

**Status of Implementation of the Newaygo County
School Districts Service Consolidation Plan 2012-13**

January 31, 2013

This report to the Department is to describe the status of the Newaygo County School Districts (Grant, Hesperia, Fremont, Newaygo, White Cloud, Big Jackson and NC RESA) Consolidation Plan implementation in accordance with the State requirement for all districts which voluntarily participated in the Service Consolidation Plan agreement.

Status of Consolidation Efforts The Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency (NC RESA) in collaboration with its constituent local school districts has a long history of cooperative programs and services. These include special education services, area career-tech center, extensive data, voice and video technology and a wide variety of general education services designed to enhance the design and delivery of the local curriculum for students of all ages, socio-economic status and ability levels. All of these programs and services continue.

The following are the successes and challenges from the process to date (through fiscal year 2012-13):

Successes

- Consolidation of Business Services (NC RESA with local non-profit) – In an effort to save costs, a local non-profit organization has contracted NC RESA business office to provide business services. This also helps to provide funds for NC RESA to maintain full time accounting clerks to provide this service along with maintaining NC RESA’s financial services as well, rather than reducing staff to part time.**
- Consolidated Business Services (NC RESA and White Cloud) – Various shared service models have been tried since 2007-08 fiscal year when the first agreement was established between NC RESA and White Cloud Public Schools. The estimated savings to White Cloud Public Schools from 2007-08 through 2012-13 has been over \$400,000 based upon costs for Business Manager and Payroll Clerk costs from the 2006-07 fiscal year (conservatively estimated - adjusted only two of the 6 years by a 4% increase for health and retirement increases). See also Challenges.**
- Consolidation of maintenance staff – (Grant and Newaygo) - The two districts currently share the cost of two multi-certified full-time maintenance staff. This has led to universal processes, supply savings and equipment sharing between the districts.**
- Consolidated cleaning/custodial Services thru PCMI contracting – (Grant and Newaygo) - The first 90 days of employment for incoming cleaners is handled through a contracting company, these staff are used during this 90 days at both districts.**
- Collaborative (possibly Consolidated) Contracted Custodial Bid (Countywide) - Bids were taken in the spring of 2012, for services to be provided during 2012-13. With all districts bidding services allowed for sharing RFP processes and information. Districts saved between \$20,000 and \$100,000 depending upon the previous situation (whether already contracting or not). See also Challenges.**
- Consolidated Special Education Secretaries (W/C, Newaygo, Grant) - This consolidation has benefited each of the local districts through improved efficiencies as well as financially. By having dedicated Special Education Secretaries assisting with student data, the number of errors with student has been reduced significantly. Documentation required for claiming Medicaid funding has also improved based upon an internal review compared to the Department of Community Health audit conducted on 2010-11 fiscal year when approximately 30% of claims audited were missing appropriate documentation. Financially, the local districts have had a combined savings of approximately \$25,000 since implemented in 2010-11 (approximately \$34,000 when adjusted for increases in retirement costs during that same time).**

- Credit Recovery through Career Tech Programs (Countywide)** - Since Credit Recovery and certain Michigan Merit Curriculum Credits are provided by the Career-Tech at no cost to the local districts, the local districts are saving the cost of educating these students within their programs. Unsure of actual cost savings to the local districts.
- Radio Consolidation (Countywide)** - All busses and building offices are equipped with these radios – much better area coverage and communication abilities not only between districts but also enforcement and county offices. Reduced cost through cooperative purchasing of radios.
- Cooperative purchasing for paper (Countywide)** - The NC RESA provides the staff to look for comparative prices and services with paper purchases. The local districts are only required to inform NC RESA as to the quantity desired. Also, the larger purchases allow for savings to the local districts as well as reducing the need to store as much paper in order to take advantage of higher quantities. This arrangement started in 2010-11 fiscal year and continues to run smoothly. Unsure of actual cost savings to the local districts and unable to determine cost of time savings to local districts.
- Consolidated Director of Maintenance and Operations services (NC RESA/Fremont)** Services are provided by the NC RESA staff in exchange for Fremont Public Schools (FPS) sharing their Director. NC RESA has a larger number of maintenance staff, which has various skill sets, such as plumber licenses, building licenses, etc. This allows for FPS to save on the cost of hiring contracted services to provide these services when needed by the school. The Director of Maintenance and Operations oversees both NC RESA and FPS staff to ensure the appropriate staff is provided for the level of services needed for each entity. FPS provides lower skill level staff as necessary back to NC RESA as well, such as lawn care staff. A reconciliation of services is provided annually to document services are shared as intended.
- Collaborative maintenance meetings – inter-district loans equipment/personnel (Countywide)** - As needed within the local districts and NC RESA, when specialized equipment is needed, such as lift trucks, line painting sprayers, etc. or specialized personnel, such as plumbers, HVAC specialists, etc., are needed whenever possible the districts contact each other within the County to share as appropriate. Personnel costs are shared as cost, but generally equipment is not charged, unless for mileage for necessary transportation of equipment. This has especially benefited the local districts from needing specialized staff on hand rather than paying for these services through contracted services with private companies.
- Kent County Data Warehouse (IGOR)** - All Newaygo County districts and NC RESA are part of this cooperative Data Warehouse. Cost for maintaining this Warehouse has been covered for several years via various grants which has kept the price reasonable for Newaygo County to participate.
- Similar countywide data codes for attendance, discipline, etc. (Countywide)** - By sharing similar countywide data codes, the NC RESA can provide assistance with cooperatively purchased Skyward student accounting software. This provides a reduced cost to locals who do not need to contact Skyward for this assistance.
- Trash services – determined some schools were wrong size containers, review countywide pricing and recycling services (Countywide)** - The County Maintenance Directors compared pricing and services and discussed possible methods for reducing unnecessary services and/or duplicated charges. There is only one company which provides services to Newaygo County area, so comparing prices allowed for some ability to negotiate lower prices for some districts which were charged at higher rates. NC RESA is unsure of the amount of savings to each local district.
- “Ride Share” when districts cross through another district – share bus space (Countywide) and outside county (Newaygo/Tri County)** - This process has been in place for many years, when able to assist, all districts have been willing to make necessary arrangements, including situations where Homeless students were displaced into a neighboring district meeting in township parking lots to switch students.

Coordination of Homeless Program (Countywide and expanded to Oceana County)

This coordination allows for sharing data and implementing similar services across the area. Rather than each district having a director, each district only has a dedicated liaison who is typically a principal or counselor within the district. Savings would be approximately \$70,000 for each district (the cost of a director).

Cooperative Purchase of Software: Skyward and Masadda (Countywide) - Cooperative purchase of software allows for reduced cost through company provided discounts. Various savings depending upon number of districts participating in the software purchase.

Technology Services - NC RESA oversees, operates and maintains nearly 60 miles of backbone fiber optic cable that connects all five cities within Newaygo County plus an additional 15 miles of fiber that links all educational buildings of each local school district, several city government buildings and fire departments, the Newaygo County administrative complex, Community Mental Health, a Community Foundation and three wireless telecommunication towers. NC RESA provides technology services including internet, network, fiber maintenance, general technical support, shared software application assistance as well as long distance and call accounting. These services all take advantage of E-rate discounts when possible. Internet services take advantage of large bandwidth purchases which are shared with all the local districts and local governmental units at various levels, depending upon the unit's needs.

Coordination of Bullying Prevention Program (Countywide) - Through a local foundation grant, NC RESA has been able to assist local districts in providing a Countywide Bullying Prevention Program. This helps the local districts to provide necessary education for bullying prevention in accordance with legislation without a cost to the local district.

Challenges

Transportation – cost savings not sufficient for changes at this time – Bid for contracting transportation was higher than total of all local districts transportation expenses due to rural area, sparse population.

Cooperative purchase of custodial paper products – time is needed to determine which countywide products to convert and when to proceed – use of stock products – it has been a good process with many issues coming to light prior to implementation – containers used/supply contracts in place/equipment in buildings further discussion continues between the County Maintenance Directors.

Consolidation Transportation Supervision – Plan to consider Consolidation of Transportation Supervision to a county level position based upon attrition. No attrition to date for implementation.

Third-Party vendor for Substitute drivers – Local districts are considering this issue at a local level as appropriate with current labor agreements, unsure of status.

Consolidated Business Services (NC RESA and White Cloud) – At the beginning of fiscal year 2012-13, NC RESA was providing Business Manager services to White Cloud Public Schools. In an effort to reduce costs to White Cloud Public Schools, NC RESA agreed to provide Payroll Services and consultation services as needed, while White Cloud promoted the payroll clerk to Business Manager. This continued through June, 2013. Effective July 1, 2013, the White Cloud Public School Board also elected to hire a part-time payroll clerk/Superintendent's secretary. NC RESA no longer provides any business office services to White Cloud Public Schools.

Collaborative (possibly Consolidated) Contracted Custodial Bid (Countywide) - As part of the bidding process, the companies were requested to provide bids if all county school districts were to select one vendor. This part of the process did not provide as much savings as anticipated and individual districts selected different companies with the exception of Fremont Public Schools and NC RESA.