 students. The school districts to which School District of Bruce students most frequently "out-migrated" were Ladysmith-Hawkins School District (17 students), Birchwood School District (10 students), and Weyerhaeuser Area School District (8 students). Those non-resident students who "in-migrated" to the School District of Bruce arrived in greatest numbers from Ladysmith-Hawkins School District (6 students) and Weyerhaeuser Area School District (1 student).

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce has experienced substantial losses of resident students (and revenue) through the State of Wisconsin's open enrollment process.

TABLE 4a-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE OPEN ENROLLMENT 2007-08			
<u>District</u>	<u>In-Migration</u>	<u>Out-Migration</u>	<u>Net</u>
Bruce	+7	-40	-33

The Project Consultants learned from the school district's administration that, in 2007-08, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District enrolled +50 non-resident students who had "in-migrated" from other school districts and realized a loss of -67 resident students who had "out-migrated" to other school districts through open enrollment. Table 4a-LH delineates that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's net balance on open enrollment in 2007-08 was -17 students. The school districts to which Ladysmith-

Hawkins School District students most frequently “out-migrated” were Flambeau School District (54 students) and the School District of Bruce (6 students). Those non-resident students who “in-migrated” to Ladysmith-Hawkins School District arrived in greatest numbers from Flambeau School District (26 students), School District of Bruce (17 students), and Winter School District (5 students).

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has experienced substantial losses of resident students (and revenue) through the State of Wisconsin’s open enrollment process, though—in large measure—those open enrollment losses have been counter-balanced by student “in-migrating” to the school district through the same process. Overall, the net loss of students to Ladysmith-Hawkins School District through the open enrollment process is nominal.

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE 4a-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT OPEN ENROLLMENT 2007-08</p>			
<u>District</u>	<u>In-Migration</u>	<u>Out-Migration</u>	<u>Net</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	+50	-67	-17

Based on information provided by the school district’s administration, the Project Consultants learned that in 2007-08 Weyerhaeuser Area School District enrolled +15 non-resident students who had “in-migrated” from other school districts, while -9 resident students had “out-migrated” to other school districts through open enrollment. Table 4a-W records that Weyerhaeuser Area School District’s net balance on open enrollment in

2007-08 was +6 students. The school district from which Weyerhaeuser Area School District most frequently received “in-migrating” non-resident students was from the School District of Bruce, while resident students most frequently out-migrated from Weyerhaeuser Area School District to Cameron and Rice Lake School Districts.

The Project Consultants concluded that, while Weyerhaeuser Area School District’s larger “in-migration” of non-resident students into the school district than “out-migration” of resident students to other school districts would be viewed positively, the State of Wisconsin’s open enrollment statute has not had or will have a significant bearing on the long-term viability of Weyerhaeuser Area School District.

TABLE 4a-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT OPEN ENROLLMENT 2007-08 (and 2008-09)			
<u>District</u>	<u>In-Migration</u>	<u>Out-Migration</u>	<u>Net</u>
Weyerhaeuser	+15 (+20)	-9* (-16)	+6 (+4)
*WDPI report (9); District (6)			

2.7 Non-Public School and Home School Attendance

The State of Wisconsin offers other “choice options” for parents to educate their children other than through open enrollment between and among Wisconsin public schools. Attendance in non-public or home school settings is available for parents (and their children) to choose as beliefs, desires, and/or opportunities may dictate.

Table 4b-B reports the School District of Bruce’s 2007-08 resident students enrolled in non-public and home school settings. The School District of Bruce’s resident students attending non-public schools in 2007-08 totaled 9 students. Those students were attending Our Lady of Sorrows School, a K-8 elementary school in Ladysmith.

During the 2007-08 school year, the School District of Bruce reported 10 resident students were delivered alternative programs and services in their homes (home schooling).

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE 4b-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE NON-PUBLIC AND HOME SCHOOL ENROLLMENT 2007-08</p>			
<u>District</u>	<u>Non-Public School</u>	<u>Home School</u>	<u>Total</u>
Bruce	-11	-10	-21

Table 4b-LH reports that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s 2007-08 resident students enrolled in non-public and home school settings. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s resident students attending non-public school in 2007-08 numbered 121 students. Ninety-nine (99) of those students attended Our Lady of Sorrows School, a K-8 school located in Ladysmith, while 22 students attended New Hope Christian Academy, a K-12 school situated in Ladysmith. (It is to be noted that the vast majority of Our Lady of Sorrows School’s students matriculate to Ladysmith-Hawkins School District upon their completion of grade 8 programming).

During the 2007-08 school year, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District reported 35 resident students were delivered alternative programs and services in their homes (home schooling).

TABLE 4b-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT NON-PUBLIC AND HOME SCHOOL ENROLLMENT 2007-08			
<u>District</u>	<u>Non-Public School</u>	<u>Home School</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	-121	-35	-136

Table 4b-W details Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 2007-08 resident students enrolled in non-public and home school settings. There were no Weyerhaeuser Area School District resident students attending non-public schools in 2007-08.

TABLE 4b-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT NON-PUBLIC AND HOME SCHOOL ENROLLMENT 2007-08			
<u>District</u>	<u>Non-Public School</u>	<u>Home School</u>	<u>Total</u>
Weyerhaeuser	0	-6	-6

During the 2007-08 school year, Weyerhaeuser Area School District reported 6 resident students were delivered alternative programs and services in their homes (home schooling).

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce's enrollment losses to non-public school and home school settings have had an impact on the school district's student enrollment base and finances.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's enrollment losses to non-public school and home school settings have had an impact on the school district's student enrollment base and finances, though the educational enterprise fares much better in re-enrolling non-public school students at the high school level.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's enrollment losses to non-public and home school settings have been negligible in their student and/or financial impact on the organization.

2.8 Census Information

The Project Consultants reviewed demographic information from the United States Census Bureau and the State of Wisconsin on Rusk County—as well as the Village of Bruce, City of Ladysmith, Village of Hawkins, and the Village of Weyerhaeuser—to ascertain whether or not conditions existed which would be likely to reverse trends experienced by the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District.

The population of Rusk County declined from 15,347 residents in 2000 to 15,054 residents in 2006, a loss of -293 residents or -1.9%. During that span of time, the State of Wisconsin's population increased by +3.6%. The 2004 median household income in Rusk County was \$34,468 (State of Wisconsin was \$46,142). In 2004, the number of individuals living below

the poverty line in Rusk County was 12.9%, comparing unfavorably to the State of Wisconsin figure (10.9%). The number of individuals residing in Rusk County in 2000 was 16.8 residents/square mile (State of Wisconsin was 98.9 residents/square mile).

In 2000, the median household income in the Village of Bruce was \$26,250. The percentage of families living below the poverty line in the Village of Bruce in 2000 was 4.9%. Approximately 86% of those working individuals—living in the Village of Bruce—commuted to work by vehicle (mean travel time to work was 19.4 minutes).

In 2000, the median household income in the City of Ladysmith was \$28,274. The percentage of families living below the poverty line in the City of Ladysmith in 2000 was 7.2%. Approximately 89% of those working individuals—living in the City of Ladysmith—commuted to work by vehicle (mean travel time to work was 13.2 minutes).

In 2000, the median household income in the Village of Weyerhaeuser was \$26,250. The percentage of families living below the poverty line in the Village of Weyerhaeuser in 2000 was 4.9%. In the Village of Weyerhaeuser, 81% of those working individuals commuted to work by vehicle (mean travel time to work was 22.9 minutes).

CHAPTER III

FINANCES

3.0 Background Information

School Boards and District Administrators recognize that no factors have more profound impacts on the long-term financial viability of an educational enterprise than the size, enrollments, and enrollment trends of that organization. As such, the Project Consultants followed their analysis of the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's demographics with a study of the organizations' financial conditions. The purposes of the financial analyses were to assess the quality of the school districts' fiscal management, ascertain financial trends, determine the organizations' reserves, compare the school districts' spending patterns with the average of all Wisconsin school districts, and determine each organization's debt load. The Project Consultants ascertained through past experiences in studying a multitude of school districts that school district patrons are vitally interested in the financial condition of the educational enterprise they support prior to approving any major and/or long-term commitment affecting the organization's future.

3.1 Financial Analysis

The Project Consultants examined the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's annual audit reports for seven consecutive years from 2001-02 through 2007-08 as a part of the **Consolidation Feasibility Study**. (Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's 2007-08 audit was not available at

the time of preparation of this report and, therefore, annual audit reports for six consecutive years from 2001-02 through 2006-07 were analyzed).

Table 5-B details that the School District of Bruce's General Fund revenue increased from \$5,639,351 in 2001-02 to \$6,165,712 in 2007-08, an increase of +\$526,361 or +9.3%. Within the same six year span of time, the school district's General Fund expenditures increased from \$4,868,066 in 2001-02 to \$5,660,815 in 2007-08, an increase of +\$792,749 or +16.3%.

Between 2001-02 (base year) and 2007-08, the school district's General Fund balance decreased from \$1,725,286 to \$1,281,615, a decline of -\$443,671 or -25.7%.

The Project Consultants observed that the School District of Bruce operated balanced General Fund budgets in each of seven consecutive years from 2001-02 to 2007-08. Revenue growth over the six year span of time (using the 2001-02 revenue figure as a base) averaged +1.55%/year.

At the conclusion of the 2007-08 school year, the School District of Bruce's General Fund balance of \$1,281,615 amounted to a healthy 22.6% of the school district's General Fund expenditure budget of \$5,660,815.

The Project Consultants observed that the School District of Bruce's six year growth in revenue (+9.3%) **trailed** the organization's six year growth in expenditures (+16.3%) by -7.0%.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce has been a fiscally well-managed educational organization. The School Board

and District Administrator of the school district have managed the educational enterprise effectively during a span of time when the organization has experienced regular student enrollment decline.

TABLE 5-B			
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE			
GENERAL FUND REVENUES, EXPENDITURES, FUND BALANCES			
2001-02 / 2007-08			
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Fund Balance</u>
2001-02	\$5,639,351	\$4,868,066	\$1,725,286
2002-03	\$5,780,751	\$5,321,997	\$1,647,589
2003-04	\$5,674,317	\$5,227,918	\$1,585,438
2004-05	\$5,919,838	\$5,558,644	\$1,531,501
2005-06	\$5,994,084	\$5,612,617	\$1,448,282
2006-07	\$6,041,820	\$5,688,165	\$1,335,661
2007-08	\$6,165,712	\$5,660,815	\$1,281,615
Change	+\$526,361	+\$792,749	-\$443,671
% Change	+9.3%	+16.3%	-25.7%

Table 5-LH reports that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's General Fund revenue decreased from \$11,023,054 in 2001-02 to \$10,763,393 in 2006-07, a decline of -\$259,661 or -2.4%. Over the course of the same five year span of time, the school district's General Fund expenditures decreased from \$9,997,193 in 2001-02 to \$9,580,635 in 2006-07, a spending drop of -\$416,558 or -4.2%.

Between 2001-02 (base year) and 2006-07, the school district's General Fund balance grew from \$619,375 to \$1,072,252 an increase of +\$452,877 or +73.1%.

The Project Consultants observed that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District operated balanced General Fund budgets in each of six consecutive years from 2001-02 to 2006-07. Revenue decline over the five year span of time (using the 2001-02 revenue figure as a base) averaged -.5%/year.

At the conclusion of the 2006-07 school year, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's General Fund balance of \$1,072,252 amounted to a (low) acceptable 11.2% of the school district's General Fund expenditure budget of \$9,580,635.

TABLE 5-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT GENERAL FUND REVENUES, EXPENDITURES, FUND BALANCES 2001-02 / 2006-07			
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Fund Balance</u>
2001-02	\$11,023,054	\$9,997,193	\$619,375
2002-03	\$11,431,686	\$10,287,386	\$717,617
2003-04	\$11,414,789	\$9,974,601	\$1,159,967
2004-05	\$11,187,518	\$10,079,885	\$1,267,825
2005-06	\$10,983,910	\$10,195,219	\$951,863
2006-07	10,763,393	\$9,580,635	\$1,072,252
Change	-\$259,661	-\$416,558	+\$452,877
% Change	-2.4%	-4.2%	+73.1%

The Project Consultants observed that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's five year loss in revenue (-2.4%) **was less than** the organization's five year loss in expenditures (-4.2%) by +1.8%. Thus, while the school district experienced a net decline in revenue over the five year span of time from

2001-02 through 2006-07, the organization's reduction in expenditures—over the same span of time—easily offset revenue losses.

The Project Consultants determined that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has been a prudently-managed educational organization. The School Board, District Administrator, and business administrative staff of the school district have managed the enterprise effectively during a time period when the organization has been experiencing variable student enrollment (decline and increase).

Table 5-W reveals that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's General Fund revenue decreased from \$2,410,082 in 2001-02 to \$2,259,342 in 2007-08, a decrease of -\$150,740 or -6.3%. Within the same six year span of time, the school district's General Fund expenditures increased from \$2,142,379 in 2001-02 to \$2,220,972 in 2007-08, an increase of +\$78,593 or +3.7%.

Between 2001-02 (base year) and 2007-08, the school district's General Fund balance decreased from \$919,436 to \$299,212, a decline of -\$620,324 or -67.5%.

The Project Consultants observed that Weyerhaeuser Area School District operated balanced General Fund budgets in five of the seven years from 2001-02 through 2007-08. In the three most recent years reported in Table 5-W, Weyerhaeuser Area School District operated imbalanced General Fund budgets in 2005-06 and 2006-07, while the 2007-08 General Fund budget was balanced. Over the six year span of time from 2001-02 (base year), the school district's General Fund revenue declined an average of -1.5%/year.

TABLE 5-W
WEYERHAEUSER SCHOOL DISTRICT
GENERAL FUND REVENUES, EXPENDITURES, FUND BALANCES
2001-02 / 2007-08

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Fund Balance</u>
2001-02	\$2,410,082	\$2,142,379	\$919,436
2002-03	\$2,522,862	\$2,436,318	\$880,719
2003-04	\$2,593,308	\$2,338,951	\$1,011,089
2004-05	\$2,564,540	\$2,433,984	\$968,575
2005-06	\$2,421,782	\$2,482,368	\$671,514
2006-07	\$2,278,910	\$2,292,874	\$472,300
2007-08	\$2,259,342	\$2,220,972	\$299,112
Change	-\$150,740	+\$78,593	-\$620,324
% Change	-6.3%	+3.7%	-67.5%

At the conclusion of the 2007-08 school year, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's General Fund balance of \$299,112 amounted to a commendable 13.5% of the school district's General Fund expenditure budget of \$2,220,972.

The Project Consultants observed that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's six year decline in General Fund revenue (-6.3%) **lagged behind** the organization's six year trend in expenditures (+3.7%) by -10.0%.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District is a financially struggling educational organization, due largely to the school district's diminutive critical student mass (size) and declining enrollment. The District Administrator and School Board wisely sought community

support to exceed the revenue cap and furnish under-girding fiscal support to the organization. Patrons of Weyerhaeuser Area School District supported the measure to increase funding to the school district.

3.2 Change in General Fund Revenue

The Project Consultants examined the School District of Bruce's change in General Fund revenue over the six year span of time from 2001-02 to 2007-08 to ascertain the degree to which financial support of the school district had or had not shifted and, if so, the nature of that revenue shift.

As revealed in Table 5a-B, the School District of Bruce's primary sources of General Fund revenue in 2001-02 were local (\$1,744,121); state (\$3,572,383); and federal (\$201,916). Total General Fund revenue in 2001-02 was \$5,639,351. By 2007-08, the School District of Bruce's primary sources of General Fund revenue were as follows: local (\$2,255,574); state (\$3,657,055); and federal (\$133,343). The school district's 2007-08 General Fund revenue totaled (\$6,165,712).

As table data reveal, over the six year span of time from 2001-02 (base year) to 2007-08, local General Fund revenue in the School District of Bruce increased by +\$511,453 or +29.3%, while State of Wisconsin General Fund revenue increased by +\$84,672 or +2.4%. Federal revenue supporting the General Fund budget decreased by -\$68,573 or -34.0% over the six year span of time from 2001-02 through 2007-08. In total, the School District of Bruce's General Fund revenue increased by +\$526,361 or +9.3% over the six year span of time from 2001-02 to 2007-08.

TABLE 5a-B
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE
CHANGE IN GENERAL FUND REVENUE
2001-02 / 2007-08

<u>Source*</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2007-08</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Local	\$1,744,121	\$2,255,574	+\$511,453	+29.3%
State	\$3,572,383	\$3,657,055	+\$84,672	+2.4%
Federal	\$201,916	\$133,343	-\$68,573	-34.0%
Total	\$5,639,351	\$6,165,712	+\$526,361	+9.3%

*Other minor sources of revenue not included in total (inter-district, intermediate, other)

The Project Consultants observed that new revenue to the School District of Bruce from local sources outstripped new revenue from the State of Wisconsin at a rate of \$6 to \$1 over the six year span of time from 2001-02 to 2007-08.

The Project Consultants concluded that, between 2001-02 and 2007-08, the School District of Bruce taxpayers assumed a substantially greater responsibility for funding the school district's operations, while the State of Wisconsin's obligations to the school district over the same span of time were virtually stagnant.

The Project Consultants reviewed Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's change in General Fund revenue over the five year span of time from 2001-02 to 2006-07 to establish the manner in which financial support of the

school district had or had not shifted and, if so, the nature of that revenue shift.

Table 5a-LH depicts that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's primary sources of General Fund revenue in 2001-02 were local (\$2,270,122); state (\$7,987,190); and federal (\$341,424). Total General Fund revenue in 2001-02 was \$11,023,054. By 2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's primary sources of General Fund revenue were as follows: local (\$2,301,238); state (\$7,742,728); and federal (\$395,398). The school district's 2006-07 General Fund revenue totaled (\$10,763,393).

TABLE 5a-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT CHANGE IN GENERAL FUND REVENUE 2001-02 / 2006-07				
<u>Source*</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Local	\$2,270,122	\$2,301,238	+\$31,116	+1.4%
State	\$7,987,190	\$7,742,728	-\$244,462	-3.1%
Federal	\$341,424	\$395,398	+\$53,974	+15.8%
Total	\$11,023,054	\$10,763,393	-\$259,661	-2.4%
*Other minor sources of revenue not included in total (inter-district, intermediate, other)				

Over the five year span of time from 2001-02 (base year) to 2006-07—as revealed in Table 5a-LH—local General Fund revenue in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District increased by +\$31,116 or +1.4%, while State of

Wisconsin General Fund revenue decreased by -\$244,462 or -3.1%. Federal revenue supporting Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's General Fund budget increased by +\$53,974 or +15.8%. Overall, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's General Fund revenue decreased by -\$259,661 or -2.4%.

The Project Consultants observed a significant reduction in the State of Wisconsin's funding support of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District over a six year span of time.

The Project Consultants concluded that, between 2001-02 and 2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's revenue stagnated and has resulted in the need to incur General Fund budget reductions. As in the case of nearly all of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, "neighboring" school districts, the State of Wisconsin's tax investments in area school districts has declined (despite immense inflationary pressures on those and all other Wisconsin school districts).

As revealed in Table 5a-W, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's primary sources of General Fund revenue in 2001-02 were local (\$1,357,824); state (\$904,070); and federal (\$57,780). Total General Fund revenue in 2001-02 was \$2,410,082. By 2007-08, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's primary sources of General Fund revenue were as follows: local (\$1,587,958); state (\$478,238); and federal (\$85,285). The school district's 2007-08 General Fund revenue totaled (\$2,259,342).

TABLE 5a – W
WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
CHANGE IN GENERAL FUND REVENUE
2001-02 / 2007-08

<u>Source*</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2007-08</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Local	\$1,357,824	\$1,587,958	+\$230,134	+16.9%
State	\$904,070	\$478,238	-\$425,832	-47.1%
Federal	\$57,780	\$85,285	+\$27,505	+47.6%
Total	\$2,410,082	\$2,259,342	-\$150,740	-6.3%

*Other minor sources of revenue not included in total (inter-district, intermediate, other)

As table data reveal, over the six year span of time from 2001-02 (base year) to 2007-08, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's local General Fund revenue increased by +\$230,134 or +16.9%, while State of Wisconsin General Fund revenue decreased by -\$425,832 or -47.1%. Federal revenue supporting the General Fund budget increased by +\$27,505 or +47.6%. Overall, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's General Fund revenue decreased by -\$150,740 or -6.3% over the six year span of time from 2001-02 to 2007-08.

The Project Consultants noted that, in 2001-02, the State of Wisconsin contributed 37.5% of Weyerhaeuser School District's General Fund revenue budget. By 2007-08, the State of Wisconsin's revenue contribution had dropped to 21.2%.

The Project Consultants concluded that, between 2001-02 and 2007-08, Weyerhaeuser School District taxpayers had assumed a substantially greater responsibility for funding the school district's operations, while the State of Wisconsin's obligations to the school district over the same span of time had substantially decreased.

3.3 Total Expenditures Per Student

Following an examination of seven years of the School District of Bruce's, (six years of) Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's audit reports, the Project Consultants determined it would be instructive to review each of the organization's total expenditures/student trend data over the ten inclusive years from 1996-97 through 2006-07 and, additionally, comparisons of those expenditures with the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts' figures over the same span of time. Such data—it was believed—would reveal the growth rate of each school district's total expenditures/student and the extent to which such expenditures would appear to be displaying heightened cost/effectiveness or cost/ineffectiveness.

As delineated in Table 6-B, the School District of Bruce's total expenditures/student in 1996-97 was \$7,179/student, an amount that was -\$156/student or -2.1% less than the State of Wisconsin average figure in that year (\$7,335/student).

Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 (base year) through 2006-07, the School District of Bruce's total expenditures/student increased from \$7,179/student to \$11,042/student, a gain of +\$3,863/student or +53.8%, while the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts' figure increased

from \$7,335/student in 1996-97 to \$10,933/student in 2006-07, a gain of +\$3,598/student or +49.1%.

TABLE 6-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE TOTAL EXPENDITURES/STUDENT 1996-97 / 2006-07					
	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Bruce	\$7,179	\$7,503	\$11,042	+\$3,863	+53.8%
K-12 Average	\$7,335	\$9,241	\$10,933	+\$3,598	+49.1%

In 2006-07, the School District of Bruce's total expenditures/student (\$11,042/student) slightly exceeded the total expenditures/student figure for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$10,933/student) by +\$109/student or +1.0%.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce's total expenditures/student have moderately escalated over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 to 2006-07—from below State average to above State average—suggesting an increasing level of cost/ineffectiveness. This trend will continue/worsen as the organization's enrollment continues to decline.

Table 6-LH reports that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's total expenditures/student in 1996-97 was \$7,688/student, an amount that was +\$353/student or +4.8% greater than the State of Wisconsin average figure (\$7,335/student) in that year.

TABLE 6-LH
LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT
TOTAL EXPENDITURES/STUDENT
1996-97 / 2006-07

	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	\$7,688	\$10,634	\$12,410	+\$4,722	+61.4%
K-12 Average	\$7,335	\$9,241	\$10,933	+\$3,598	+49.1%

Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 (base year) through 2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's total expenditures/student increased from \$7,688/student to \$12,410/student, a gain of +\$4,722/student or +61.4%, while the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts' figure increased from \$7,335/student in 1996-97 to \$10,933/student in 2006-07, a gain of +\$3,598/student or +49.1%.

In 2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's total expenditures/student (\$12,410/student) significantly exceeded the total expenditures/student figure for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$10,933/student) by +\$1,477/student or +13.5%.

The Project Consultants concluded that total expenditures/student in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has escalated at a rapidly increasing level over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 through 2006-07, revealing the percentage variance between the school district and the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts for total expenditures/student has nearly tripled (+4.8% in 1996-97 to +13.5% in

2006-07). If this trend continues, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District can anticipate increased difficulty in long-term cost containment.

As delineated in Table 6-W, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total expenditures/student in 1996-97 was \$8,529/student, an amount that exceeded the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts' figure (\$7,335/student) by +\$1,194/student or +16.3%.

Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 (base year) through 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total expenditures/student increased from \$8,529/student to \$14,282/student, a gain of +\$5,753/student or +67.4%, while the State of Wisconsin school districts' average figure increased from \$7,335/student (1996-97) to \$10,933/student (2006-07), a growth of +\$3,598/student or +49.1%.

In 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total expenditures/student (\$14,282/student) was significantly higher than the total expenditures/student figure for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$10,933/student) by +\$3,349/student or +30.6%.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District has consistently spent substantially greater total expenditures/student dollars than the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 through 2006-07. Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total expenditures/student—as one would expect with the combination of low critical student mass (size) and persistently declining enrollment—is cost/ineffectively high and can be expected to escalate uncontrollably in the near and distant future.

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE 6-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT TOTAL EXPENDITURES/STUDENT 1996-97 / 2006-07</p>					
	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Weyerhaeuser	\$8,529	\$8,996	\$14,282	+\$5,753	+67.4%
K-12 Average	\$7,335	\$9,241	\$10,933	+\$3,598	+49.1%

3.4 Total Instructional Expenditures Per Student

Following an examination of the School District of Bruce’s, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District’s total expenditures/student trends, the Project Consultants determined it would be additionally instructive to review total instructional expenditures/student trends and comparative district expenditures with the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts over a nine year span of time (10 years). Such further analyses were deemed essential to the Project Consultants in determining the extent to which the school districts had succeeded in cost containment (in relationship to inflation) and/or maintained cost/effectiveness in instructional spending.

Table 7-B details the School District of Bruce’s total instructional expenditures/student over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 (base year) through 2006-07.

In 1996-97, the School District of Bruce spent \$4,266/student for total instructional expenditures, while the average of all State of Wisconsin

school districts' expenditures for total instruction was \$4,453/student. Thus, in that year, the School District of Bruce expended -\$187/student or -4.2% less than the average of all school districts in the State of Wisconsin for total instruction.

Over the nine year span of time, total instructional expenditures/student in the School District of Bruce increased from \$4,266/student (1996-97) to \$6,903/student (2006-07), a gain of +\$2,637/student or +61.8%, while the State of Wisconsin average total instructional figure grew from \$4,453/student (1996-97) to \$6,381/student (2006-07), a rate of growth of +\$1,928/student or +43.3%.

In 2006-07, the School District of Bruce spent \$6,903/student for total instruction, a figure that was +\$522/student or +8.2% greater than the total instructional expenditures in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts in that year (\$6,381/student).

The Project Consultants concluded that the total instructional expenditures in the School District of Bruce have rapidly escalated over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 through 2006-07. While an expenditure disparity—favoring the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts—existed in 1996-97, that disparity no longer exists and, in fact, the School District of Bruce's total instructional expenditures are displaying signs of significantly increasing cost/ineffectiveness. With future student enrollment decline predicted, this condition will exacerbate.

TABLE 7-B
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE
TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENDITURES/STUDENT
1996-97 / 2006-07

	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Bruce	\$4,266	\$5,604	\$6,903	+\$2,637	+61.8%
K-12 Average	\$4,453	\$5,403	\$6,381	+\$1,928	+43.3%

Table 7-LH reports Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's total instructional expenditures/student over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 (base year) through 2006-07.

In 1996-97, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District expended \$4,591/student for total instructional expenditures, while the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts' expenditures for total instruction was \$4,453/student. In that year, then, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District spent +\$138/student or +3.1% greater than the average of all school districts in the State of Wisconsin for total instruction.

Over the nine year span of time, total instructional expenditures/student in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District grew from \$4,591/student (1996-97) to \$6,484/student (2006-07), an increase of +\$1,893/student or +41.2%, while the State of Wisconsin average total instructional figure grew from \$4,453/student (1996-97) to \$6,381/student (2006-07), a gain of +\$1,928/student or +43.3%.

In 2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District spent \$6,484/student for total instruction, a figure that was +\$103/student or +1.6% greater than the total instructional expenditures in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts in that year (\$6,381/student).

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has marginally larger total instructional expenditures/student than the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts, and the breadth of disparity between the school district and the State average has diminished over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 to 2006-07. The school district is commended for undertaking cost containment measures.

TABLE 7-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENDITURES/STUDENT 1996-97 / 2006-07					
	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	\$4,591	\$6,154	\$6,484	+\$1,893	+41.2%
K-12 Average	\$4,453	\$5,403	\$6,381	+\$1,928	+43.3%

Table 7-W provides an overview of Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total instructional expenditures/student over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 through 2006-07.

In 1996-97, Weyerhaeuser Area School District spent \$4,811/student for total instructional expenditures, while the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts spent \$4,453/student. Thus, Weyerhaeuser Area School

District spent +\$358/student or +8.0% greater dollars for total instruction than the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts in that year.

Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 through 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total instructional expenditures increased from \$4,811/student (1996-97) to \$9,006/student (2006-07), an expenditure gain of +\$4,195/student or +87.2%. During the same span of time, expenditures for total instruction in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts grew from \$4,453/student (1996-97) to \$6,381/student (2006-07), an increase of +\$1,928/student or +43.3%.

TABLE 7-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENDITURES/STUDENT 1996-97 / 2006-07					
	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Weyerhaeuser	\$4,811	\$5,596	\$9,006	+\$4,195	+87.2%
K-12 Average	\$4,453	\$5,403	\$6,381	+\$1,928	+43.3%

In 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total instructional expenditures were \$9,006/student, a figure that was +\$2,625/student or +41.1% greater than such expenditures in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total instructional expenditures have rapidly and cost/ineffectively increased over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 through 2006-07—

compared to the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts—and will continue to increase, uncontrollably and cost/ineffectively, as student enrollment plummets.

3.5 Fund Balance

Fund balance trends for the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District are detailed below in Tables 8-B, 8-LH, and 8-W. According to **SchoolFacts 08**, fund balance represents revenues not currently being used by a school district, including dollars reserved for an upcoming capital expenditure (such as building construction) or cash reserved until state aid and property tax appropriations are received. The fund balance could serve as a “rainy day fund” in the event of an emergency.

Table 8-B delineates that the School District of Bruce’s 1996-97 fund balance was \$472/student, a figure that was -\$2,179/student or -78.3% less than the fund balance of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$2,651/student).

Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 (base year) to 2006-07, the School District of Bruce’s fund balance increased from \$472/student (1996-97) to \$1,338/student (2006-07), a gain of +\$866/student or +183.5%. Over the same span of time, the fund balance for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts increased from \$2,651/student (1996-97) to \$3,727/student (2006-07), a gain of +\$1,076/student or +40.6%.

At the conclusion of the 2006-07 school year, the fund balance in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$3,727/student)

exceeded the fund balance of the School District of Bruce (\$1,338/student) by +\$2,389/student or +178.6%.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce’s fund balance increased substantially from 1996-97 through 2006-07, though the fund balance is substantially below that of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts. The Project Consultants further noted that the School District of Bruce’s fund balance declined by no small margin over the five year span of time from 2001-02 through 2006-07. Nonetheless, the Project Consultants commend the School District of Bruce’s leadership for having strengthened the organization’s fiscal standing.

TABLE 8-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE FUND BALANCE 1996-97 / 2006-07					
	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Bruce	\$472	\$1,725	\$1,338	+\$866	+183.5%
K-12 Average	\$2,651	\$3,177	\$3,727	+1,076	+40.6%

Table 8-LH details that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s 1996-97 fund balance was \$874/student, a figure that was -\$1,777/student or -67.0% less than the fund balance for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$2,651/student).

Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 (base year) to 2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s fund balance increased from

\$874/student (1996-97) to \$1,081/student (2006-07), a growth of +\$207/student or +23.7%. Over the same span of time, the fund balance for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts increased from \$2,651/student (1996-97) to \$3,727/student (2006-07), a gain of +\$1,076/student or +40.6%.

At the conclusion of the 2006-07 school year, the fund balance in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$3,727/student) exceeded the fund balance of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District (\$1,081/student) by +\$2,646/student or +244.8%.

TABLE 8-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT FUND BALANCE 1996-97 / 2006-07					
	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	\$874	\$701	\$1,081	+\$207	+23.7%
K-12 Average	\$2,651	\$3,177	\$3,727	+\$1,076	+40.6%

The Project Consultants concluded that, while Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's fund balance increased modestly from 1996-97 through 2006-07, the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts' fund balance increased at a significantly greater rate. Indeed, the Project Consultants observed that the fund balance disparity between Ladysmith-Hawkins School District and the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts had more than doubled. The Project Consultants compliment the leadership of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District on preserving (and

increasing) their modest fund balance over the course of the past nine years.

Table 8-W reveals that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 1996-97 fund balance was \$627/student, a figure that was -\$2,024/student or -76.3% less than the fund balance of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$2,651/student).

Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 through 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's fund balance decreased from \$627/student (1996-97) to \$472/student (2006-07), a loss of -\$155/student or -24.7%. During the same span of time, the fund balance of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts increased from \$2,651/student (1996-97) to \$3,727/student (2006-07), a gain of +\$1,076/student or +40.6%.

TABLE 8-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT FUND BALANCE 1996-97 / 2006-07					
	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Weyerhaeuser	\$627	\$919	\$472	-\$155	-24.7%
K-12 Average	\$2,651	\$3,177	\$3,727	+\$1,076	+40.6%

At the conclusion of the 2006-07 school year, the fund balance in Weyerhaeuser Area School District (\$472/student) trailed the fund balance in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts (\$3,727/student) by -\$3,255/student or -87.3%.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's fund balance was diminutive in 1996-97 and has continued to erode, over time, is strikingly below the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts, likely will marginally improve as a result of local patrons' authorization for the school district to exceed revenue caps, and, then over time, will continue to decline as General Fund revenue diminishes with the erosion of student enrollment. The Project Consultants further concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's fund balance is cost/ineffectively low.

3.6 Property and Tax Data

The Project Consultants examined select property and tax data for the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District, employing the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's financial data records.

Table 9-B delineates the School District of Bruce's 2006-07 equalized value was \$275,745,570, and the district's equalized value/member was \$435,617. (Over the five year span of time from 2001-02 to 2006-07, the School District of Bruce's equalized value/member increased from \$265,353/member to \$435,617/member, a gain of +\$170,264/member or +64.2%).

The 2006-07 mill rate for the School District of Bruce was \$6.98 (per \$1,000 of valuation). (Over the five year span of time from 2001-02 to 2006-07, the School District of Bruce's mill rate decreased from \$9.90 to \$6.98, a decline of -\$2.92 per \$1,000 of valuation or -29.5%).

The 2006-07 equalized aid for the School District of Bruce was \$3,548,741, while the equalized aid/member was \$5,606/member. The total 2006-07 levy amounted to \$2,188,540, yielding a tax levy/member of \$3,570/member in that year.

TABLE 9-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE PROPERTY/TAX DATA 2001-02 / 2006-07				
	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Equalized Value	\$275,745,570			
Equalized Value/mbr	\$435,617	\$265,353	+\$170,264	+64.2%
Mill Rate	\$6.98	\$9.90	-\$2.92	-29.5%
Equalized Aid	\$3,548,741	\$3,380,313	+\$168,428	+5.0%
Equalized Aid/mbr	\$5,606			
Total Levy	\$2,188,540			
Tax Levy/mbr	\$3,570			

Table 9-LH reports that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's 2006-07 equalized value was \$284,948,053, and the equalized value/member was \$291,358. (Over the five year span of time from 2001-02 to 2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's equalized value/member increased from \$176,871/member to \$291,358/member, a gain of +\$114,487/member or +64.7%).

The 2006-07 mill rate for Ladysmith-Hawkins School District was \$10.22 (per \$1,000 of valuation). (Over the five year span of time from 2001-02 to

2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's mill rate decreased from \$12.75 to \$10.22, a decline of -\$2.53 per \$1,000 of valuation or -19.8%).

The 2006-07 equalized aid for Ladysmith-Hawkins School District was \$7,305,118, while the equalized aid/member was \$7,469/member. The total 2006-07 levy amounted to \$3,158,323, yielding a tax levy/member of \$3,233/member.

TABLE 9-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPERTY/TAX DATA 2001-02 / 2006-07				
	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Equalized Value	\$284,948,053			
Equalized Value/mbr	\$291,358	\$176,871	+\$114,487	+64.7%
Mill Rate	\$10.22	\$12.75	-\$2.53	-19.8%
Equalized Aid	\$7,305,118	\$7,494,669	-\$189,551	-2.5%
Equalized Aid/mbr	\$7,469			
Total Levy	\$3,158,323			
Tax Levy/mbr	\$3,233			

Table 9-W reveals that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 2006-07 equalized value was \$153,653,092, and the district's equalized value/member was \$808,700. (Over the five year span of time from 2001-02 to 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's equalized value/member increased from \$415,141/member to \$808,700/member, a gain of +\$393,559/member or +94.8%).

The 2006-07 mill rate of Weyerhaeuser Area School District was \$8.93 (per \$1,000 of valuation). (Over the five year span of time from 2001-02 to 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's mill rate decreased from \$12.08 to \$8.93, a net decline of -\$3.15 per \$1,000 of valuation or -26.1%).

The 2006-07 equalized aid for Weyerhaeuser Area School District was \$109,440, while the equalized aid/member was \$576/member. The total 2006-07 levy amounted to \$1,582,034, yielding a tax levy/member of \$8,888/member.

TABLE 9-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPERTY/TAX DATA 2001-02 / 2006-07				
	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Equalized Value	\$153,653,092			
Equalized Value/mbr	\$808,700	\$415,141	+\$393,559	+94.8%
Mill Rate	\$8.93	\$12.08	-\$3.15	-26.1%
Equalized Aid	\$109,440			
Equalized Aid/ mbr	\$576			
Total Levy	\$1,582,034			
Tax Levy/mbr	\$8,888			

3.7 Referendum to Exceed Revenue Cap

The State of Wisconsin permits local school districts to bring before their patrons a referendum to increase revenue for general operations or remodeling/new construction of school facilities. In April, 2008, residents of the School District of Bruce denied the organization authority to exceed the

revenue cap. Similarly, residents of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District denied their organization the authority to exceed the revenue cap in the recent past. In June, 2008, residents of Weyerhaeuser Area School District authorized the organization to exceed the revenue cap by the amount of \$1,800,000 over a three year period of time, thereby easing the school district's cash flow difficulties and need for short-term borrowing.

The Project Consultants concluded that exceeding the revenue caps for all three school districts—experiencing declining enrollment and budget reductions in the past—was/is essential to ensuring organizational long-term fiscal and program/service viability.

3.8 Administrative Expenditures

The School District of Bruce is administered by three administrators: District Administrator; elementary principal; and high school principal. Over the ten inclusive years from 1996-97 through 2006-07, the school district reduced its administrative staff from 3.6 (1996-97) to 3.0 (2006-07) administrators. Over that span of time, the School District of Bruce's administrative cost per student increased from \$636/student in 1996-97 to \$826/student in 2006-07, an increase of +\$190/student or +29.9%. In 1996-97, the school district's cost for administration trailed that of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts by -\$23/student or -3.5%, while in 2006-07, the school district's administrative costs exceeded those in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts by +\$4/student or +.5%.

The Project Consultants concluded that, as the School District of Bruce's student enrollment declined, the organization's leadership made

compensatory adjustments in its administrative staffing, an action that is worthy of commendation.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District is administered by four administrators: District Administrator/elementary principal; middle school principal; high school principal; and business manager/special education director. Over the ten inclusive years from 1996-97 through 2006-07, the school district reduced its administrative staffing from 4.5 (1996-97) to 4.3 (2006-07) administrators. Over that span of time, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's administrative cost per student increased from \$738/student in 1996-97 to \$1,038/student in 2006-07, an increase of +\$300/student or +40.7%. In 1996-97, the school district's cost of administration exceeded that of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts by +\$79/student or +12.0%, while in 2006-07, the school district's administrative costs exceeded those of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts by +\$216/student or +26.3%.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's administrative costs have become increasingly cost/ineffective over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 (base year) through 2006-07. That trend will continue to escalate as the organization's student enrollment either remains stable or declines.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District is administered by two administrators: District Administrator and elementary/secondary principal. Over the ten inclusive years from 1996-97 through 2006-07, the school district has retained two administrative positions. Over that span of time, Weyerhaeuser School District's administrative cost per student increased

from \$1,031/student in 1996-97 to \$1,804/student, an increase of +\$773/student or +75.0%. In 1996-97, the school district's cost of administration exceeded that of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts by +\$372/student or +56.4%, while in 2006-07, the school district's administrative costs exceeded those of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts by +\$982/student or +119.5%.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's administrative costs are cost/ineffectively high.

3.9 Teacher Master Agreements

The Project Consultants examined the Master Agreements negotiated by the School Boards of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District and their respective teacher organizations to determine negotiated salary/wage and health insurance benefits. In the event of the consolidation of school districts, staffs—in whole or, likely, in part—will be merged (on a seniority basis), and the more favorably-negotiated contract conditions prevail/apply.

The School District of Bruce's 2006-07 teacher salary schedule wages/benefits were reported as follows: BA: \$31,902; BA + 24: \$33,456; MA: \$34,059; MA + 32: \$36,130; and MA + 32 (top): \$54,558.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's 2006-07 teacher salary schedule wages/benefits were reported as follows: BA: \$31,058; MA: \$33,754; MA + 36 (top): \$54,296.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 2008-09 teacher salary schedule wages/benefits were reported as follows: BA: \$28,030; BA + 24: \$29,552; MA/BA +30: \$29,932; MA + 18: \$31,073; and MA + 18 (top): \$47,100.

The School District of Bruce's health benefits were detailed as follows: full premium health benefits for all teachers.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's health benefits were detailed as follows: teachers receive 95% single/family health insurance (100% if one teacher is married to another employee).

Weyerhaeuser Area School District's health benefits were detailed as follows: teachers receive single or family health insurance benefits at 98% of quoted premium. Teacher voluntary retirement health benefits are \$250/month for a maximum of five years.

Consolidation of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District teaching staffs would likely result in a moderate increase in wages/salary and health benefits for the resulting, merged teaching staff.

3.10 Employee Retirement System Obligations

The Project Consultants examined the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's annual financial reports (audits) to ascertain long-term obligations to the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), a cost-sharing, multi-employer defined benefit Public Employee Retirement System (PERS).

The School District of Bruce paid off its prior service liability in the 2006-07 fiscal years through the issuance of long-term debt.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District paid off its unfunded pension liability during the year ended June 30, 2006 and, accordingly, had no unfunded pension-related debt on June 30, 2007.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District had an unfunded, pension-related liability of \$390,592 on June 30, 2008.

3.11 Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Obligations

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board issued Statement 45 on Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) accounting by governmental agencies to provide more complete, reliable, and decision-useful financial reporting regarding the costs and financial obligations that governments incur when they provide post-employment benefits other than pensions (OPEB) as part of the compensation for services rendered by their employees. Post-employment healthcare benefits, the most common form of OPEB, are a very significant financial commitment by many governmental agencies.

Prior to Statement 45, governmental agencies typically followed a “pay-as-you-go” accounting approach in which the cost of benefits is not reported until after employees retire. This approach is not comprehensive—only revealing a limited amount of data and failing to account for costs and obligations incurred as governmental agencies receive employee services each year for which they have been promised future benefit payments in exchange (Citation: GASB).

The School District of Bruce's actuarial accrued liability is \$1,765,328.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's actuarial accrued liability is \$3,330,589.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District's actuarial accrued liability is \$386,503.

3.12 Student Transportation

The Project Consultants reviewed the School of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's student transportation routes, expenditures, and transportation agreements (if privately contracted) to render general judgments about the potential impact of school consolidation on the effectiveness, efficiency, and cost implications of transporting students.

The School District of Bruce operated its own student transportation system during the 2008-09 school year. Eight (8) routes were in operation (the Project Consultants did not have the route plan for bus route #6). Approximately 500 students were served by the student transportation system (excluding bus route #6). According to the 2007-08 annual audit, the School District of Bruce expended \$345,944 from the General Fund and Special Education Fund budgets for student transportation services. The school district's longest bus route (bus route #7) was 114 miles and incurred one hour and thirty-five minutes from departure time to arrival at school (6:30-8:05 a.m.). All but one of the school district's bus routes reported route times of one hour and fifteen minutes from departure to arrival at school (6:50 a.m. or earlier departure to 8:05 a.m. arrival).

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District contracts its student transportation system with six different contractors and operates 12 student transportation routes and 2 special education routes. (Additionally, the school district owns and operates 2 special education buses). According to the 2007-08 annual audit, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District expended \$756,468 from its General Fund and Special Education Fund budgets for the delivery of student transportation services.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District owns and operates its own student transportation system. Representatives of the Transportation Department reported operating three routes. The roster of students on each of the three transportation routes illustrates that 100 students are transported. According to the 2007-08 annual audit, Weyerhaeuser Area School District expended \$105,309 for operation of the student transportation system from the General Fund and Special Education Fund budgets. The school district's longest student transportation route is 54 miles with one hour and fifteen minutes of travel time.

According to **SchoolFacts** data for the 2006-07 school year, the cost/student for student transportation services in the School District of Bruce (\$561/student), Ladysmith-Hawkins School District (\$709/student), and Weyerhaeuser Area School District (\$566/student) all exceeded the State of Wisconsin K-12 district average cost/student (\$441/student). The Project Consultants concluded that such levels of expenditure may well be understandable, given the rural nature of the study's school districts, their small critical student masses, and declining enrollments.

In the event of consolidation of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District, the Project Consultants would recommend that (a) the school districts engage the services of a transportation consultant to reexamine the school districts' current student transportation routes to enhance efficiency and (b) as required, increase bus service to the Weyerhaeuser Area School District area—using savings achieved through consolidation—to reduce student transportation time under one hour.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND STAFFING

4.0 Introduction

Following the Project Consultants' analysis of the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's critical student masses (district sizes), enrollments, enrollment trends, and financial data, attention was directed on the organizations' educational programs, services, and staffing, the "centerpieces" of the school districts' operations. In examining those pivotal components of the school districts, the Project Consultants gathered and analyzed a myriad of source documents, undertook interviews, toured, and observed the school districts' teaching/learning processes and environments.

The primary purpose of the operation of public school districts in Wisconsin and throughout the United States is the delivery of instructional programs and services to resident and, through open enrollment and tuition agreements, non-resident P-K-12 students, initially, and, ever more increasingly in recent decades, to resident and non-resident pre-school youngsters and adults. The breadth, scope, and sophistication of the school district's programs and services have manifoldly increased over the past four decades in response to changing societal needs, family structure, business/industrial priorities, population aging, technological expansion, global competition, and a myriad of other interacting and intersecting variables.

A school district's size, enrollment trends, and finances have a direct bearing on the number, breadth, scope, and sophistication of programs and

services, the numbers and types of staff members, and the numbers, types, and sophistication of facilities. In this light, it is axiomatic that the Project Consultants would investigate the status of the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's educational programs, services, staffing, and related issues (including class section sizes, course credit offerings, teacher preparations, staffing, pupil/teacher ratios, extra-curricular programming, instructional and support services, organizational configuration, methodologies and delivery systems, and the like) to serve the school district's pre-school, school-aged, and adult populations and their communities.

A cross-section of the Project Consultants' findings in examining programs, services, staffing, and other indicators is presented in this chapter. The purposes inherent in the analyses of such data are to determine the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's statuses, assess the organizations' strengths and needs, conduct comparative analyses, and, as appropriate, identify potential, future courses of action for consideration by the School Boards and District Administrators.

4.1 Elementary Class Sizes

A summary of the School District of Bruce's 2008-09 elementary class section sizes, grades K(4)-5 is presented in Table 10-B.

The School District of Bruce provided elementary instructional programming in a grade K(4)-5 configuration for 233 youngsters during the 2008-09 school year. The school district served 28 4-year-old kindergarten students, 35 5-year-old kindergarten students, and 170 grade 1-5 students

for an average of 33.3 students/grade level in grades K(4)-5 in 2008-09. The school district operates an all day/every day/no fee kindergarten program for 5 year olds. The school district also is a participant in the SAGE Program.

An examination of Table 10-B data illustrate that the School District of Bruce operated 15 elementary class sections during the 2008-09 school year. All 15 elementary class sections or 100% were operated with enrollments of less than 20 students. There were no elementary class sections which enrolled 20-25 students/section, 26-29 students/section, or 30 students or greater/section. There were no multi-grade, combination class sections operated in the school district’s elementary school. Class section sizes in K(4), K(5), and grades 1-3 maintained enrollments of approximately 15 students or less as required by the State of Wisconsin’s SAGE Program.

TABLE 10-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE ELEMENTARY CLASS SIZES 2008-09					
<u>School</u>	<u>Less than 20</u>	<u>20-25</u>	<u>26-29</u>	<u>30 or larger</u>	<u>Total</u>
K-5	15	0	0	0	15
%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

The Project Consultants found that the average elementary class section size in the School District of Bruce during the 2008-09 school year was computed at 15.5 students/section.

The Project Consultants concluded that elementary class section sizes in the School District of Bruce are operated at a favorable but marginally cost/ineffective level. The school district's demographics suggest a trend toward declining student enrollment and increasing cost/ineffectiveness at the elementary school level.

A summary of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's 2008-09 elementary class section sizes, grades K(4)-4 is presented in Table 10-LH.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District provided elementary instructional programming in a grade K(4)-4 configuration for 400 elementary school students during the 2008-09 school year. The school district served 3 pre-school students, 64 4-year-old kindergarten students, 73 5-year-old kindergarten students, and 263 grade 1-4 students for an average (excluding pre-school students) of 66.7 students/grade level in grades K(4)-4 in 2008-09. The school district operates an all day/every day/no fee kindergarten program for 5 year olds. The school district also is a participant in the SAGE Program.

An examination of Table 10-LH data illustrate that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District operated 24 elementary class sections during the 2008-09 school year. Twenty-one (21) elementary class sections or 87.5% were operated with enrollments of less than 20 students/section, while 3 elementary class sections or 12.5% enrolled 20-25 students/section. There were no elementary class sections which enrolled either 26-29 students/section or 30 students or greater/section. There were no multi-grade, combination classrooms operated in the school district's elementary school. Class section sizes in K(4), K(5), and grades 1-3 maintained

enrollments of approximately 15 students or less (actually 13-17 students/section) as required by the State of Wisconsin's SAGE Program.

The Project Consultants found that the average elementary class section size in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District during the 2008-09 school year was computed at 16.7 students/section.

The Project Consultants concluded that elementary class section sizes in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District are operated at a favorable and cost/effective level. The school district's demographics suggest a trend toward declining student enrollment and increasing cost/ineffectiveness at the elementary school level (though, due to the school district's grade level configuration, with less of a fiscal impact than other school districts with either K(4)-5 or K(4)-6 organizational configurations).

TABLE 10-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT ELEMENTARY CLASS SIZES 2008-09					
<u>School</u>	<u>Less than 20</u>	<u>20-25</u>	<u>26-29</u>	<u>30 or larger</u>	<u>Total</u>
K-4	21	3	0	0	24
%	87.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Weyerhaeuser Area School District provided elementary instructional programming in grades K(4)-5 at Weyerhaeuser Elementary/Secondary School during the 2008-09 school year. The school district served 4 students in K(4), 9 students in K(5), and 38 students in grades 1-5 for an

average of 7.3 students/grade level in grades K(4)-5 during the 2008-09 organizational year.

An examination of Table 10-W illustrates that Weyerhaeuser Area School District operated six elementary class sections during the 2008-09 school year. Six class sections or 100.0% were operated with enrollments of less than 20 students. There were no elementary class sections enrolling 20-25 students/section, 26-29 students/section, or 30 students or larger/section during the 2008-09 school year.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District operates an all day/every day/no fee Kindergarten Program. The school district's 4-year-old kindergarten students are served by the School District of Bruce in conjunction with the school district's Head Start Program.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District employed one multi-age level/combination classroom during the 2008-09 school year at grades 4-5.

The Project Consultants found that the average elementary class section size in Weyerhaeuser Area School District during the 2008-09 school year was computed at 8.5 students/section.

The Project Consultants concluded that elementary class section sizes in Weyerhaeuser Area School District are highly cost/ineffective and will become increasingly so, over time, as student enrollment continues to decline. The school district's demographics confirmed that the trend toward increasing cost/ineffectiveness will continue.

TABLE 10-W
WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
ELEMENTARY CLASS SIZES
2008-09

<u>School</u>	<u>Less than 20</u>	<u>20-25</u>	<u>26-29</u>	<u>30 or larger</u>	<u>Total</u>
K(4)-5	6	0	0	0	6
%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

4.2 Secondary School Class Section Sizes

An analysis of the first trimester/semester secondary school class section sizes in the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District are presented, respectively, in Tables 11-B, 11-LH, and 11-W for the 2008-09 school year.

During the first semester of the 2008-09 organizational year, the School District of Bruce Middle School conducted 62 semester sections of which 47 course sections or 78.8% enrolled less than 20 students/section; 14 course sections or 22.6% enrolled 20-25 students/section; 1 course section or 1.6% enrolled 26-29 students/sections; and no course sections enrolled 30 or more students/section.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce operated a significant number of its middle school course sections at a cost/ineffective level during the 2008-09 organizational year.

**TABLE 11-B
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE
SECONDARY CLASS SIZES
2008-09**

<u>School</u>	<u>Less than 20</u>	<u>20-25</u>	<u>26-29</u>	<u>30 or larger</u>	<u>Total</u>
Middle School*	47	14	1	0	62
%	75.8%	22.6%	1.6%	0.0%	100.0%
High School*	77	11	6	0	94
%	81.9%	11.7%	6.4%	0.0%	100.0%

* Semester 1 only.

During the same organizational year, Bruce High School delivered 94 semester sections of which 77 course sections or 81.9% enrolled less than 20 students/section, while 11 sections or 11.7% enrolled 20-25 students/section, and 6 sections or 6.4% enrolled 26-29 students/section. There were no semester course sections that were operated with enrollments of 30 students or greater/section.

The Project Consultants concluded that Bruce High School operated an exceedingly large number of course sections with enrollments of less than 20 students/section (at a cost/ineffective level) during the 2008-09 organizational year. The school district may anticipate that, as student enrollment continues to decline, the organization can anticipate reductions in teaching/learning staff and course offerings, accompanied by decreasing class sizes and increasing cost/ineffectiveness throughout programming at both the middle and high school levels.

During the first semester of the 2008-09 organizational year, Ladysmith-Hawkins Middle School operated 102 semester sections of which 53 course sections or 52.0% enrolled less than 20 students/section; 45 course sections or 44.1% enrolled 20-25 students/section; 1 course section or 1.0% enrolled 26-29 students/sections; and 3 course sections or 2.9% enrolled 30 or more students/section.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District operated a moderately high level of cost/ineffective middle school course sections during the 2008-09 organizational year.

TABLE 11-LH					
LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT					
SECONDARY CLASS SIZES*					
2008-09					
<u>School</u>	<u>Less than 20</u>	<u>20-25</u>	<u>26-29</u>	<u>30 or larger</u>	<u>Total</u>
Middle School*	53	45	1	3	102
%	52.0%	44.1%	1.0%	2.9%	100.0%
High School*	71	38	11	2	122
%	58.2%	31.1%	9.0%	1.6%	100.0%
* Semester 1 only.					

During the same organizational year, Ladysmith-Hawkins High School delivered 122 semester sections of which 71 course sections or 58.2% enrolled less than 20 students/section, while 38 sections or 31.1% enrolled 20-25 students/section, 11 sections or 9.0% enrolled 26-29 students/section, and 2 sections or 1.6% enrolled 30 students or greater/section.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins High School operated a substantial number of course sections with enrollments of less than 20 students/section (at a cost/ineffective level) during the 2008-09 organizational year. As time elapses and student enrollment declines, the school district can anticipate reductions in teaching/learning staff and course offerings, accompanied by increasing cost/ineffectiveness in course section sizes at both the middle school and high school levels.

During the 2008-09 organizational year, Weyerhaeuser Area School District Secondary School conducted 53 first semester course sections of which 49 sections or 92.5% enrolled less than 20 students/section (at a cost/ineffective level). Additionally, the secondary school operated 4 course sections or 7.5% with enrollments of 20-25 students/section. The secondary school offered no course sections enrolling 26-29 students/section or 30 students or larger/section.

TABLE 11-W					
WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT					
SECONDARY CLASS SIZES					
2008-09					
<u>School</u>	<u>Less than 20</u>	<u>20-25</u>	<u>26-29</u>	<u>30 or larger</u>	<u>Total</u>
Secondary*	49	4	0	0	53
%	92.5%	7.5%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
* Semester 1 only.					

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's Secondary School maintained a high level of cost/ineffectively operated and staffed secondary school courses during the 2008-09 school year. The Project Consultants observed that Weyerhaeuser Area School

District's high level of cost/ineffectively operated secondary school course sections were attributable to the organization's low critical student mass. Over time, the Project Consultants concluded the cost/ineffectiveness of Weyerhaeuser Area School District's Secondary School class section sizes will further, uncontrollably, worsen.

4.3 Senior High School Credit Course Offerings

The School District of Bruce—during the 2008-09 school year—operated an eight period schedule with a period length of 46 minutes and passing periods of 4 minutes. School hours extended from 8:20 a.m. through 3:20 p.m. Course offerings were typically designed on a semester or year-long basis.

The Project Consultants examined the School District of Bruce's **Course Description, 2008-2009** to ascertain course offerings which would be made available to grade 9-12 students in Bruce High School during the 2008-09 organizational year.

Table 12-B reports that Bruce High School made available 70.5 credit course offerings to high school students in grades 9-12 during the 2008-09 school year. Course offerings spanned 12 disciplines: agriculture; art; business education/computer; English; family and consumer science; mathematics; music; physical education and health; science; social studies; technology education; and world languages.

High school students were afforded the broadest arrays of credit course offerings in the following disciplines: technology education (11.5 credits); mathematics (8.0); agriculture (7.0); business education/computer (6.5);

and science (6.0). The smallest arrays of high school credit course offerings were made available to grade 9-12 students enrolled in Bruce High School in the following subject-matter disciplines during the 2008-09 school year: physical education and health (2.0 credits); music (2.5); world languages (4.0); and social studies (4.0).

**TABLE 12-B
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE
CREDIT COURSE OFFERINGS, 9-12
2008-09**

<u>Discipline/Subject</u>	<u>Credits</u>
Agriculture	7.0
Art	5.0
Business Education/Computers	6.5
English	5.5
Family and Consumer Science	4.5
Mathematics	8.0
Music	2.5
Physical Education & Health	2.0
Science	6.0
Social Studies	4.0
Technology Education	11.5
World Languages	4.0
Other (Work-Based)	4.0
Total	70.5

Bruce High School students were provided opportunities to secure course credit through Distance Learning.

The breadth and scope of grade 9-12 course offerings made available to Bruce High School students during the 2008-09 school year would be considered comparable to offerings found in high schools with student populations of comparable critical student mass.

During the 2008-09 school year, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District employed an eight period schedule with a period length of 47 minutes and passing periods of 4 minutes. School hours extended from 8:15 a.m. through 3:30 p.m. Course offerings were typically designed on a semester or year-long basis.

The Project Consultants studied the Ladysmith-Hawkins High School and Health Care Academy **2008-09 Course Description Book** to understand the breadth and scope of course offerings which would be made available to grade 9-12 students in Ladysmith-Hawkins High School during the 2008-09 school year.

Table 12-LH reports that Ladysmith-Hawkins High School (and the school district's Health Care Academy) made available 77.5 credit course offerings to high school students in grades 9-12 during the 2008-09 school year. Course offerings spanned 12 disciplines: art; business education; English; family and consumer science; mathematics; music; physical education and health; science; social studies; technology education; world languages; and Health Care Academy.

High school students in grades 9-12 were afforded the broadest array of credit course offerings in the following subject-matter disciplines at Ladysmith-Hawkins School District (and the Health Care Academy) during

the 2008-09 school year: Health Care Academy (14.0 credits); science (9.0); technology education (8.0); and social studies (7.5). The smallest arrays of high school credit course offerings made available during the same school year were as follows: art (3.5 credits); family and consumer science (3.5); world languages (4.0); and physical education and health (4.0).

TABLE 12-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT CREDIT COURSE OFFERINGS, 9-12 2008-09	
<u>Discipline/Subject</u>	<u>Credits</u>
Art	3.5
Business Education	6.0
English	6.5
Family and Consumer Science	3.5
Mathematics	7.0
Music	4.5
Physical Education & Health	4.0
Science	9.0
Social Studies	7.5
Technology Education	8.0
World Languages	4.0
Other	14.0
Total	77.5

Ladysmith-Hawkins High School students were provided opportunities to secure course credit through the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Technical College systems (offering dual credit). Ladysmith-Hawkins

School District instituted a highly innovative Health Care Academy, sanctioned through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Charter Schools, to provide instructional programming for its high school students in the healthcare industry. The Health Care Academy has partnered with Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College and Chippewa Valley Technical College, along with a number of private sector healthcare (and related) firms to define appropriate instructional programming/curricula. Additionally, the school district has pursued and is developing a number of additional, creative, instructional options to enhance student enrollment and instructional programs and services to high school level young people.

The breadth and scope of grade 9-12 course offerings made available to Ladysmith-Hawkins High School students during the 2008-09 school year were comparable to offerings found in high schools with similar critical student masses, though, indeed, the school district's administration is "thinking outside the box" in its approach to future instructional programming. The Project Consultants were complimentary of the school district's leadership in pursuing a broadened array of instructional programs and services to both enhance critical student mass and, also, opportunities for students they are entrusted to serve.

During the 2008-09 school year, Weyerhaeuser Area School District operated an eight period schedule with a period length of 44 minutes and a passing period of 4 minutes. School hours extended from 8:10 a.m. through 3:20 p.m. Course offerings were typically designed on a semester or year-long basis.

Table 12-W details that Weyerhaeuser Area School District made available 81.0 credit course offerings to high school students in grades 9-12 during the 2008-09 school year (including 17 courses accessed through telecommunication). Course offerings spanned 11 disciplines: art; business and information technology; English; family and consumer science; mathematics; music; physical education and health; science; social studies; technology education; and world languages.

TABLE 12-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT CREDIT COURSE OFFERINGS, 9-12 2008-09	
<u>Discipline/Subject</u>	<u>Credits</u>
Art	3.0
Business & Information Technology	5.5
English	7.5
Family and Consumer Science	7.0
Mathematics	9.5
Music	6.0
Physical Education & Health	3.5
Science	7.5
Social Studies	6.5
Technology Education	4.0
World Languages	3.0
Other	1.0 + 17.0*
Total	64.0 + 17.0*
*CVTC, WITC, and UWBC courses	

High school students were offered the broadest arrays of credit courses in the following disciplines during the 2008-09 school year: mathematics (9.5 credits); science (7.5); English (7.5); and family and consumer science (7.0). The narrowest arrays of high school credit courses were made available to grade 9-12 students in the following subject-matter disciplines during the 2008-09 school year: world languages (3.0 credits); art (3.0); physical education and health (3.5); and technology education (4.0).

High school students in Weyerhaeuser Area School District were provided with opportunities to access telecommunication offerings through WIN ITV and acquire credits (high school or dual) provided through the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Technical College systems.

The breadth and scope of grade 9-12 course offerings made available to Weyerhaeuser Area School District students during the 2008-09 school year would be somewhat larger than offerings found in high schools with a comparable critical student mass.

4.4 Course Preparations

The Project Consultants reviewed the master schedules of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District for the 2008-09 school year to ascertain the number of course preparations assigned to full-time and part-time teaching staff members in grades 9-12. Secondary school teacher course assignments in a school district illustrate to the Project Consultants the teaching load of full-time and part-time staff members and assist in assessing the cost/ineffectiveness of a school district's current staffing.

The Project Consultants review of the School District of Bruce's high school master schedule for the 2008-09 school year revealed that 8 of 16 regular, full-time teaching staff members held split assignments between Bruce Middle School and Bruce High School. (Most were assigned only 1 period at Bruce Middle School). Considering all regular (non-special education) teachers at Bruce High School during the first semester of the 2008-09 school year, 12 of 16 teaching staff members were assigned 4, 5, 6, or 7 teaching preparations daily, while 4 (full-time) teaching staff members were assigned 2 or 3 teaching preparations daily.

The Project Consultants concluded that the number and distribution of teaching preparations assigned to Bruce High School full-time teaching staff members during the 2008-09 school year were predictable for a smaller critical student mass school district which is experiencing student enrollment decline and attempting, simultaneously, to maintain a comparatively robust array of secondary school course offerings.

In the Project Consultants' examination of Ladysmith-Hawkins High School master schedule for the 2008-09 school year, it was ascertained that only 2 of 21 full-time, regular teaching staff members held split assignments between Ladysmith-Hawkins Middle School and Ladysmith-Hawkins High School. Considering all regular (non-special education) teachers at Ladysmith-Hawkins High School during the first semester of the 2008-09 school year, 19 full-time teaching staff members were assigned 3, 4, 5, or 6 teaching preparations daily, while 1 full-time teaching staff member was assigned 2 teaching preparation daily. (Part-time regular teaching staff members were assigned 2 or 3 teaching preparations daily).

The Project Consultants concluded that the number and distribution of teaching preparations assigned to Ladysmith-Hawkins High School full-time and part-time teaching staff members during the 2008-09 school year were within predictable parameters when compared to assignments found in comparably-sized secondary schools.

An examination of Weyerhaeuser Area School District's Secondary School's master schedule yielded that, among the regular education teaching staff of 11, 7 teachers held full-time assignments and 4 held part-time assignments (at the elementary school level) during the first semester of the 2008-09 school year. With an eight period teaching/learning schedule, 5 of the 7 full-time regular teaching staff members were assigned 6 or 7 teaching preparations daily, while the remaining 2 full-time regular teaching staff members were assigned, respectively, 4 and 2 teaching preparations daily. Among Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 4, part-time, regular education teachers, 2 staff members were assigned 4 preparations daily, while the remaining 2 staff members were assigned, respectively, 2 preparations and 1 preparation daily.

The Project Consultants concluded that the number and distribution of teaching preparations assigned to Weyerhaeuser Area School District's full-time teaching staff members during the 2008-09 school year reflected the substantial difficulties experienced by a low critical student mass organization when it endeavors to provide a broad and comprehensive array of course offerings to its students with insufficient funding and staffing.

4.5 Total Professional Staffing Trends

The Project Consultants examined the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total professional staffing trends from 1996-97 through 2006-07. (The Project Consultants employed data gathered from the Wisconsin Taxpayers' Alliance documents entitled **SchoolFacts**).

Table 13-B divulges that 90.3 full-time equivalent professional staff members were employed by the School District of Bruce in 1996-97 and 71.6 full-time equivalent professional staff members were employed in 2006-07, resulting in a net decrease of -18.7 full-time equivalent professional staff members or -20.7% over the nine year span of time.

TABLE 13-B			
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE			
TOTAL STAFF (FTE)			
1996-97 / 2006-07			
<u>School</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Bruce	90.3	86.1	71.6

A review of the School District of Bruce's student enrollment from 1996-97 through 2006-07 illustrated a drop in student enrollment from 725 to 582 students, a net loss of -143 students or -19.7%. When comparing changes in the school district's student enrollment and full-time equivalent professional staff member losses between 1996-97 and 2006-07, the Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce has done an excellent job of synchronizing its reduction in full-time equivalent

professional staff members with the organization's student enrollment losses over the nine year span of time.

Table 13-LH reports that 169.4 full-time equivalent professional staff members were employed by Ladysmith-Hawkins School District in 1996-97 and 124.8 full-time equivalent professional staff members were employed in 2006-07, resulting in a net decrease of -44.6 full-time equivalent professional staff members or -26.3% over the nine year span of time.

TABLE 13-LH SCHOOL DISTRICT TOTAL STAFF (FTE) 1996-97 / 2006-07			
<u>School</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	169.4	165.0	124.8

The Project Consultants' review of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's student enrollment from 1996-97 through 2006-07 divulged that the organization's student enrollment dropped from 1,248 to 960 students, a net loss of -288 students or -23.1%. When comparing changes in the school district's student enrollment and full-time equivalent professional staff member losses between 1996-97 and 2006-07, the Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has expertly synchronized its reduction in full-time equivalent professional staff members with the organization's student enrollment losses over the nine year span of time.

As delineated in Table 13-W, 42.2 full-time equivalent professional staff members were employed by Weyerhaeuser Area School District in 1996-97, while 38.7 full-time equivalent staff members were employed in 2006-07, yielding a net decrease of -3.5 full-time equivalent professional staff members or -8.3% over the nine year span of time.

TABLE 13-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT TOTAL STAFF (FTE) 1996-97 / 2006-07			
<u>School</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Weyerhaeuser	42.2	44.2	38.7

A review of Weyerhaeuser Area School District’s student enrollment from 1996-97 through 2006-07 reveals a decline in student enrollment from 237 to 177 students, a net loss of -60 students or -25.3%. When comparing changes in the school district’s student enrollment and full-time equivalent professional staff member losses between 1996-97 and 2006-07, the Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District has not synchronized its reduction in full-time equivalent professional staff members with the organization’s student enrollment losses over the nine year span of time.

4.6 Pupil/Teacher Ratio Trends

The pupil/teacher ratio trends for the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District between 1996-97 and 2006-07 are reported in Tables 14-B, 14-LH, and 14-W.

In 1996-97, the School District of Bruce's pupil/teacher ratio was 13.6/1, a figure that was +1.7 students/1 teacher or +11.1% lower/better than the average of all Wisconsin school districts in that year (15.3/1). Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 to 2006-07, the School District of Bruce's pupil/teacher ratio remained virtually the same (13.6/1 to 13.5/1), a decline of a mere -.1 pupil/teacher or -.7%. During the same nine year span of time, the pupil/teacher ratio for the average of all Wisconsin school districts declined from 15.3/1 to 14.7/1, a decrease of -.6 pupil/1 teacher or -3.9%.

During the 2006-07 school year, the School District of Bruce's pupil/teacher ratio (13.5/1) trailed (was better than) the average of all Wisconsin school districts' pupil/teacher ratio (14.7/1) by -1.2 pupils/1 teacher or -8.2%.

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE 14-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE PUPIL/TEACHER RATIO 1996-97 / 2006-07</p>			
<u>School</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Bruce	13.6/1	13.2/1	13.5/1
WI Ave	15.3/1	14.4/1	14.7/1

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce's pupil/teacher ratio remained relatively constant between 1996-97 and 2006-07 but, still, remained significantly lower/better than the pupil/teacher ratio for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts. At the same time, it is to be positively noted that, while the average of all State of Wisconsin's school districts average pupil/teacher ratio was improving over

the nine year span of time from 1996-97 to 2006-07, the School District of Bruce pupil/teacher ratio was not further reduced and, hence, further lowered the organization's staffing cost/ineffectiveness.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's pupil/teacher ratio in 1996-97 was 13.8/1, a figure that was -1.5 students/1 teacher or -9.8% lower/better than the average of all Wisconsin school districts in that year (15.3/1). Over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 to 2006-07, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's pupil/teacher ratio decreased from 13.8/1 to 13.4/1, a decline of -.4 pupil/teacher or -2.9%. During the same time period, the pupil/teacher ratio for the average of all Wisconsin school districts declined from 15.3/1 to 14.7/1, a decrease of -.6 pupil/1 teacher or -3.9%.

TABLE 14-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT PUPIL/TEACHER RATIO 1996-97 / 2006-07			
<u>School</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	13.8/1	12.4/1	13.4/1
WI Ave	15.3/1	14.4/1	14.7/1

During the 2006-07 school year, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's pupil/teacher ratio (13.4/1) trailed (was better than) the average of all Wisconsin school districts' pupil/teacher ratio (14.7/1) by -1.3 pupils/1 teacher or -8.8%.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's pupil/teacher ratio improved over the nine year span of time from

1996-97 through 2006-07 at a slower rate than the pupil/teacher ratio improved for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts. Nonetheless, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's pupil/teacher ratio continues to be significantly more favorable than the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts, a desirable attribute for parents but—long-term—increasingly cost/ineffective.

In 1996-97, Weyerhaeuser Area School District recorded a pupil/teacher ratio of 11.1/1, a figure that was -4.2 pupils/1 teacher or -27.5% less than (more favorable than) the figure for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts in that year (15.3/1). In that year, then, Weyerhaeuser Area School District could boast a pupil/teacher ratio that was much better—though substantially less cost/effective—than the ratio for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts.

Between 1996-97 and 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's pupil/teacher ratio declined from 11.1/1 to 7.9/1, a drop of -3.2 pupils/1 teacher or -28.8%. During the same span of time, the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts' pupil/teacher ratio decreased from 15.3/1 to 14.7/1, a decline of -.6 pupil/1 teacher or -3.9%.

By 2006-07, Weyerhaeuser School District's pupil/teacher ratio (7.9/1) was -6.8 pupils/1 teacher or -46.3% less (better) than the pupil/teacher ratio figure (14.7/1) computed for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's pupil/teacher ratio was substantially cost/ineffective when

compared to the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts in 1996-97, continued to plummet over the nine year span of time from 1996-97 to 2006-07, and was even more cost/ineffective in 2006-07 when compared to the pupil/teacher ratio for the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts. Weyerhaeuser Area School District's pupil/teacher ratio trend will continue to become increasingly cost/ineffective as student enrollment declines and the organization finds it necessary to retain a basic contingency of staff to provide basic and adequate educational programs and services.

TABLE 14-W WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT PUPIL/TEACHER RATIO 1996-97 / 2006-07			
<u>School</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Weyerhaeuser	11.1/1	10.9/1	7.9/1
WI Ave	15.3/1	14.4/1	14.7/1

4.7 High School Activities

The Project Consultants examined 2008-09 student activities offered by the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District. (The intent of this section is to provide a general overview of student opportunities which may not be reflective of all student options).

The School District of Bruce made the following activities available to Bruce High School students during the 2008-09 school year: cross country; football; volleyball; football cheerleading; swimming; basketball; wrestling; wrestling cheerleading; baseball; softball; track and field; golf; National

Honor Society; FFA; student council; Key Club; band; Spanish Club; FCA; FCCLA; school play (dramatics); yearbook; Athletic Club; forensics; choir; Dance Club; Science Olympiad; computer science class; computer science 2; spring computer science class; and others.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District made the following activities available to Ladysmith-Hawkins High School students during the 2008-09 school year: football; cross country; volleyball; basketball; wrestling; baseball; softball; track; golf; swimming; cheerleading; palm pon; annual/yearbook; debate/forensics; band; choir; Art Club; student council; FBLA; National Honor Society; Varsity Club; Spanish Club; Environmental Club; musical; Art Club; drama; and others.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District made the following activities available to high school students during the 2008-09 school year: football; basketball; wrestling; track; volleyball; golf; student council; Letter Club; yearbook; forensics; Drama Club/play; cheerleading; National Honor Society; and others. Weyerhaeuser Area School District collaborates with Birchwood School District and the School District of Bruce in the delivery of select student activity programs.

4.8 Instructional and Support Services

The Project Consultants examined instructional and support services provided by the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District during the 2008-09 organizational year. All three of the school districts furnish a broad and comprehensive array of instructional support services for pre-school, school-aged, and, to a much lesser extent, adult populations that would be

characteristic of Wisconsin school districts of comparable sizes. Instructional and support services generally vary among school districts on the basis of size and, to be sure, while it is found to be the case in reviewing the three school districts involved in the **Consolidation Feasibility Study**. Generally speaking, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District offered the greatest array of instructional support services, followed by the School District of Bruce. Weyerhaeuser Area School District offered a much smaller and less comprehensive package of instructional and support services for their pre-school, school-aged, and adult populations in keeping with their diminutive school district, community, population, and learner bases.

Instructional and support services are typically defined as programs and services that extend beyond those dispensed by professional teaching staff members (in the regular and general classroom setting) during the regular school day (8:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.).

The School District of Bruce and Ladysmith-Hawkins School District deliver such typical instructional and support services as co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (athletics, band, choir, yearbook, cheerleading, others); academic competitions; leadership groups (National Honor Society, student council); clubs (Spanish, letter/athletic, Key, art); programs and services delivered by specialist personnel (music specialist, physical education specialist, library/media specialist, computer specialist); special education programs and services (learning disability, communication/speech disorder, mental disability, emotional/behavioral disability, physical disability, other health impaired, psychological services, physical therapy, early childhood/special education, and the like); community education programs

and services (adult education, summer school); programs and services for disenfranchised learners (alternative education; ABE); programs and services for under-achieving students (Title I); pre-school and early childhood programs and services (pre-school, 4-year-old kindergarten); multi-school district and/or multi-institutional collaboration/cooperative programming (CESA, telecommunication networking, WITC); other student support programs (guidance counselor, county social worker); and others.

To a much smaller degree, Weyerhaeuser Area School District offers instructional and support services—in some instances collaboratively—in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities; academic competitions; leadership groups; services delivered by specialist personnel; special education programs and services; community education programs and services; programs and services for disenfranchised learners; pre-school and early childhood programs and services; multi-school district and/or multi-institutional collaborative/cooperative programming; and other student support programs.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District provided—given their respective critical student masses—instructional and support services that would be comparable in quantity and quality to Wisconsin school districts of like-size.

4.9 Organizational Configuration

The Project Consultants identified that the School District of Bruce operated a P-K(4)-5, 6-8, 9-12 organizational configuration during the 2008-09 school year. The school district's facility was originally designed

to accommodate the students served at the elementary, junior high school, and senior high school levels, though there was clearly little original intent in the facility design to segregate junior high school (now middle school) and high school students from one another. The school district's leadership has made a conscientious effort to provide segregated spaces—insofar as that is possible—for elementary school, middle school, and high school students. The very nature of the facility design, however, requires that students share select, unduplicated core spaces (particularly at the middle school and high school levels). The very nature of the school's design makes it impossible for secondary students to be segregated from one another (in passing) between and among academic classrooms, laboratories, shops, cafeteria, media centers, and the like.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District operated a P-K(4)-4, 5-8, 9-12 organizational configuration during the 2008-09 school year. The school district's elementary and high school facilities were specifically designed to accommodate students served at each of those two organizational levels. Ladysmith-Hawkins Middle School was originally constructed as the school district's secondary school facility. (Ladysmith-Hawkins Middle School has been remodeled to enhance its "user-friendliness" to middle level students). The school district's current three facilities provide for (obvious) segregation among elementary school, middle school, and high school youngsters.

During the 2008-09 school year, Weyerhaeuser Area School District operated a P-K(4)-5, 6-8, 9-12 organizational configuration. The school district's elementary/secondary school was designed to accommodate a small P-K-12 student population, and insofar as was possible, the facility

was designed in such a way as to separate elementary school students from their secondary level counterparts, though the demarcation between middle school and high school level instructional spaces is much more blurred. Virtually all common, core spaces—of necessity—are shared by Weyerhaeuser Area School District’s enrolled students at all three organizational levels.

4.10 Textbook Adoption Cycle

The Project Consultants learned from the School District of Bruce’s Principals that the organization has—in place—a formalized textbook adoption cycle. Mathematics is the subject-matter discipline under investigation during the 2008-09 organizational year.

In discussions with Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s Principals, the Project Consultants learned that that organization, as well, has—in place—a formalized textbook adoption cycle. As in the case of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District adoption focus during the 2008-09 organizational year is the mathematics subject-matter discipline.

At an earlier point in time, Weyerhaeuser Area School District had in place a five year textbook adoption cycle. In recent years, however, the school district’s financial pressures halted a regularized, formal schedule for reviewing and adopting new textbooks. It was reported that the school district intends to re-visit formal adoption and curriculum alignment (left idle for approximately five years) in the future.

4.11 Staff Development

The Project Consultants discussed with the Principals of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District the presence of and priorities for staff development/in-service training during the 2008-09 organizational year. Principals readily identified their school districts' staff development priorities.

The School District of Bruce's staff development priorities for 2008-09 were identified as reading, mathematics, school safety, and State of Wisconsin test score analyses.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District Principals identified the organization's 2008-09 staff development priorities as curriculum mapping, curriculum alignment, and analysis and application of State of Wisconsin test data.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 2008-09 staff development focuses included Response To Intervention (RTI) and goal-setting.

4.12 Teaching Methodologies and Delivery Systems

The Project Consultants interviewed the District Administrators, Principals, School Board members, and—on a random basis—select classroom teachers in the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District, toured the school districts' facilities, and observed the delivery of instructional programs and services and the school districts' methodologies to determine the prevailing instructional methodologies and delivery systems.

In the main, the Project Consultants found that School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District teachers employed an array of conventional and “best practices” methodologies at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels, including—but not limited to—whole group instruction, small group instruction, differentiation, cooperative learning, project-based learning, technology-based learning, research-based learning, performance-based assessment, multi-age level instructional delivery, interdisciplinary instructional delivery, inclusive instruction (special education), resource-based instruction (special education), peer tutoring, team teaching, and others.

In addition to regular classroom delivery of instructional programs, specialists were available to deliver original and support services in Title I, art, physical education, music, library/media, technology, special education, enrichment, and other, related programs and services. The school districts employed inclusive instruction with special education specialists working with individual, special education-eligible students in the classroom while regular instruction was ensuing and/or in resource rooms/center-based programs.

Multiple delivery systems were employed by the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and, to a lesser degree, Weyerhaeuser Area School District, including—but not limited to—on-line learning; interactive instructional television learning; Wisconsin Technical College-based learning; Wisconsin State University-based learning; multi-school district alternative education programming; Wisconsin Virtual High School

programming; CESA-based services; College In The School programming; and others.

The Project Consultants acknowledged that the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and, to a lesser extent because of its small critical student mass, Weyerhaeuser Area School District provide their students with access to a broad array of alternative delivery systems incorporating both direct and on-line instruction.

4.13 Special Education Programs and Services

The School District of Bruce provides eligible students with a comprehensive array of special education programs and services. The school district's 2007-08 annual audit report revealed a special education expenditure budget of \$693,497.

The School District of Bruce employs 5.0 full time equivalent special education professional staff members to serve its eligible students' needs. Seventy-two (72) special education students were served by the School District of Bruce during the 2008-09 organizational year.

The School District of Bruce delivers instructional programs and services through a combination of inclusion/mainstreaming in the regular classroom and resource/center-based instruction, as may be appropriate for students' programming needs.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District provides eligible students with a comprehensive array of special education programs and services. The

school district's 2007-08 annual audit report revealed a special education expenditure budget of \$1,906,578.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District employs 14.2 full time equivalent special education professional staff members to serve its eligible students' needs. One hundred fifty-nine (159) special education students were served by Ladysmith-Hawkins School District during the 2008-09 organizational year.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District delivers instructional programs and services through a combination of inclusion/mainstreaming in the regular classroom and resource/center-based instruction, as may be appropriate for students' programming needs.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District provides eligible students with a comprehensive array of special education programs and services. The school district's 2007-08 annual audit report revealed a special education expenditure budget of \$473,496.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District employs 2.0 full time equivalent special education professional staff members (and 1 part-time speech/language therapist) to serve its eligible students' needs. Twenty-two (22) special education students were served by Weyerhaeuser Area School District during the 2008-09 organizational year.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District delivers instructional programs and services through a combination of inclusion/mainstreaming in the regular

classroom and resource/center-based instruction, as may be appropriate for students' programming needs.

4.14 Achievement Test Results

The Project Consultants examined the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 2007-08 achievement test results on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exams (WKCE) to ascertain student performance levels in reading and mathematics at grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. (Results detailed below reflect the percentages of students scoring at the proficient and advanced levels of proficiency in each of the two school districts).

The School District of Bruce's student performances on the WKCE were as follows (State of Wisconsin averages are reported parenthetically, following the school district's proficiency level): grade 4: reading: 78 (81); mathematics: 72 (77); grade 5: reading: 74 (84); mathematics: 59 (76); grade 6: reading: 90 (85); mathematics: 69 (76); grade 7: reading: 79 (85); mathematics: 71 (77); grade 8: reading: 87 (84); mathematics: 82 (75); grade 10: reading: 94 (75); mathematics: 66 (70).

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's student performances on the WKCE were as follows (State of Wisconsin averages are reported parenthetically, following the school district's proficiency level): grade 4: reading: 85 (81); mathematics: 81 (77); grade 5: reading: 88 (84); mathematics: 81 (76); grade 6: reading: 88 (85); mathematics: 71 (76); grade 7: reading: 81 (85); mathematics: 64 (77); grade 8: reading: 88 (84); mathematics: 69 (75); grade 10: reading: 72 (75); mathematics: 68 (70).

Weyerhaeuser School District's student performances on the WKCE were as follows (State of Wisconsin averages are reported parenthetically, following the school district's proficiency level): grade 4: reading: 63 (81); mathematics: 63 (77); grade 5: reading: 88 (84); mathematics: 88 (76); grade 6: reading: 78 (85); mathematics: 67 (76); grade 7: reading: 77 (85); mathematics: 92 (77); grade 8: reading: 92 (84); mathematics: 75 (75); grade 10: reading: 76 (75); mathematics: 88 (70).

The Project Consultants concluded that the three school districts' student performances on achievement tests posed no deterrent to further collaboration/cooperation between or consolidation of the three school organizations.

4.15 Collaboration and Cooperation

The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District have displayed some measure of collaboration with one another in the past (athletics, special education), though such working relationships do not extend to shared administrative or teaching staffing, program development, or the like. All three of the school districts are members of CESA 10.

In their own rights, both the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District are collaborative organizations and, as appropriate, have established and maintained relationships with other school districts, colleges and universities, profit and non-profit organizations, businesses, cities, counties, and other service-providers to expand and enhance the quantity and quality of educational programs and services delivered to their respective organization's clientele.

4.16 Interview Perceptions: District Strengths, Needs, and Ratings

The Project Consultants conducted interviews with the District Administrators, School Board members, Principals, and other community patrons and parents to secure perspectives about perceived strengths, needs, and priority ratings of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District.

The most frequently identified strengths of the School District of Bruce among individuals interviewed were as follows: small community/small school district; teaching staff; personalized/individualized attention; facility; small class sizes.

The most frequently identified needs/concerns of the School District of Bruce among individuals interviewed were as follows: declining programs and services; declining enrollment; finances; limited curricular options; school population too small.

Individuals interviewed by the Project Consultants were asked to rate select quality factors/characteristics of the School District of Bruce on a rating scale of 0 to 10 (lowest to highest). Respondents' assessments—when averaged—yielded the following quality ratings of organizational characteristics:

- ❖ Quality of the school district: 7.9

- ❖ Quality of the School Board: 7.5

- ❖ Quality of the administrative staff: 8.6

- ❖ Quality of the teaching staff: 7.6
- ❖ Quality of the school district's communication with its publics: 8.3
- ❖ Quality of the school district's planning for the future: 7.9
- ❖ Oppressiveness of school property taxes: 5.1
- ❖ Community support of a reasonably developed and explained school district consolidation plan: 7.0

The most frequently identified strengths of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District among individuals interviewed were as follows: teachers; small community; curricular course offerings; supportive community; facilities; innovative programming/Health Care Academy.

The most frequently identified needs/concerns of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District among individuals interviewed were as follows: declining enrollment; finances; excess buildings; past budget reductions; animosities with Village of Hawkins.

Individuals interviewed by the Project Consultants were asked to rate select quality factors/characteristics of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District on a rating scale of 0 to 10 (lowest to highest). Respondents' assessments—when averaged—yielded the following quality ratings of organizational characteristics:

- ❖ Quality of the school district: 7.2

- ❖ Quality of the School Board: 7.1
- ❖ Quality of the administrative staff: 7.9
- ❖ Quality of the teaching staff: 7.5
- ❖ Quality of the school district's communication with its publics: 5.9
- ❖ Quality of the school district's planning for the future: 6.9
- ❖ Oppressiveness of school property taxes: 6.3
- ❖ Community support of a reasonably developed and explained school district consolidation plan: 6.5

The most frequently identified strengths of Weyerhaeuser Area School District among individuals interviewed were as follows: teachers/staff; administration; athletics/music; small town environment; small school environment.

The most frequently identified needs/concerns of Weyerhaeuser Area School District among individuals interviewed were as follows: money/finances; cutting teaching staff; declining enrollment; taxes; loss of students (open enrollment).

Individuals interviewed by the Project Consultants were asked to rate select quality factors/characteristics of Weyerhaeuser Area School District on a rating scale of 0 to 10 (lowest to highest). Respondents' assessments—

when averaged—yielded the following quality ratings of organizational characteristics:

- ❖ Quality of the school district: 8.3

- ❖ Quality of the School Board: 7.4

- ❖ Quality of the administrative staff: 8.7

- ❖ Quality of the teaching staff: 8.7

- ❖ Quality of the school district's communication with its publics: 7.9

- ❖ Quality of the school district's planning for the future: 6.0

- ❖ Oppressiveness of school property taxes: 6.7

- ❖ Community support of a reasonably developed and explained school district consolidation plan: 6.0

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL FACILITIES

5.0 Introduction

With the Project Consultants' analysis of the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's sizes, enrollment, enrollment trends, finances, educational programs and services, staffing, organizations, delivery systems and methodologies, and related issues, a contextual frame of reference had been established within which assessments could be made on the conditions of the three school districts' current facilities. Those assessments are/were particularly important in this and other **Consolidation Feasibility Studies** since such studies frequently include discussions about—if not the reality of—the possibility of school closures as one mechanism to achieve long-term organizational cost/effectiveness.

5.1 Importance of School Facilities

It is axiomatic that the environment in which a process occurs (in this case, the education of learners) is supremely important to an organization's mission statement, goals, productivity, performance, and public accountability. School facilities provide the environment within which the teaching/learning process unfolds and within which students either will or will not acquire skills, concepts, processes, attitudes, and attributes necessary to function with distinction in the highly-competitive global economy that does and will continue to characterize the 21st Century.

It is with more than just passing interest the Project Consultants observed that, only in the last few decades, school districts have given studied

consideration to the degree to which school facilities may enhance or detract from the delivery of educational programs and services for and the successes achieved by students.

Prior to the 1970's and the onset of special education programs, gender equity in the delivery of curricular, extra-curricular, and co-curricular programs, handicapped accessibility, health and life safety issues, technology expansion, child-care, early childhood/family education programming, parent education, Senior Citizen programming, multi-institutional collaboration, burgeoning recreational and enrichment programming, and a myriad of other programs and services, school facilities simply "housed" instructional programs and services. In today's and tomorrow's information age, school facilities must do much more than "house" the needs of pre-schoolers, school-aged students, parents, and community patrons. Access to sophisticated laboratories, a range of co-educational programs, rapidly changing technology, sophisticated media, child-care programming, early childhood opportunities, enhanced parent/patron involvement in the schools, business/educational partnerships, performance-based curricular design, multi-district telecommunications connectivity, co-located governmental programs and services, expanded volunteerism, community-based and project-based learning, graduation standards' implementation, and much, much more must be taken into consideration in appraising and addressing existing and/or future school facilities.

In part, the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District **Consolidation Feasibility Study** is focused on assessing the school districts' teaching/learning

environments in which “students either will or will not acquire skills, concepts, processes, attitudes, and attributes necessary to function with distinction in the highly-competitive global economy that is and will continue to characterize the 21st Century,” offering conclusions, alternatives, and recommendations to assist the School Boards, District Administrators, administrative and teaching staffs, and community patrons strengthen the organizations’ teaching/learning environments, and, indeed, providing a framework within which the school districts can be strengthened as the “centerpieces of their communities infrastructures” to retain or, more beneficially, attract prospective parents, patrons, and students to the school districts and communities in the future.

5.2 Guidelines for School Facilities

Presented below in Table 17 are Select Guidelines for School Facilities which provided representative benchmarks for the Project Consultants and the study’s school districts to use in undertaking comparative facility appraisal and/or planning, designing, and implementing new facility construction, renovation, and remodeling projects.

Detailed in the table are guidelines for school site acreage and facility square footage information per student in modern-day elementary, middle, junior high, senior high, junior-senior high, and campus school settings.

Square footage data per student are also provided for elementary, middle school, and high school facilities which enroll less than 500 students or 500-999 students and in school districts which have constructed a swimming pool and/or auditorium.

**TABLE 17
SELECT GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL FACILITIES**

<u>School Enrollment</u>	<u>Elementary SF</u>	<u>Middle Level SF</u>	<u>High School SF</u>
Less than 500	125-155	170-200	200-225
500-999	110-135	160-190	190-220
For Pool Addition	10-12	10-12	10-12
For Auditorium Addition	10-12	10-12	10-12
<u>Site</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Square Foot Per Student</u>	
Elementary	10	100 SF – 110 SF	
Middle School	20	48 SF or 25/1200 SF	
Junior High	25	36 SF or 25/900 SF	
Senior High	35	150 – 200 SF depending upon grade organization and enrollment	
Junior-Senior High	40	150-200 SF depending upon grade organization and enrollment	
Campus (Several Schools)	40 – 60	32 SF or 25/800 SF	
PLUS One acre for each 100 students of estimated capacity, including additions			

The Project Consultants employed the data delineated in Table 17—in part—in making qualitative and quantitative judgments about the educational adequacy of the school district’s teaching/learning facilities.

5.3 Overview of the School Districts' Facilities

At the time of the conduct of the **Consolidation Feasibility Study**, the School District of Bruce owned and operated one teaching/learning facility: Bruce Elementary/Secondary School. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District operated three teaching/learning facilities (and one vacant teaching/learning facility): Ladysmith Elementary School; Ladysmith Middle School; and Ladysmith High School (and the non-operating Hawkins Elementary School). Weyerhaeuser Area School District operated a single teaching/learning facility: Weyerhaeuser Elementary/Secondary School.

Tables 18-B, 18-LH, and 18-W below provide the dates of original construction of and additions to each of the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's facilities; the types of organizational configurations; facility square footages; 2008-09 enrollments; and 2008-09 square footages/student.

TABLE 18-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE OVERVIEW OF FACILITIES 2008-09					
<u>School</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Square Feet</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Sq. Ft./ Student</u>
Bruce Elementary/ Secondary School	1936 1941 1945 1949 1952 1953 1957 1962 1968 1992*	P-K-5, 6-8, 9-12	125,000	551	226.9
*Minor remodels without new construction: 1999; 2000; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2006; 2008.					

Bruce Elementary/Secondary School is a P-K-5, 6-8, 9-12 teaching/learning facility, located in the Village of Bruce. The facility was constructed in 1936 and received nine subsequent additions in 1941, 1945, 1949, 1952, 1953, 1957, 1962, 1968, and 1992. (Minor remodelings of the Bruce Elementary/Secondary School—without new construction—were undertaken in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2008). The elementary/secondary school structure provided 125,000 square feet of teaching/learning, office, and support spaces for the 2008-09 student population of 551, offering a substantial 226.9 square feet/student.

**TABLE 18-LH
LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT
OVERVIEW OF FACILITIES
2008-09**

<u>School</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Square Feet</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Sq. Ft./ Student</u>
Hawkins Elementary	<u>1920</u> <u>2003</u>	N/A	10,507	0	N/A
Ladysmith Elementary	<u>1963</u> <u>1988</u> <u>2003</u>	P-K-4	62,723	403	154.9
Ladysmith Middle School	<u>1914</u> <u>2003</u>	5-8	90,514	250*	362.1
Ladysmith High School	<u>1970</u> <u>1998</u> <u>2003</u>	9-12	136,306	337	404.5

*Does not factor out space allocated to Health Care Academy

Ladysmith Elementary School is a P-K-4 teaching/learning facility, located in the City of Ladysmith. The facility was originally constructed in 1963 and received two subsequent additions in 1988 and 2003. Ladysmith Elementary School provided 62,723 square feet of teaching/learning, office,

and support space during the 2008-09 organizational year. With an enrollment of 403 students in 2008-09, the facility offered an ample 154.9 square feet/student.

Ladysmith Middle School is a grade 5-8 teaching/learning facility, located in the City of Ladysmith. The facility was originally constructed in 1914 and received a subsequent addition in 2003. The middle level structure provided 90,514 square feet of teaching/learning, office, and support spaces for the 2008-09 student population of 250, offering a cost/ineffectively high 362.1 square feet/student. (It is to be noted that Healthcare Academy space was included in the facility's total space, though that program's student count was not included in the facility's enrollment).

Ladysmith High School is a grade 9-12 teaching/learning facility, located in/near the geographic boundaries of the City of Ladysmith. The facility was originally constructed in 1970 and received two subsequent additions in 1998 and 2003. The high school structure provided 136,306 square feet of teaching/learning, office, and support spaces for the 2008-09 student population of 337, offering a cost/ineffectively high 404.5 square feet/student.

Hawkins Elementary School is a non-operating school, located in the Village of Hawkins. The facility was constructed in 1920 and received a substantial addition/make-over in 2003. The elementary school structure provided 10,507 square feet of teaching/learning, office, and support spaces in 2008-09. The facility is idle and used, minimally, for storage.

**TABLE 18-W
WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
OVERVIEW OF FACILITIES
2008-09**

<u>School</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Square Feet</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Sq. Ft./ Student</u>
Weyerhaeuser Elementary/ Secondary	1955 1977 2005	P-K-6, 7-12	64,039	159	402.8

Weyerhaeuser Elementary/Secondary School is a P-K-12 (P-K-6; 7-12) teaching/learning facility, located in the Village of Weyerhaeuser. The facility was originally constructed in 1955 (stated as mid-1950's) and received two subsequent additions in 1977 and 2005. Weyerhaeuser Elementary/Secondary School provided 64,039 square feet of teaching/learning, office, and support spaces during the 2008-09 organizational year. With an enrollment of 159 students in 2008-09, the facility offered a cost/ineffectively high 402.8 square feet/student.

5.4 Facility Observations by the Project Consultants

The Project Consultants toured the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's facilities to assess the **educational adequacy** of the facilities. **Educational adequacy** is a phrase employed to describe the capabilities of a school facility to enhance the delivery of modern-day programs, services, methodologies, and learning experiences that will ensure students are well-positioned to perform with distinction in a highly-competitive, global marketplace upon high school graduation and

subsequent further training in an institution of higher learning (e.g. technical institution, college, university, military, or other).

Except in newly-constructed schools, most modern-day school facilities lack select components of **educational adequacy**, but in the main, they exhibit a significant majority of the following design components and characteristics:

- ❖ Adequate size, including space for parking, playgrounds, athletics/recreational/community usage, transportation access, other.
- ❖ Provide safe and secure entries—including visual inspection—to deter intruders.
- ❖ Meet health, life safety, and accessibility statutes and codes.
- ❖ Display modern-day electrical and mechanical systems.
- ❖ Display current technology, including voice, video, and data access.
- ❖ Provide adequate classroom and specialty room space per student.
- ❖ Provide custom-designed teaching/learning spaces for art, music, physical education, technology, special education, science, business education, technical education, family and consumer science, fitness, and the like.
- ❖ Are flexibly-designed to accommodate multi-purpose functions.

- ❖ Accommodate modern-day teaching methodologies and delivery systems, including team teaching, project-based learning, applied learning, cooperative learning, community-based learning, interdisciplinary curriculum delivery, performance-based assessment, co-located programming, inclusion model, resource-based model, multi-age level grouping, technology-based learning, peer tutoring, and the like.

- ❖ Provide adequate conferencing space.

- ❖ Furnish variable teaching/learning spaces, including independent study, small group, and large group spaces.

- ❖ Offer specialty spaces for teacher planning, teaming, and curriculum design.

- ❖ Offer a centrally-located, spacious, multi-purpose media center as the “hub” of the school.

- ❖ Provide teacher office areas.

- ❖ Incorporate contemporary equipment, furniture, and fixtures.

- ❖ Encourage before and after school usage by the community, while maintaining the integrity (security) of the school district’s properties.

- ❖ Facilitate usage of technology in the teaching/learning process.

❖ Other factors.

As the Project Consultants tour, review, and assess the educational adequacy of a school district's schools, the comparative benchmark employed (by the Project Consultants) is/would be a typical, recently-constructed, mid-range costed, modern-day elementary school, middle school, or high school (as the comparison may dictate) in the same state or general region (in this case the Midwest) of the United States. The Project Consultants examine each of the school district's teaching/learning facilities in the light of the aforementioned **educational adequacy** components as those components would be found in the recently-constructed, modern-day school of like organizational level. Each school facility school component is ranked, employing the following coding system: Excellent (state-of-the-art); Good (definitely a higher quality than that which is typically found in most schools); Adequate (acceptable; workable; average, not necessarily deficient; not necessarily remarkable); Marginal (below standard; deficient); Poor (inadequate; unacceptable as a teaching/learning environment).

To provide a broad spectrum perspective for the reader in assessing a school district's teaching/learning facilities, the Project Consultants would describe, for example, the educational adequacy of an "excellent" teaching/learning environment as follows: spacious; well-lighted; modern-day flooring and ceilings; ample modern-day cabinetry; technology-laden (SMART Board); modern-day furniture; flexible seating; adequate storage; and the like. By comparison, the Project Consultants would characterize the educational adequacy of a "poor" teaching/learning environment as follows: under-sized; antiquated flooring; antiquated, soiled, and, potentially, missing ceiling components; insufficient electricity; aged and/or

insufficient storage; absence of technology; period-dated furniture; aged heating and ventilation system; period-dated and inadequate lighting; poor air quality; and the like.

With the aforementioned guidelines in mind, the Project Consultants toured the teaching/learning facilities and examined the floor plans of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District and noted the following, select, educational adequacies and inadequacies:

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE

Bruce Elementary/Secondary School

- ◆ School is situated on an expansive, oblong site; facility is handicapped accessible; multi-floor; confusing loss of original design logic; fire compliant; much of facility modernized.

- ◆ Office suites are remotely locked from locked main entrance (insure entry safety/security); security cameras; offices generally spacious; adequate.

- ◆ Classrooms range from adequate to good; generally spacious; (some undersized); appointed.

- ◆ Kindergarten classroom/space is good; well appointed; spacious.

- ◆ Library/media are spacious; modernized; good; conference; office; distance learning; technology access.

- ◆ Gymnasia (2) are adequate; seating; stage; two stations.

- ◇ Computer laboratories (including Business Education) are good; spacious; appointed.
- ◇ Music suites are un-tiered; unremarkable space, though adequate; acoustically treated; office; storage; practice; access to stage.
- ◇ Music (elementary) is marginal; standard classroom; undersized.
- ◇ Cafeteria is spacious; appealing; good; exterior view.
- ◇ Art suites are adequate (elementary) to good (secondary); spacious; well appointed.
- ◇ Family and Consumer Science is spacious; adequate.
- ◇ Science space is spacious; appointed; adequate.
- ◇ Technology Shops and adjoining classrooms are spacious; period dated; adequate; deferred maintenance.
- ◇ Green house is marginally adequate; deferred maintenance.
- ◇ Special education classrooms/office are adequate to good; range in appointments.
- ◇ Wrestling room is marginally ventilated; marginally adequate.
- ◇ Conferencing space is available.

- ◆ School is adequate by modern-day standards.

LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Ladysmith Elementary School

- ◆ School is located on an ample site; two story structure; handicapped accessible; fire compliant.
- ◆ Office suite is in close proximity to front entry for security purposes; suite is small by modern-day standards but adequate reception and offices.
- ◆ Classrooms are adequate in size; well appointed; some with SMART Boards; television and classroom computers.
- ◆ Kindergarten classrooms (4 and 5 year old) are adequate; though several are undersized; also several without internal bathrooms; well appointed.
- ◆ Special education classrooms are marginally adequate; sub-divided by barriers, shelves, file cabinets; converted regular classrooms.
- ◆ Music classroom is adequate; basic converted regular classroom; adequate storage.
- ◆ Science classroom is adequate; basic converted regular classroom; adequate storage.

- ◇ Art classroom is adequate; basic converted regular classroom; adequate storage.
- ◇ Media/library is not modern-day; marginal; questionable ventilation; undersized.
- ◇ Gymnasium is good by modern-day standards, two stations.
- ◇ Cafeteria/multi-purpose room is basic and adequate.
- ◇ Computer classroom is adequate; basic converted regular classroom; SMART Board.
- ◇ Family Center is adequate.
- ◇ Conference rooms are adequate.
- ◇ School has large amounts of space/rooms available for storage.
- ◇ School is adequate by modern-day standards.

Ladysmith Middle School

- ◇ School is situated on a small site with limited potential for expansion; multi-story structure; handicapped accessible; fire code compliant; modernized recently.
- ◇ Office suite situated in close proximity to front entry for security purposes; good by modern-day standards; spacious.

- ◇ Classrooms are adequate to good; well appointed; SMART Boards; average to spacious size.
- ◇ Library/media is good; spacious; well appointed; interior technology laboratory.
- ◇ Gymnasium is adequate to good; bleachers; one station; spacious.
- ◇ Computer laboratories are adequate to good.
- ◇ Music suites are good to excellent; storage; practice rooms; acoustical treatment; spacious.
- ◇ Cafeteria is adequate to good; stage; interior; quality layout; multi-purpose.
- ◇ Art suite is marginal to minimally adequate; undersized; un-modernized.
- ◇ Special education classrooms range from adequate to excellent; well appointed; well designed; offices; storage.
- ◇ Technology laboratory is spacious; good; storage; office.
- ◇ Science laboratories are good; spacious; well appointed; storage; fixtures.
- ◇ Conference room is available and adequate.

- ◆ Health Care Academy classrooms and offices are adequate.
- ◆ Auditorium is undersized; adequate; stage.
- ◆ School is good by modern-day standards.

Ladysmith High School

- ◆ School is situated on an expansive, attractive site; handicapped accessible; variable level facility; fire compliant.
- ◆ Office suite is in close proximity to front entry for security purposes; excellent layout; spacious; access to student service; medical; faculty room.
- ◆ Classrooms are generally adequate; some good; demountable walls; flexibility for reconfiguration; adequately appointed.
- ◆ Library/media is good by modern-day standards; spacious; seating; well appointed; adjoining computer laboratory.
- ◆ Gymnasium is adequate to good; spacious; one station; balcony (wrestling).
- ◆ Computer laboratories (including Business Education) are adequate to good; SMART Board.
- ◆ Music suites are adequate; adjacent storage; practice rooms; offices; band tiered; band acoustics.

- ◆ Cafeteria is adequate.
- ◆ Art suite is undersized; crowded; marginally adequate.
- ◆ Family and Consumer Science is good; lecture/laboratory; appointed; spacious.
- ◆ Science laboratories are adequate to good; subject defined; well appointed; spacious; lecture/laboratory.
- ◆ Technology shops are adequate; generally unremarkable; spacious.
- ◆ Special education classrooms are adequate to good; modified to serve programs; spacious.
- ◆ Conference space is available.
- ◆ Auditorium is good by modern-day standards.
- ◆ Weight room is good; spacious; well appointed.
- ◆ Pool and support areas are good; spacious.
- ◆ School is good by modern-day standards.

Hawkins Elementary School

- ◆ School is situated on a limited site; one story; recently remodeled; vacant/used for storage.

- ◇ The school is comprised of a gymnasium; a small number (5) classrooms; media center; and office areas.
- ◇ School condition is adequate to good.
- ◇ School is cost/ineffectively small by modern-day standards, and given the school district's declining enrollment should not have been remodeled and/or repurposed.

WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Weyerhaeuser Elementary/Secondary School

- ◇ School is situated on an ample site; single story structure; handicapped accessible; fire compliant.
- ◇ Office suite is remotely located from the front entry; doors locked for security; guests ushered; office reception area limited; overall adequate.
- ◇ Classrooms are generally adequate in size, quality, appointment; some multi-grade level.
- ◇ Kindergarten classroom is adequate though undersized.
- ◇ Library/media is undersized but adequate; adjoins small ITV room; adjoins computer room; unremarkable.

- ◇ Gymnasium is adequate by modern-day standards; stage; multi-station; adjoins multi-purpose gymnasium/cafeteria/food service.
- ◇ Computer laboratories (including Business Education) are converted regular classroom; spacious; adequate to good.
- ◇ Music is adequate; office; storage; practice space; access to stage; non-acoustic.
- ◇ Cafeteria is adequate.
- ◇ Art suite is adequate to good; spacious; appointed; storage.
- ◇ Family and Consumer Science is adequate; spacious; lecture/laboratory.
- ◇ Science laboratory is adequate; lecture/laboratory; spacious; storage; appointed.
- ◇ Technology (wood) shop is excellent; state of the art; multi-purpose.
- ◇ Special education spaces and offices are generally adequate.
- ◇ Conference space is available.
- ◇ School is adequate by modern-day standards.

5.5 Long-Term Facility Debt

The Project Consultants examined the annual financial reports (audits) of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District for the 2007-08 organizational year to ascertain the extent of long-term facility debt, including bonds, refunding bonds, and State Trust Fund Loans.

Table 19-B reveals that the School District of Bruce's long-term facility debt (refunding bonds and State Trust Fund Loans) obligation at the conclusion of the 2007-08 school year amounted to \$1,886,486 (principal), \$753,307 (interest), and \$2,639,793 (total).

TABLE 19-B SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BRUCE LONG-TERM FACILITY DEBT 2007-08			
<u>District</u>	<u>Principal</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Total</u>
Bruce	\$1,886,486	\$753,307	\$2,639,793
*Margin of Indebtedness: \$30,521,012			

The School District of Bruce's 2007 equalized valuation was \$324,074,978. With a debt limit (10% of 2007 equalized value) of \$32,407,498 and long-term (principal) debt of \$1,886,486, the organization's margin of indebtedness was \$30,521,012.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce's long-term facility debt—when compared to the organization's margin of indebtedness—was minimal.

Table 19-LH divulges that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s long-term facility debt (refunding bonds, promissory notes, and State Trust Fund Loans) obligation at the conclusion of the 2006-07 (2007-08 audit was not yet available) school year amounted to \$15,532,829 (principal), \$7,853,617 (interest), and \$23,386,446 (total).

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s 2006 equalized valuation was \$310,191,289. With a debt limit (10% of 2006 equalized value) of \$31,019,129 and long-term (principal) debt of \$15,532,829, the organization’s margin of indebtedness was \$15,486,300.

TABLE 19-LH LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT LONG-TERM FACILITY DEBT 2006-07			
<u>District</u>	<u>Principal</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ladysmith-Hawkins	\$15,532,829	\$7,853,617	\$23,386,446
*Margin of indebtedness: \$15,486,300			

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District’s long-term facility debt—when compared to the organization’s margin of indebtedness—was substantial.

Table 19-W delineates Weyerhaeuser Area School District’s long-term facility debt (State Trust Fund Loans) obligation at the conclusion of the 2007-08 school year amounted to \$422,121 (principal), \$71,746 (interest), and \$493,867 (total).

TABLE 19-W
WEYERHAEUSER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
LONG-TERM FACILITY DEBT
2007-08

<u>District</u>	<u>Principal</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Total</u>
Weyerhaeuser	\$422,121	\$71,746	\$493,867
*Margin of Indebtedness: \$18,155,459			

Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 2007 equalized valuation was \$185,775,800. With a debt limit (10% of 2007 equalized value) of \$18,577,580 and long-term (principal) debt of \$422,121, the organization's margin of indebtedness was \$18,155,459.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's long-term facility debt—when compared to the organization's margin of indebtedness—was minimal.

5.6 Capital Leases

The Project Consultants examined the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's annual financial reports (audits) for the 2007-08 organizational year to ascertain the existence and extent of capital leases.

The School District of Bruce paid off its capital lease obligations on July 1, 2007.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has no capital leases in place.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District has no capital leases in place.

5.7 Utilities Expenditure

The Project Consultants reviewed the 2007-08 utilities consumption (electricity, natural gas, water/sewer, and garbage) for the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District.

The School District of Bruce expended \$49,800 for electricity, \$57,400 for natural gas, \$7,150 for water/sewer, and \$4,150 for garbage, totaling \$118,500 during the 2007-08 organizational year. With a total of 125,000 square feet of facility, the school district's combined utility cost consumption was \$.95/square foot. The utility cost consumption per student (using the 551 students enrolled in 2008-09) was \$215/student.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District expended \$168,178 for electricity, \$199,431 for natural gas/propane, \$14,782 for water/sewer, and \$16,819 for garbage, totaling \$399,210 during the 2007-08 organizational year. With a total of 300,050 square feet of facility, the school district's combined utility cost consumption was \$1.33/square foot. The utility cost consumption per student (using the 990 students enrolled in 2008-09) was \$403/student.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District expended \$33,151 for electricity, \$36,238 for natural gas, \$2,921 for water/sewer, and \$3,494 for garbage, totaling \$75,804 during the 2007-08 organizational year. With a total of 64,039 square feet of facility, the school district's combined utility cost

consumption was \$1.18/square foot. The utility cost consumption per student (using the 159 students enrolled in 2008-09) was \$477/student.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce's comparatively (to neighboring school districts) lower utility expenses were likely attributable, in part, to the multi-level facility design and more cost/effective ratio of facility square footage/student.

The Project Consultants concluded that the higher utility consumption cost/square foot in Ladysmith-Hawkins School District was attributable, in part, to specialty facilities not available in neighboring school districts (e.g. pool), more extensive facility usage by the public and alternative programming, the high school's expansive, single story facility design, and a much more cost/ineffective facility square foot/student ratio.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's cost/ineffectively high utilities cost consumption was largely attributable to the cost/ineffectively high volume of square footage allocation per student (402.8 square feet/student).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, ALTERNATIVES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

The District Administrator of the School District of Bruce, Ms. Deb Brown, the District Administrator of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, Mr. Mario Friedel, the District Administrator of Weyerhaeuser Area School District, Mr. Christopher (Chris) Nelson, and the School Boards of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District determined it was in the collective best interests of their school organizations and communities to commission a **Consolidation Feasibility Study** to assess the status of their respective organizations, identify pressing organizational needs, develop viable alternatives for addressing those organizational needs, including the possibility of school district restructuring, and assist in fashioning a comprehensive plan of action to strengthen the organizations' enrollments, finances, programs, services, staffing, facilities, and other operational components. Toward that end, the school districts sought and received funding from the State of Wisconsin to partially cost underwrite the engagement of the services of an independent third party neutral firm to conduct a **Consolidation Feasibility Study**.

Cited below are those questions which were prepared to guide the conduct of the **Consolidation Feasibility Study**:

- ❖ What is the current status of each school district's enrollment, enrollment trends, finances, programs, services, staffing, organizational configuration, facilities, and related issues?

- ❖ Is there probable cause for either/both of the school districts to consider the possibility of future consolidation?

- ❖ What conclusions may be drawn about future program and service benefits and opportunities for students served if the original school districts were to consider consolidation?

- ❖ What conclusions may be drawn about the cost/effectiveness of the resulting school district if the original school districts were to consider consolidation?

- ❖ What conclusions may be drawn about long-term merits/demerits for the taxpayers if the original school districts were to consider consolidation?

- ❖ What recommendations do the Project Consultants tender to the School Boards and District Administrators of the participating school districts regarding improvement of the organizations' statuses and/or consideration of the possibility of future consolidation?

6.1 Conclusions

Based on data gathered, analyzed, and presented in the previous five chapters of the **Consolidation Feasibility Study**, the Project Consultants offer the following conclusions to the School Boards and District Administrators of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District:

District Sizes and Enrollment Trends

The School District of Bruce would be classified as a small critical student mass school district. It would be profiled as a declining enrollment school district.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District would be classified as a mid-sized critical student mass school district. It would be profiled as a minimally declining enrollment school district.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District would be classified as a small critical student mass school organization. It would be profiled as a declining enrollment school district.

The School District of Bruce realized a net loss of -115 students or -17.3% over the ten year span of time from 1998-99 through 2008-09. The school district's enrollment is projected to continue declining. The school district enrolled 551 students in 2008-09.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District faced a net loss of -168 students or -14.5% over the ten year span of time from 1998-99 through 2008-09. The school district's enrollment is projected to remain stable over the course of the next few years and, then, likely continue to decline. The school district enrolled 990 students in 2008-09.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District experienced the loss of -82 students or -34.0% over the ten year span of time from 1998-99 through 2008-09. The school district enrolled 159 students in 2008-09.

While the School District of Bruce may expect to lose -41 students or -7.4% and Ladysmith-Hawkins School District is projected to realize a +4 students or +.4% student gain between 2008-09 and 2011-12, Weyerhaeuser Area School District will likely experience a net loss of -34 students or -21.4% over the same three year span of time.

Besides losing larger numbers of students (with graduation) at grade 12 than are gained, annually, in the 4-year-old kindergarten program, both the School District of Bruce and Weyerhaeuser Area School District typically display additional losses among some/many grade levels during grade level transitions from one school year to the next. Indeed, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has not displayed a similar trend. In fact, that school district has seemingly benefited through the “in-migration” of non-resident students and the transitional matriculation of non-public school students to Ladysmith-Hawkins School District at grade 9.

The School District of Bruce has displayed substantial “out-migration” of resident students to other school districts through Wisconsin’s open enrollment option. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has experienced a much smaller net loss (though loss, indeed, has occurred) of students through Wisconsin’s open enrollment option. Weyerhaeuser Area School District—diminutive in size—actually realizes a net gain in students through open enrollment. Unfortunately, those meager student enrollment gains are insufficient to stabilize the organization’s K(4)-12 enrollment.

The School District of Bruce loses a small number and percentage of its resident student population to home schooling. Weyerhaeuser Area School District’s losses to home schooling are traditionally small in number

and percentage. Neither school district reveals significant student losses through non-public school attendance. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District loses a substantial number of students to area non-public schools, though most return to the public school district during their high school years. Comparatively speaking, 3-4% of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's resident students participate in home schooling.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has sufficient critical student mass and a sufficiently slow rate of decline to ensure long-term viability. Past school district enrollment decline resulted in deterioration of the organization's budget, staff, and programs and services. If the school district's enrollment begins to slip from the stable condition it has experienced over the course of the past 2-3 years, the organization can anticipate further reductions in budgets, staff, and programs and services.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce has a small critical student mass and declining enrollment. It is predictable the organization will face conditions which will parallel those currently found in Weyerhaeuser Area School District in the foreseeable future.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's small critical student mass and declining enrollment will result, shortly, in the organization's demise.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District

would significantly benefit through the merger of the organizations' critical student masses.

Finances

The School District of Bruce has been a fiscally well-managed educational organization. The school district's 2007-08 General Fund balance amounted to a healthy 22.6% of the school district's General Fund expenditure budget. General Fund budgets were balanced in each of the most recent, seven, consecutive years. The General Fund balance, however, deteriorated by -25.7% over the past six years—reflecting student enrollment decline and stagnating General Fund revenue—which trailed General Fund expenditure growth.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has been a fiscally well-managed educational organization. Its 2007-08 General Fund balance amounted to an acceptable (but low) 11.2% of the school district's General Fund expenditure budget. General Fund budgets were balanced in each of the most recent, seven, consecutive years. General Fund revenues decreased by -2.4% over the past six years, while General Fund expenditures dropped, simultaneously, -4.2%, reflecting both student enrollment decline and concomitant reduction to the General Fund budget.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District is a financially struggling educational organization, due largely to the school district's diminutive critical student mass (size) and declining enrollment. In 2007-08, the school district's General Fund balance amounted to a commendable 13.5% of the organization's General Fund expenditure budget. In the main, the school district has operated balanced General Fund budgets over the course of

the past seven years (excepting two years). General Fund revenues have decreased -6.3% over the course of the past six years, a reflection of declining student enrollment, while the organization's six year trend in expenditures grew a paltry +3.7%, assisted by repeated General Fund budget reductions.

The School District of Bruce's local contributions to the support of the General Fund budget increased over the most recent six years, while the State of Wisconsin's contributions improved only minimally. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's local contributions to support its General Fund budget only moderately increased over the most recent six years, while the State of Wisconsin's contributions increased by nearly a quarter of a million dollars. Weyerhaeuser Area School District's local contributions to support the General Fund budget significantly increased, while the State of Wisconsin's support of the school district diminished at a staggering rate.

The School District of Bruce's total expenditure/student and total instructional expenditure/student in 2006-07 exceeded such spending levels in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts, and the rate of expenditure growth in the School District of Bruce clearly outstripped such expenditures in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts over the ten year span of time from 1996-97 through 2006-07. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's total expenditure/student exceeded by a sizeable margin such expenditures in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts in 2006-07, and the school district's rate of total expenditure/student growth significantly outstripped that of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts. Conversely, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District only slightly outspent the average of all State of Wisconsin

school districts for total instructional expenditure/student in 2006-07. Weyerhaeuser Area School District's total expenditure/student and total instructional expenditure/student in 2006-07 substantially exceeded the spending rates in the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts, and the organization's spending in these categories is escalating at a cost/ineffective rate when compared to the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts.

The School District of Bruce's fund balance increased over the past ten years, though the organization's fund balance decreased over the past five years. Overall, the school district's fund balance is far smaller than the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's fund balance minimally increased over the ten year span of time from 1996-97 to 2006-07 and trails by a sizable amount the fund balance of the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts. Weyerhaeuser Area School District's fund balance decreased over the course of the past ten years and is staggeringly below the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts.

The School District of Bruce's equalized value/member in 2006-07 was \$435,617/member, and the organization's mill rate was \$6.98. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's equalized value/member was \$291,358/member in 2006-07, while the organization's mill rate was \$10.22. Weyerhaeuser Area School District's 2006-07 equalized value/member was \$808,700/member, and its mill rate was \$8.93.

In recent years, residents of both the School District of Bruce and Ladysmith-Hawkins School District have denied their organizations authority to exceed the revenue cap. In June, 2008, residents of Weyerhaeuser Area School District authorized the organization to exceed the revenue cap by the amount of \$1,800,000 over a three year period of time.

Conditions of the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's teacher master agreements, employee retirement system obligations, and other post-employment benefits (OPEB) obligations do not present barriers—as assessed by the Project Consultants—for consideration of future consolidation by the three school districts.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce is displaying both enrollment and financial trends which would suggest a significant deterioration of the organization in the future and meritorious reasons for consideration of a future consolidation. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District—assisted by its larger critical student mass and relatively (current) enrollment stability—may see less immediate need to consider consolidation, but the fact is the organization's high mill rate, high bonded indebtedness, excess facilities, and languishing finances would serve as ample motivation for the organization to consider future consolidation.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District is in a precarious financial position which, over time, can/will worsen. Thus, the Project Consultants concluded that the leadership of Weyerhaeuser Area School District is pursuing a prudent course of action in seeking one

or more viable school districts with which to consolidate. The School District of Bruce and Ladysmith-Hawkins School District are just such school districts.

Educational Programs and Services

The School District of Bruce operated cost/ineffectively low class section sizes at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. With declining enrollment, deteriorating budgets, and reduced staff, the organization will continue to experience increasing cost/ineffectiveness over time.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District operated elementary and middle school class section sizes at favorable and cost/effective levels. The organization delivered a substantial number of course sections with enrollments of less than 20 students/section at the high school level during the 2008-09 organizational year but, yet, managed to offer over 40% of its high school course sections at a cost/effective level.

With its small critical student mass, Weyerhaeuser Area School District operated cost/ineffectively small class section sizes at the elementary and secondary school levels. The school district does not have the capability to significantly enhance the cost/effectiveness of its class section sizes (even through employing multi-age, combination classes).

The School District of Bruce and Ladysmith-Hawkins School District made available to their students a broad and comprehensive array of high school credit course offerings as well as other/alternative avenues for securing

high school/college credits through the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Technical College system and on-line learning options.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has been very innovative and creative in developing a range of new, exciting, timely course offerings in the health care field, with several new and promising plans for additional courses on the organization's drawing board.

Given its small critical student mass, Weyerhaeuser Area School District furnishes its students with an excellent array of credit course offerings and, as well, provides access to telecommunication offerings through WIN ITV and the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Technical College systems.

Over time and as a result of student enrollment decline, the School District of Bruce's total professional staff has decreased and, in turn, the organization's pupil/teacher ratio has declined/improved, though cost/ineffectively so. With the decline in student enrollment, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District has significantly lowered its total professional staff and, in turn, the organization's pupil/teacher ratio has lowered/improved, though cost/ineffectively so. Weyerhaeuser Area School District has decreased its total professional staff, as well, over the course of the past ten years, but the demands of course offerings and the inability to reduce professional teaching staff, proportionately to student losses, has resulted in a staggeringly low pupil/teacher ratio (cost/ineffectively so) when compared to the average of all State of Wisconsin school districts.

The School District of Bruce furnishes an average array of high school activities, instructional and support services, curriculum renewal, staff development planning, and special education programming.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District furnishes an excellent array of high school activities, instructional and support services, curriculum renewal, staff development planning, and much more robust special education programs than is likely to be found in most school districts of like-size.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District offers a much smaller array of high school activities and instructional support services, though it has augmented its offerings to school district students through collaboration/cooperation with other, neighboring school districts. Because of the demands placed on administrative and teaching staff members in Weyerhaeuser Area School District, the breadth and scope of curriculum planning and staff development are far less operationalized and refined. Special education programs and services in the school district, as well, are provided by a small number of staff members and, as required, secured through contracting with other school districts.

The Project Consultants concluded that the educational programs and services delivered by the School District of Bruce are clearly reasonable for the organization's critical student mass, though they display characteristics and signs of an organization that is in decline.

The Project Consultants concluded that the educational programs and services delivered by Ladysmith-Hawkins School District display a breadth, scope, and quality that would be characteristic of more progressive school districts of like-size in the State of Wisconsin.

The Project Consultants concluded that Weyerhaeuser Area School District's educational programs and services have been and will continue to be impacted by the organization's small critical student mass and declining enrollment. For example, mostly under-sized class sections—while desirable for achieving personalized attention from teaching staff members—minimize student to student interaction. Furthermore, the large number of preparations assigned to regular classroom teachers virtually ensures that quality preparedness for classroom leadership and content delivery will diminish.

The Project Consultants concluded that the students of Weyerhaeuser Area School District would significantly benefit—both academically and interpersonally—through a consolidation of the organization with a neighboring school district.

Facilities

The School District of Bruce operates a generally adequate elementary/secondary school facility which has received multiple additions and multiple remodelings. While functional, the facility has lost its original design logic. This elementary/secondary school provided its 2008-09 student population of 551 a spacious 226.9 square feet/student.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District operates a modern-day elementary school, an adequate middle school, and a modern-day high school. Ladysmith Middle School and Ladysmith High School provided their 2008-09 student populations of 250 students and 337 students, respectively, cost/ineffectively high square feet/student space figures of 362.1 square

feet/student and 404.5 square feet/student. Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's facilities are adequate to good by modern-day standards.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District operates a single elementary/secondary school facility. The school is adequate by modern-day standards. With an enrollment of 159 students in 2008-09, Weyerhaeuser Area School District's teaching/learning facility offered a cost/ineffectively high 402.8 square feet/student.

The School District of Bruce's long-term facility debt—principal and interest—at the conclusion of the 2007-08 organizational year was \$2,639,793. The school district had no capital leases in place at the time.

Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's long-term facility debt—principal and interest—at the conclusion of the 2006-07 organizational year was \$23,386,446. The Project Consultants concluded that the school district's long-term facility debt—when compared to its margin of indebtedness—was substantial.

Weyerhaeuser Area School District's long-term facility debt—principal and interest—amounted to \$493,867 in 2007-08. The school district had no capital leases in place at that time.

The Project Consultants concluded that the School District of Bruce will experience significant difficulties in containing facility costs—due to the structural design—as student enrollment continues to decline and square footage/student further escalates.

The Project Consultants concluded that Ladysmith-Hawkins School District was already over-encumbered with teaching/learning facilities which exhibit (at the middle school and high school levels) lavish square footage/student figures. As student enrollment declines and square footage/student further escalates, the school district's leadership will need to consider closing a school (likely Ladysmith Middle School).

The Project Consultants concluded there is substantial likelihood that, in a consolidation of Weyerhaeuser Area School District with the School District of Bruce and Ladysmith-Hawkins School District or some other neighboring school district, Weyerhaeuser Elementary/Secondary School would be closed.

Assessment of the Study Questions

The Project Consultants concluded there is probable cause for the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District to consider the possibility of future consolidation. The resulting school district would be strengthened by its potential critical student mass of 1,600-1,700. All three of the initial school districts would be strengthened by enhancing critical student mass, cost/effectiveness, and State of Wisconsin foundation aid. All three school districts would acquire a quality array of staff members, programs, and services—along with a much more stable future—for the students they are entrusted to serve.

The Project Consultants concluded that the students of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District would acquire future program and service benefits and opportunities as a result of the partial re-investment of funds secured

through the merger of the three school districts' budgets and subsequent cost economizations.

The Project Consultants concluded that the resultant school district—formed from the consolidation of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District—would be more cost/effective than the original school districts with a potential savings (or re-investment) of \$3,000,000-\$4,000,000 from the combined General Fund budgets.

The Project Consultants concluded that the State of Wisconsin's funding of consolidated school districts may well need to be reexamined and modified by the Wisconsin State Legislature. It would appear that, with the consolidation of two or more school districts, the equalized value/member of one or more of the consolidating school districts will increase beyond the current level(s) and, thereby, reduce State of Wisconsin General Fund aid to the resulting school district, elevating local mill rates and taxes above levels that existed prior to consolidation. In this instance, the actions by Wisconsin school districts to enhance organizational cost/effectiveness and expand programs and services to students served would/could actually result in penalizing the participating/consolidating school districts. Unless that circumstance is favorably addressed, the Project Consultants would recommend that the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District not consolidate.

6.2 Alternatives

The Project Consultants identified the following alternatives as available for future consideration by the School Boards and administrative leaderships

of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District:

Alternative 1

The School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District consolidate, resulting in enhanced organizational cost/effectiveness and expanded programs, services, staffing, and opportunities for the students of the current school districts.

Alternative 2

That the School District of Bruce and Ladysmith-Hawkins School District reject consolidation with Weyerhaeuser Area School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District seek consolidation with an alternative school district.

Alternative 3

That the School District of Bruce and Ladysmith-Hawkins School District reject consolidation with Weyerhaeuser Area School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District institute proceedings to dissolve.

6.3 Twelve Criteria for Gauging the Need for Organizational Restructuring

Roger Worner Associates, Inc. employ data-driven decision-making in rendering assessments about the short-term and long-term viability of school districts and the need for and value of organizational restructuring (including consolidation). The “Twelve Criteria for Gauging the Need for Organizational Restructuring” are based on the Project Consultants’ conduct of some 350 studies—involving 1,000 Midwest school districts—

over the span of 19 years and has proven to contain reliable benchmarks for determining the viability of educational enterprises. These criteria were applied by the Project Consultants to each of the school districts participating in the **Consolidation Feasibility Study** in determining findings, developing conclusions, identifying alternatives, and rendering recommendations. Detailed below, then, are twelve major criteria which are used to gauge the need for organizational restructuring:

- ❖ Small critical student mass organization.
- ❖ Past declining student enrollment.
- ❖ Projected declining student enrollment.
- ❖ Imbalanced General Fund budget and/or General Fund budget reductions.
- ❖ Cost/ineffectively high spending per pupil (when compared to the State average or peer group average).
- ❖ Inability to pass an operating referendum.
- ❖ Declining or stagnating General Fund balance.
- ❖ Cost/ineffectively small class section sizes.
- ❖ Cost/ineffectively low pupil/teacher ratios.

- ❖ Cost/ineffectively high number of teaching preparations.
- ❖ Declining programs, services, staffing, and/or course offerings.
- ❖ Cost/ineffectively high facility square footage per pupil.

The Project Consultants have found—with experience and over time—those school districts which display one-half or more of the criteria for gauging the need for and value of organizational restructuring will experience difficulties with organizational viability in the future.

6.4 Recommendations

The Project Consultants tender the following recommendations to the School District of Bruce's, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District's, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District's School Boards, District Administrators, staff, parents, and patrons:

Recommendation 1

That the school districts create a Joint Consolidation Study Task Force—comprised of ten open-minded representatives from each of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District—to study the **Consolidation Feasibility Study** and tender recommendations regarding the feasibility of the School Boards of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District further pursuing the possibility of school district consolidation.

Recommendation 2

That the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District propose to consolidate, effective July 1, 2010.

Recommendation 3

That the consolidated school district adopt a K(4)-4, 5-8, 9-12 organizational/grade level configuration.

Recommendation 4

That the consolidated school district undertake measures to close Weyerhaeuser Elementary/Secondary School and Ladysmith Middle School.

Recommendation 5

That the consolidated school district locate the school district's K(4)-4 elementary school populations at Bruce Elementary/Secondary School and Ladysmith Elementary School; the entirety of the school district's grade 5-8 middle school student population be located at Bruce Elementary/Secondary School; the entirety of the school district's grade 9-12 high school student population be located at Ladysmith-Hawkins High School.

Recommendation 6

That the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District initiate planning to merge the school districts' administrative, teaching, and support staffs; curricular course offerings; instructional support services; negotiated agreements; policies,

procedures, and operations; and a myriad of other functions/responsibilities.

Recommendation 7

That the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District initiate a comprehensive, independent, third-party neutral study of the (proposed) consolidated school district's student transportation system to reduce time travel for students—to and from school—to no greater than 60 minutes.

Recommendation 8

That the School Boards and District Administrators of the School District of Bruce, Ladysmith-Hawkins School District, and Weyerhaeuser Area School District confer with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and, as required, area legislators and the Wisconsin State Legislature to ensure that the resultant, consolidated school district's taxpayers are not financially penalized by the State of Wisconsin for having supported a decision to enhance multi-district cost/effectiveness and strengthen programs, services, staffing, and opportunities provided to the students through consolidation of the initial school districts.