



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF DURAND

Our Vision: Our children will be respectful, responsible and resourceful.
Our Mission: To stimulate, facilitate and educate.

604 7th Avenue East PO Box 190 Durand, Wisconsin 54736

Greg Doverspike, District Administrator
Randy Roinila, Director of Pupil Services

Phone: (715) 672-8919 Fax: (715) 672-8930
Phone: (715) 672-8921 Fax: (715) 672-8930

Date: January 31, 2014

To: Representative Swearingen
Representative Clark
Representative Czaja
Representative Petryk
Representative Brooks
Representative Williams
Representative Mursau
Representative Schrau
Representative Nass
Representative Danou
Representative Pope
Representative Wright

Fr: Greg Doverspike, School District of Durand

RE: Testimony to Speaker's Task Force on Rural Schools

Dear Task Force on Rural Schools,

I want to apologize for having to leave early during your recent hearing in Pepin. I would like to thank you for your service on this committee and considering the issues facing many rural schools in Wisconsin. The issues you hear from many of my colleagues are real and need to be addressed to allow rural schools in Wisconsin to continue.

I am sending you the comments I had prepared for the hearing and ask you to please consider them. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Once again, I appreciate you considering my comments and wish you the best of luck while making many of the tough decisions facing this great state.

Sincerely,

Greg Doverspike
District Administrator

Junior / Senior High School
Bill Clouse, Principal
604 7th Avenue East
Durand, WI 54736
(715) 672-8917

Arkansaw Elementary
Erika Johnson, Principal
N6290 North H Street
Arkansaw, WI 54721
(715) 285-5315

Caddie Woodlawn Early Learning Center
Erika Johnson, Principal
650 Auth Street
Durand, WI 54736
(715) 672-8977

Rural Schools Task Force Testimony

I would like to thank everyone for their service on this committee to hear the issues facing rural schools throughout Wisconsin. We have a unique set of challenges as we attempt to hang on to the lifeblood of many small communities and continue to do an excellent job of educating our students turning out high quality young adults.

I could echo the comments made by those testifying before me regarding many of the issues facing rural schools from technology concerns, budget concerns, declining enrollment, retaining quality educators, the list could go on for quite a while.

Instead I would like to focus on two areas. The first is transportation. I would like to first thank the legislature for the additional high cost transportation aid placed in the current budget. Those are funds that will help our district, but I wanted to spend some time showing you the differences in transportation costs throughout the state. The district boundaries in Durand are quite extensive. As a district we put on over 1750 miles per day getting our roughly 1000 public school students and roughly 200 private school and Amish students to school during the 2012-2013. This represents around \$1.15 million dollars or 10% of our budget. Last year we received around \$88,000 of state aid to offset this cost. As of this time we are unsure of the amount we will receive from the newly created high cost transportation aid. The figure is set to be announced later this spring.

When compared to other schools, based on 2010-2011 data from the DPI, we are the highest in terms of cost per member in CESA 11 at over \$1200 per member. That figure only takes into account public school students, even though we supply transportation to Amish and private school students as well. During that year the state average was \$490 per pupil. Analyzing those figures over our enrollment for the 2010-2011 school year of 988 students, we spent just under \$1.2 million, but if we would have paid the state average of \$490 we would have spent just over \$475,000. That means those schools with a similar enrollment and a smaller geography have an additional \$725,000 to spend in the classrooms on their students to provide additional support, technology, etc. This is a real problem faced by many rural schools. The struggle of rural schools transporting students to school is much greater resulting in fewer resources in the classroom leaving us with the option of cutting routes and increasing ride times or having fewer funds in the classroom. Neither is a good option and I feel this unfairly penalizes our students based on where they live.

I realize many people right now are asking for additional resources with the announced \$911 million anticipated surplus, but this is an area that would greatly help our school and many rural schools in our situation. I am asking you to consider putting additional funds in the high cost transportation aid to continue to help out the rural schools in Wisconsin.

The second area I would like to focus on is Career and Technical Education. I would like to first say that we appreciate the recent legislation passed focusing on this area with additional funds placed into the Youth Apprenticeship program and the recent legislation co-authored by Representative Petryk providing \$1000 per student receiving an industry recognized certificate.

At Durand we plan to take advantage of both of these pieces of legislation and are expanding programs in all curricular areas with Chippewa Valley Technical College. Our first area of focusing is manufacturing with the goal of starting a Manufacturing Academy Program for the 2014-2015 school year. The relationship we have developed with CVTC in the past year and a half has been tremendous for our students and district. We hope to continue to grow this relationship.

What I would like to talk about is creating a pool of grant dollars for small rural districts to use to purchase updated equipment for the Career and Technical Area. I heard Governor Walker speak during his state of the state address and in Milwaukee at the State Education Convention. He stressed the lack of interest in CTE, the importance of preparing our students to fill the trade jobs available, and the need to develop a stronger pipeline to the two-year programs. These would help our state on the road to further economic recovery. We have an interest to do that and want to encourage our students in this area.

I would argue that many of the issues identified by Governor Walker are tied to the inability of small rural schools to stay current and modern in these areas. The issue we are facing is many of the manufacturing jobs have become so technical with the equipment needed. As a small school we cannot afford to purchase the needed equipment to stay modern to prepare our students to become the future workers needed to fill many of these jobs. As a result the students do not get exposed to the possibilities these careers hold.

The cost to update our welding shop is not affordable considering we may only run a welding course one period per day with 18-20 students in the class. The cost per student to update to the necessary equipment does not make it affordable considering the other financial needs we are facing in other curricular areas serving a larger enrollment. We would love to expose our students to the wonderful career options available in welding and the quality wage that could be earned, but we don't have the financial ability to stay even two generations behind the equipment. I could go on to talk about the cost for mills and CNC machines in other CTE areas to expose our students to those career options as well.

We all know that Wisconsin is a strong manufacturing state and we need to continue to prepare quality workers to fill the needed jobs to continue to expand our economy. The problem small rural schools are facing is how to stay modern compared to the cost needed to stay modern with dwindling budgets and other unfunded mandates. The students sitting in the desks of schools throughout this state are the raw materials that will continue to make our state one of the best in the country. We need to invest in our raw materials to allow our finished product to be top notch.

I am asking you to consider a grant program of around \$2 - \$5 million for schools to apply to use the funds to update the CTE areas. Schools can either apply alone or share in the grant to purchase the equipment together. I feel this small expense would allow small rural schools to move forward to better prepare our students for the future they are facing and continue to move our state forward by filling the currently vacant manufacturing positions.

Thank you again for your time and service. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.