

WASDA Small Schools Conference

Exercise Led by Tony Evers, Deputy State Superintendent, DPI

Raw Verbatim Responses – March 17, 2004

Rural Strategic Directions – Provide Specific Action Ideas

School Funding. Advancing recommended changes to the state's K-12 school finance system to take into account the special needs and unique characteristics of rural education.

1. Hold harmless in state aid for declining enrollment districts. Also defeat or modify TABOR.
2. We would save \$3,500 – post on Internet instead of in newspaper. Floor on budgets.
3. Special education costs versus regular education costs. Don't pit special education against regular education.
4. Minimal budget of some figure – maybe \$3 million – no matter how small you get you can maintain programs.
5. Special consideration of unique transportation costs for rural areas (costs are high!)! Ways to encourage rural schools to collaborate in serving high cost special education needs – through incentives, etc.
6. Declining enrollment: the revenue cap must disqualify small school access to dollars.
7. All districts have special needs and unique characteristics. This requires a statewide initiative.
8. Increase funding for transportation. Provide adequate funding to continue quality rural education. Property value is not a measure of wealth.
9. High property value in rural areas (undeveloped recreational) are forcing low-income people to sell. This is leading to declining enrollment. This is leading to a migration of people from rural to urban areas. This all results in negative tertiary aid. This becomes devastating.
10. Adjust the homestead credit to give relief to poor residents in property-rich districts, not just change the whole finance. Maintain Fund 80. Increase the level to 120 percent of

spending for tertiary aid instead of 90 percent to remove some off there. Equity – equal top effort.

11. Validate the governor's school finance committee by involving legislators either being part of the committee or having some oversight.
12. What other resources can contribute to the funding of the schools, i.e., sales taxes? Home schools. Get money from other sources.
13. Revenue limits – if they continue small schools will no longer exist. The clock is ticking in many small school districts and the education will begin to decline at a rapid rate.
14. Consider supplementing "large area" districts for transportation. Get rid of "open enrollment."
15. Defeat TABOR! Fund school on the basis of anything but the property tax. Provide a vouchers incentive for parents whose children attend a school under 400 enrollment/building.
16. Time is crucial – we are being compressed; highly qualified without quality will not work. The survival of each school is the number one responsibility of each individual and their school. Tax all property fairly; no tax breaks for state or federal lands, hospitals, clinics, churches, state and federal buildings in area.
17. Allow local communities to decide the level of support that they are willing to provide. Remove the revenue caps. Address economies of scale.
18. Can we tax additional areas – alcohol, casinos, property of out-of-state residents? Can we get partial credit for partial day attendance for home schoolers? When will the state take over health insurance for the schools?
19. If this isn't addressed – and soon – all the questions about the future of rural schools will be meaningless. We'll all be out of business! Take special education off of the revenue caps.
20. Outsourcing. IDEA – low incidence categorical programs.
21. Do something (money will work) to keep educators living in the community where they work.
22. If a school district's budget is less than \$3 million, they should consider consolidation.
23. Low class needs (enrollment) – lift for offering class (make it economically feasible to offer).
24. Funding must make allowance for high tax base districts that also have high percentage of poverty.

25. The school aid formula ties to income of residents rather than property value (for property-rich, income poor, school districts).
26. Equity in funding – value (\$) all kids at the same level regardless of geography or economic status of the school district.
27. Account for fluctuations in the school population to give relief from caps.
28. Declining enrollment adjustment.
29. Apply revenue caps and cost controls to all levels of government. Fix health insurance and retirement by mandating that employer couldn't pay more than fifty percent of either – employees would then have a personal stake and change would be possible.
30. Provide a system of equality so all students can receive the same quality education in Wisconsin. Funding for large-size (in square miles) transportation districts.
31. Designating grant funds to be used in advancing this (these) initiative(s).
32. Need a funding plan that gives small schools the ability to offer basic curriculum offerings.
33. Fully fund transportation per student bussed to/from school.
34. Have different budgets for rural and urban schools.
35. Address health care costs. Without the steep rise of late, most of us wouldn't be in trouble.
36. Children and young adults need to be recognized by the legislature as being important constituents. Funding needs to be shared with schools.
37. Increase the sales tax to defray the costs of transportation, special education, and unfunded mandates.
38. Equity in funding. Increase the per student funding to match the QEO minimums. Regulate home schoolers – they have no standards. Accommodations in funding formulas that recognizes that schools within less than 1,000 students have significantly less ability to provide the wide array of programs as do schools with 5,000 or 10,000 students. Provide a tiered program. Add \$500 per student for schools with an enrollment of less than 1,500; \$250 for schools with an enrollment of less than 3,000.
39. Sparsity factor. Poverty factor. Ability to pay – income based. Transportation costs.
40. Set a minimum curriculum necessary to run a single track school system.
41. Use income vs. property values as the basis for funding.

42. Income earning power of residence. Growing Amish community – what to do about the property they buy at too high a price.
43. Take into consideration declining enrollments and increasing valuation in many rural districts.
44. Fund special education at the level provided – 40 percent. Fully fund or exempt small school districts from many of the mandates. 180 days, burdensome record keeping and testing, etc. Increase transportation aid.
45. More per capita funding on a per pupil basis.
46. Weighted FTE for EEN students. Regional or statewide health insurance. Five year average in place of the three year average. Provide the support the state says it will, i.e., special needs and transportation.
47. Consideration of declining enrollment – we are losing opportunities for our students.
48. Rural schools need five year enrollment averaging to sustain programs on an orderly basis through enrollment decline. Increase the meager incentives now there to promote sharing or consolidation.
49. Need additional dollars for students with special needs. Very costly in small districts.
50. Special education funding – fund the cost that were originally set up. Voucher system – the program in Milwaukee has cost us one teacher each year for the past five years.
51. Reinstate drive education aid at today's rate. Provide categorical aid for transportation that is realistic to today's costs. Promote legislation that will make insurance a permissible subject of bargaining in order to provide flexibility to the boards.

Leadership Development. Advancing comprehensive efforts to ensure broad participation and support for leadership development to support Wisconsin's rural areas.

1. DPI leading the way in teaching and promoting flexibility and creativity in solving problems.
2. An ideal concept would be to have some type of leadership academy for candidates running for the school board. WASB does this once they are elected. If the training was expanded to those who might be considering that leadership opportunity, it would help to broaden the understanding of the school governance system. Consider some type of financial incentive for teachers to live in rural districts in which they teach than commuting in from a larger community to that rural district.
3. Help with training of town chairperson to show the potential for growth via incorporating – low income house and small business development.
4. Need ways to get tutoring in a cost effective way and a convenient way (limited travel) to board members.
5. Every small school does not need a superintendent. In rural counties, go with a county superintendent. Collective bargaining agreements of years ago (professional retirement) has set school district up for financial ruin.
6. No sharing of superintendents and principals – they are needed for local leadership.
7. Small districts have one-tenth the administrative personnel of large districts – yet than have the same requirements. It is not possible to continue in the current mode much longer. We will be force to go out of business within a foreseeable time.
8. Continue training in WASB, etc., to improve leadership.
9. Give teachers/administrators tuition credits for further these skills.
10. The need to get the community leaders together to get them involved.
11. Community teams to develop and mentor leadership with all students.
12. Develop training academies with debt forgiveness for leaders who serve in small schools, small municipal governments. Promote "green" agenda by establishing outdoor camps and providing instruction in environmental stewardship.
13. Knowledge is power; get more board members involved in meaningful, useful workshops closer to their homes.
14. Change state law singling out administrators by either eliminating tenure for everyone or giving it back to DA's and principals.

15. Can there be a way to have town meetings to bring people together? We need to work together to build a community. State started schools, affordable housing, jobs.
16. Facilitate experiences – networks – for those with initiative from rural communities.
17. To get more administrative leaders and better leaders who have to pay more and improve working conditions and remove the risk.
18. Learning grants for kids – connect to other schools.
19. Change school funding to eliminate the need for funding through property taxes. Leaders are seen as the villains because of the taxes needed to operate the school districts.
20. Provide support for traditional leadership development structures, i.e., agriculture and FFA.
21. Money for putting together leadership training seminars, workshops, etc., in rural areas.
22. Use education (i.e., reading) as a requirement in all jails and prisons and reward for good performance. Spending \$20-30,000 on prisoners and \$7,500 on K-12 students is ludicrous.
23. Support for statewide 4H leadership training.
24. Local universities within the UW System need to get more involved with the area schools from a leadership standpoint.
25. Encourage participation by youth in democratic process.
26. Treat city and rural schools differently.
27. A vehicle for coming together to as elected officials, appointed officials, business leaders, and informal leaders needs to be developed.
28. Mentoring programs and tutoring at all levels. Role models that earn respect.
29. Provide funding for rural schools to have their own video conference sites for leadership development.
30. Regional cadres. Future teachers of America. Future administrators of America. Get the UW System to think rural.
31. Work with the existing comprehensive planning committees.
32. Make grants available to promote leadership workshops.

33. Make it legal to allow school boards to require all employees except substitutes to live within the school district.
34. Get ideas from farmers and other working people.
35. Encourage the use of ITV for training open to multi-levels.
36. Real partnerships between school and communities.
37. The leaders are there – the economics are not – federal adjusted gross income is way behind.
38. Leadership like the Gates Academy for Leaders of the entire community not just the school leaders.
39. Need plans to consolidate school districts. Yes, there are some districts that should not be feasible. However, there are many districts in the state that could be consolidated. If the state would realize savings in central Wisconsin they could be passed on to areas that can't be consolidated.

Collaborative Efforts. Advancing the development of collaborative programs and efforts that will strengthen and improve the ability of rural school and rural communities to work in creative and innovative ways to advance key issues and local priorities.

1. Continue to focus on collaboration success stories; emphasize collaboration over consolidation.
2. Property tax relief for participating senior citizens. Continue DPI efforts to allow districts to collaborate with indigenous groups (i.e., the Amish). This is a good thing.
3. Get all governmental entities working to save rural Wisconsin and not fighting with each other. When Wisconsin DPI folks get a chance to voice Wisconsin thoughts to the feds, they are all to say that Wisconsin education is not broken – leave us alone – no ESEA regulations for good educational states – Fix Texas.
4. Financial incentives are needed to stimulate district to work together. We can no longer do it all by ourselves, but incentives need to be in place to encourage the collaboration.
5. School boards in rural school districts as well as regular residents of different communities need to come together to discuss common issues and how to resolve them.
6. Creative and realistic certification as opposed to PI 34.
7. Schools seem to be encouraged to join - consolidate services. Other areas (agric.) seem to be providing encouragement to become larger.
8. Create a system for getting numbers of new students moving into district or new housing so we can plan appropriately. Continue shared building projects, e.g., libraries, pools, auditoriums, gym, tracks, etc.
9. Organize meetings with local leaders and school boards with legislators.
10. Staff sharing in small schools. Small, but necessary.
11. Sharing staff and working together will help advance the education of students.
12. Encourage cooperative programs between districts such as shared services. Some of us are using CESA but it is difficult because they are almost two hours away!
13. Provide financial incentives for districts to form shared (collaborative) programs.
14. Students and parents – legislators must not only hear us but must react (we need more participants as a group). We're a cost effective, cost-efficient, low-spending district; yet we get penalized for being that.

15. Support CESA's. Eliminate youth options – we talk about the importance of belonging to a community and service learning and then allow them to leave by encouraging them to get college credits paid for.
16. Ditch open enrollment – we have become competitors on an unequal playing field.
17. Technology – like WASDA teleconferencing.
18. Business thrives and reaps the benefits of being creative and innovative and reaps the financial rewards. No such thing in education, is there?
19. District teams.
20. Usage of school buildings to enhance the total community.
21. Incentives to support cooperative efforts, i.e., joint community programs.
22. Teaching models of collaboration to rural communities through some type of statewide network.
23. Shared services and programming is necessary at all levels of government. End unfunded mandates.
24. We do need much more work between districts and using staff members, teachers and services.
25. Local leaders need to meet in informal sessions to share thoughts and ideas.
26. Connect school with community economic efforts.
27. Small schools must work together.
28. Why collaborate? There needs to be a reason to come together. Cooperation between various government agencies. Property taxation allowance for housing for senior citizens.
29. Nighttime networking – adopt an adult (younger with older).
30. Reduce DPI paperwork. Get rid of open enrollment. Larger schools that have a wide array of opportunities have a big advantage. Pits schools against each other. How much does it cost the state and the DPI to track and manage open enrollment?
31. Small area meetings with businesses, county boards, etc.
32. Sharing in-service dates to develop curriculum.
33. Do away with open enrollment.

34. Freeze property tax on houses – not kind to retirees.
35. Incentives for joint ventures to share services. Greater state support of CESAs.
36. This should also be between communities and districts.
37. As test scores reflect, small is often better – maybe we need to belly up to funding rather than squeezing.
38. Provide revenue incentives for schools that are willing to share programs.
39. Sell this – we hear enough about the large schools from the DPI – sell the rest of us a lot.
40. Let's quit looking at better ways to "ride a dead horse." Someone also has to take leadership in funding building projects (which has been going on since the QEO/Revenue Limits/Two-thirds funding) that have no realistic future to serve a significant (role).

Economic Development. Advancing rural economic development through marketing the advantages of living and working in rural communities and by helping to promote entrepreneurship, business retention and growth, and active engagement of rural youth and families in those endeavors.

1. Youth apprenticeships, school-to-work programs that can enhance economic development.
2. Promote rural quality of life.
3. Help partner with small rural schools and real estate people to develop marketing kits to attract families to rural areas.
4. Grants or money to develop sewer/water system so entrepreneurs can do low-cost housing developments without massive financial inputs (roads, curbs, etc., too).
5. Incentives for businesses to develop in rural areas. Incentives to engage rural stake holders to get involved to promote their areas – many do not want growth, or for things to change.
6. Rural areas are not attractive to people with families (children) because of good housing, cultural opportunities, shopping centers, privacy and work opportunities for spouse.
7. Goes without saying.
8. Encourage programs to help young families purchase homes. Provide assistance to help promote small businesses.
9. Without high paying jobs, rural communities lag in income levels. Take into consideration economies of scale.
10. Advertise the advantages of living and working in rural Wisconsin on state television and radio.
11. Very important but difficult in a small community with leadership that enjoys status quo.
12. Ensure and expand the use of rural distance learning options for communities to utilize for work force development and human capitalization (capacity-building).
13. Difficult to do; need large number of employers employing 50-100 people with a decent wage.
14. Encourage part-time residents to consider full time residence by giving property tax breaks to year-round residents. After all, with a computer you don't always have to live next door to work.
15. Rural Wisconsin absolutely needs economic development – yet how often do school boards and local governments meet to collaborate – to lobby legislation?

16. Government and school collaboration.
17. Entrepreneur incentives for rural business development.
18. Funding adequacy.
19. What communities need to do to attract businesses into rural communities.
20. This won't happen unless there is a trained workforce -- which need moderate cost housing for families.
21. Encourage small business development in rural communities.
22. Have small schools publish brochures etc. on their schools.
23. This will never work as long as we keep exporting jobs overseas.
24. What incentive is there for businesses to grow or locate in rural Wisconsin? How do we welcome and encourage community development? Need to champion intergenerational community and commitment to children!
25. Dream ... small business: to be viable to small towns.
26. Ask for state legislation which would make rural business development attractive in partnership with local schools. Virtual schools – reduce the loyalty and unity of rural small communities that has been the backbone of small communities.
27. Small business incubators. Extension services for new businesses.
28. Plans to get small businesses started in communities.
29. Wisconsin's rural economy needs to grow and be healthy. Raise income tax deduction for having children so as to encourage raising families by giving a tax break.
30. Flexibility in TIF regulations.
31. Provide incentives for people to live in rural areas.
32. Greatly increase incentives for enterprise zone related to the compensation per hour – our economy has gone to Mexico, Brazil, China!
33. Promote small schools. High tax is really bad in small communities because of no industry.

34. School populations. Leadership has to come on the state level. Our elected politicians (legislature, governor and state superintendent) must bite the bullet and develop a statewide plan. Right now schools are fighting to stay in existence to hold onto their basketball teams. We need to start running schools more efficiently for academic reasons, not athletic team identity. The ostriches in Madison need to get their heads out of the sand and take a look around.

Rural School Development – Curriculum, Instruction, Programs. Advancing educational progress and curricular improvement through efforts to improve and encourage collaboration between and among school districts.

1. Promote and provide affordable distance learning to enhance curriculum in small schools. These distance options can make all the difference in small schools.
2. Continue TEACH initiatives.
3. Share staff among schools to retain quality programming. Create virtual school concept where the student is still a member of the district, i.e., also youth options funding.
4. Let's be more flexible with some of the curriculum and certification areas: speech, English, journalism as an example. Social studies also.
5. Maintain funds to support technology – most of us have machines but no money to support in people and repairs and upgrades. Put an end to any state aid to new building projects until all present schools are ADA compliant, etc.
6. Provide incentives (that would offset tight budgets) to promote collaboration efforts to the benefit of the area, and not necessarily one district.
7. Schools cannot serve all of the social issues of a community. Support services for rural families (childcare, social services, etc.) force schools and are expected from rural schools to deal with so many non-academic issues.
8. Use technology – not that big a deal.
9. Look at open enrollment effects on rural schools.
10. Consolidation is not a viable solution to issues in rural areas. Give incentives for teachers to live in the rural community.
11. Utilize online learning more – coordinating with other districts. Teacher sharing between districts.
12. Maintain essential positions and curriculum. Open enrollment issues – youth options – take away from public district.
13. Be realistic in measuring school achievement in small schools.
14. More help or sharing formats regarding curriculum and programming.
15. Working together – mentoring good ideas and curriculum.

16. Develop a model of what programs and curriculum we use and will promote in small schools as a minimum. Enhance distant learning efforts (additional funding for districts in rural areas).
17. Propagate magnet school theme ideas and fund lighthouse projects for each – e.g., International Baccalaureate programs. Promote incentives for consolidation, particularly of infra-structure duplications – payroll clerks; building and grounds supervisors; bookkeepers, food service directors, etc. Ensure technology equity for small, rural schools.
18. Creates fear of jobs lost. Jobs lost, people move. Time crucial: What is the number one priority in Wisconsin? If the answer is education, let's make it that at all levels.
19. Support CESAs.
20. I would like to see more of an effort on survival skills in rural areas – first aid, economics, child development (we have had money cut out of our program) drug and alcohol prevention, physical fitness, health.
21. Service learning.
22. Teachers should be empowered to encourage collaboration between and among school districts – without the fear that they would be costing themselves or their peers their own jobs.
23. Shared programs; staff run.
24. Fiscal assistance to transport students or staff between districts.
25. Support distance/technology focused programs.
26. Knowledge about things like distance education, sharing of staff, etc. Ideas to keep things running.
27. Require more classes and portions be taught and used via computer. End open enrollment.
28. How are students best served?
29. Small schools need to have the ability to offer variations in curriculum. Small school students should not be deprived of courses that larger schools offer.
30. Vocational development PK-12 enhanced through financial incentives.
31. More publicity and cooperative efforts between schools.
32. Quality education for all. Home schools – compare students who are educated versus students who are not being educated or avoiding truancy.

33. Cooperation – ideas and strengths. Administrative and like services – principals, teachers, janitors.
34. Provide funding to provide curriculum audits and expertise to small schools which do not have enough funds for curriculum coordinators. Schools must get what is written (standards and benchmarks) to match what is taught (instructions and lesson plans) to what is tested.
35. Cooperative education service agencies - shared. Annual meeting.
36. Maintain the quality of ITV system and TEACH support. Return TEACH funds for all districts or technology will fall behind and hurt students being prepared to enter the workforce.
37. Learning in most rural schools is already good – school districts do collaborate and have been doing so.
38. Give more flexibility with certification of staff in small schools.
39. Funding and use of TEACH and Wiscnet is vital in many school schools. How do we advance the use of technology without funding? We get over one million dollars this part three years. Where do we get funding to keep up with technology or to do curriculum development.

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