

Iowa Public School District Consolidation¹

This IPRO report will review the feasibility of consolidating Iowa public school districts administratively and educationally.

Definitions

School Districts: An officially recognized administered public school(s) maintaining kindergarten through twelfth grades with a required minimum of 300 students for any newly reorganized or created school district.^{2,3}

Regional School Unit: In Maine, a school district which is a “regional, state-approved unit of school administration”; the Maine Department of Education must approve the school district to meet certain administrative efficiencies through policy and other academic achievement.⁴

Overview

School district consolidation can involve a complex process from submitting a proposal to a state’s Department of Education to the reorganization of school district board officials and the actual act of combining schools, faculty, and students. Nationally, the school district count has decreased by 90 percent since the late 1930s.⁵ In the 2009-2010 school year, Iowa had 490,417 students in Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade (see Figure 1 for a more detailed breakdown).⁶

Iowa

Facts and Figures

School District Count Historically

Consolidating Iowa school districts has been a long-term trend since 1950 which at the time Iowa had 4,652 school districts.

- In 1970, Iowa had 453 school districts and today there are 361 school districts.⁷
- In 2009, 12 rural Iowa school districts merged into six as a result of declining enrollments and shrinking state funds.⁸

¹ This IPRO report was prepared by undergraduate students Lee Henely (lee-henely@uiowa.edu) and Nicholas Pottebaum (nicholas-pottebaum@uiowa.edu).

² Declaration of policy - surveys - definitions. Chapter 275 - Reorganization of School Districts. Subtitle Six - School Districts. Title VII Education and Cultural Affairs. Iowa Code.

³ Minimum Size. Chapter 275 - Reorganization of School Districts. Subtitle Six - School Districts. Title VII Education and Cultural Affairs. Iowa Code.

⁴ 1451. Regional school units. Subchapter 1: General Provisions. Chapter 103-A: Regional School Units. Part 2: School Organization. Title 20-A: Education. Maine State Code.

⁵ Cox, Betty; Cox, Becky. "A Decade of Results: A Case For School District Consolidation ," Education 131.1 (2010): 83-92.

⁶ Iowa Department of Education, "PK - 12 Student Data: Enrollment," September 2010, Bureau of Planning, Research, and Evaluation,

<http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=129&Itemid=1563>.

⁷ Berry, Christopher R.; West, Martin R. "Growing Pains: The School Consolidation Movement and Student Outcomes," The Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization, 26.1 (2008).

- In 2011, Iowa will have 353 school districts.⁹
- Iowa Code states, “It is the policy of the state to encourage economical and efficient school districts which will ensure an equal educational opportunity to all children of the state.”¹⁰ This consolidation of school districts has occurred because funding for public education is allocated per student, creating natural pressure for low enrolling districts to merge.

Overall, there has been a 93% drop in the number of school districts since 1950 (see Figure 3 for a detailed reduction). The reduction trend in the 1950s and 1960s was a part of a state and national effort moving from a one-teacher school (or one-room school house) to the layout that is found today in most modern school districts where there are teachers for various subjects in middle schools and high schools.¹¹ Today, consolidated school districts in Iowa are usually the result of declining enrollment, state incentives, financial pressures, and the pursuit of better educational opportunities for students.¹²

Schools District Enrollments by Size

In Iowa, schools districts with less than 1,000 students, relatively small by national standards, represent 68 percent of the school districts. However, 26 percent of the students in Iowa attend school districts with less than 1,000 students enrolled (see Figure 4 for Iowa Public School Districts Enrollment Levels breakdown).¹³

Consolidation and Financing School Districts in Iowa

Why a Consolidation Trend Since the 1950's?

According to the Iowa Department of Education, “most often, school districts [...] retreat to consolidation as dwindling enrollment and town populations leave no other choices.”¹⁴ As of late 2008, enrollment in two-thirds of Iowa public schools districts had dropped as more suburban and urban populations in Iowa grow and rural population declines.¹⁵

Funding for School Districts

Schools districts in Iowa are funded from two primary sources: property taxes and state appropriations (see the Student Aid Formula in Figure 2). Public school funding is always changing

⁸ Schulken, Mary. “Consolidation Watch: Rural Iowa Losing Schools.” Education Week. 28 Sept. 2010. 25 Nov. 2010 <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rural_education/2010/09/consolidation_watch_rural_iowa_losing_schools.html>.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Chapter 275 - Reorganization of School Districts. Subtitle 6 School Districts. Title VII Education and Cultural Affairs. Iowa Code.

¹¹ Berry, Christopher R.; West, Martin R. "Growing Pains: The School Consolidation Movement and Student Outcomes," The Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization, 26.1 (2008).

¹² Anderson, Christopher L. "School District Reorganization In Iowa: Consideration for Administrators, School Boards, and Communities," Dissertation, Drake University, 2009.

¹³ Iowa Department of Education, "PK - 12 Student Data: Enrollment," September 2010, Bureau of Planning, Research, and Evaluation,

<http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=129&Itemid=1563>.

¹⁴ The Gazette Opinion Staff, "School districts and the state must approach consolidation with strength," The Cedar Rapids Gazette 24 September 2010.

¹⁵ "More district consolidation predicted in Iowa," The Quad-City Times 28 August 2008.

as its methodology is reviewed every five years by state government. Information on public school district financing can be found at the *Iowa Association of School Boards* website.¹⁶

In 1992, Chapter 257 – School District Financing, went into effect, which is the system used today. The School and Area Education Agency Financing Act of 1989, which came into law in 1992, was a major overhaul of state aid formulas. State foundation base levels were created along with formulas for declining and increasing school district enrollments. Previously, school districts relied on property taxes for all financing until the mid-1960s when a different formulation of state aid through the 1970s and 1980s existed.¹⁷

Iowa school district financing is given “foundation aid, in an amount per pupil” which is based on the difference between per pupil foundation property tax in the district and per public cost in the district (the rich and poor property district breakdown can be found in Figure 2).¹⁸ Because financing is per student, there is natural pressure on districts to consolidate when enrolments wane.

Cost and Benefits

Benefits of Consolidating

Fiscal Savings

In 2008, a study by the *New York State Commission on Property Tax Relief* found that for every 100 students added to a school district with less than 1,000 students the districts per pupil costs would be reduced by \$700. In general, per pupil costs are reduced since fixed costs and economies of scale costs savings are realized. It should be noted that 10-year savings are not as much as 30-year savings since in some cases “adjustment costs have not yet phased out.”¹⁹ There is inconclusive evidence that every school district consolidation will result in significant cost savings, however in most cases cost savings is realized over time.

Improved Quality of Education

Increased test scores and greater access to advanced placement courses (i.e. Advance Placement) exists in larger school districts. A New York Commission found that larger (greater than 1,000) school districts increased the opportunity that students could participate in Advanced Placement (AP) classes either in the classroom or online.²⁰ Along with that, the key component is access and number of AP courses. A study by Virginia Burney of Ball State University found, “rigorous high school experience, for individuals, is far more important than their demographics related to socioeconomic status, race, and level of parental education.” Meaning, providing AP courses can be achieved in larger schools, but there must be a range of classes and few barriers of enrollment for

¹⁶ Sigel, Larry. "School Finance in Iowa," 2010, [Iowa Association of School Boards](http://www.ia-sb.org/assets/3B6E5EDD-7B3B-4E48-A06B-1DA4B74798AC.ppt), <<http://www.ia-sb.org/assets/3B6E5EDD-7B3B-4E48-A06B-1DA4B74798AC.ppt>>.

¹⁷ Legislative Service Agency, "Legislative Services Agency: Major School Finance Law Changes (1971 - 2010)," 2010, [Fiscal Services - K-12 Education Information](http://staffweb.legis.state.ia.us/lfb/docs/k-12_ed/PublicSchlFunding_LawChanges_1971_to_Present.pdf), <http://staffweb.legis.state.ia.us/lfb/docs/k-12_ed/PublicSchlFunding_LawChanges_1971_to_Present.pdf>.

¹⁸ 257.1 State school foundation program - state aid. Subtitle Six - School Districts. Subtitle One – Elementary and Secondary Education. Chapter 257 – Financing School Programs. Iowa Code.

¹⁹ Duncombe, William D. and Yinger, John M. "School District Consolidation: The Benefits and Costs" (American Association of School Administrators, 2010) 10-11, 13-15, 17.

²⁰ New York State Commission on Property Tax Relief, [School District Consolidation Could Reduce Property Taxes Without Adverse Impacts](#), Fact Sheet. Albany, New York. 2008.

quality of education to be obtained.²¹ It should be noted that, in 2005-2006, 45 percent (165 out of 365) Iowa public school districts offered at least one AP course. Further school district consolidation could increase this number to over 50 percent of Iowa districts.

Overall, there is a variety of evidence to prove that a pupil's education increases in quality since greater resources (e.g. reading programs, English Language Learner) are made available in larger schools districts.²²

Increase in Teacher Effectiveness and Incentives

Many schools districts that consolidate do so because of legislative incentives (e.g. teacher bonuses, district-wide bonuses).²³ Iowa in the 1980s and 1990s "provided bonuses to districts sharing superintendents and whole grades of students; the bonuses continued if the districts merged within five years."²⁴ This created competition and increased the likelihood of attracting better qualified teachers. Additionally, "teachers in larger districts have more colleagues on which to draw for advice and discussion, interactions that presumably lead to improved effectiveness."²⁵ When consolidation occurred in rural areas, many teachers found that they have fewer classes to prepare. This allowed teachers to focus their preparation time in more detail on one subject and to seek out more professional development opportunities.²⁶

Property Values

There are some benefits for community property values if consolidation occurs, but this is only associated with economies of scale. Smaller school districts experience a greater increase in property values upon consolidation of school districts. School districts serving greater than 1,700 students see little impact to property values.²⁷ Brasington, however, found that increased school size has a negative relationship with student performance and school quality. He found that the decrease in school quality lowers housing prices \$400 per home on average.²⁸ Small communities that lose a school building may also experience a decline in property values.

Costs of Consolidating

Community and Local Economy

Some rural communities lose their high schools during school district mergers, the main source of opposition in last year's mergers in Iowa.²⁹ Residents of rural communities are often afraid of a loss

²¹ Burney, Virginia H. "High Achievement on Advanced Placement Exams: The Relationship of School-Level Contextual Factors to Performance," *Gifted Child Quarterly* 54.2 (2010): 116-126.

²² Anderson, Christopher L. "School District Reorganization In Iowa: Consideration for Administrators, School Boards, and Communities," Dissertation, Drake University, 2009.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Duncombe, William D.; Yinger, John M. "School District Consolidation: The Benefits and Costs" American Association of School Administrators. (2010) 10-11, 13-15, 17.

²⁶ Nitta, K.; Holley, M., & Wrobel, S. A phenomenological study of rural school consolidation. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 25(2), 1-19. 2010. <Retrieved from <http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/25-2.pdf>>

²⁷ William D. Duncombe and John M. Yinger, "School District Consolidation: The Benefits and Costs" (American Association of School Administrators, 2010) 10-11, 13-15, 17.

²⁸ Brasington, David M. "School District Consolidation, Student Performance, and Housing Values." The Ohio State University. 12 March 1998. 15 Dec. 2010 <http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=101591>.

²⁹ Schulken, Mary. "Consolidation Watch: Rural Iowa Losing Schools." *Education Week*. 28 Sept. 2010. 25 Nov. 2010 <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rural_education/2010/09/consolidation_watch_rural_iowa_losing_schools.html>.

of community identity.³⁰ Communities that would lose their school district also fear further social and economic decline will follow. As a result, consolidation usually faces substantial opposition. Most school boards end up consolidating for financial, rather than educational reasons. Few ever merge willingly.³¹

Educational Quality

Some experts claim that larger school districts are not the answer to improving educational quality. Research has shown diminishing marginal returns from increasing enrollment. Studies have also found small school districts to have equal, in some cases, greater academic achievement (i.e. higher graduation rates, average daily attendance).³²

Fiscal Costs

There is evidence that administrative efficiencies can be realized through consolidating small school districts, but there is a threshold applicable nationwide for school district consolidation. It ranges from 500 to 1000 students. Once the threshold is crossed it can result in decreased administrative efficiencies in some cases. Additionally, past research has shown that as school districts become larger, more resources are devoted to secondary services—such as counseling, meal programs, and transportation—that can offset savings from increased administrative efficiencies.³³

Transportation Costs

For many communities, increased bus ride time is one of the most contentious issues.³⁴ It is also believed that consolidation in rural areas can lead to increased transportation costs. A report conducted by the University of Southern Maine on transportation costs after school consolidation in Maine found no evidence that consolidation results in significant increases in transportation cost. In fact, it found in most cases costs decreased or increased at a reduced rate in the first year post consolidation. After to completion of new school construction in the following years, costs returned to annual increases similar to those prior to consolidation.³⁵

Within the district enrollment range of 500 to 1,000 students, the lower bound estimated bus route mileage increased by 0.6 percent and the upper bound increased by 11 percent. Past this range, there

³⁰ Wieland, Regi L.; Gardener, Clark E.; Bard, Joe. "Rural School District Consolidation." Academic Leadership 4.2 (2007). 25 Nov. 2010 <http://www.academicleadership.org/emprical_research/Rural_School_District_Consolidation.shtml>.

³¹ Anderson, Christopher L. "School District Reorganization In Iowa: Consideration for Administrators, School Boards, and Communities," Dissertation, Drake University, 2009.

³² Ibid

³³ Hanley, Paul F. "Transportation Cost Changes with Statewide School District Consolidation." Elsevier. 5 Dec. 2005. 4 Dec. 2010 <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6V6Y-4HR76N6-1&_user=440026&_coverDate=06%2F30%2F2007&_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_orig=search&_origin=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_searchStrId=1567195959&_rerunOrigin=google&_acct=C000020939&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=440026&md5=8d374f6b37684d0a82005f72dfc46d15&searchtype=a>.

³⁴ Killeen, Kieran and John Sipple. "School Consolidation and Transportation Policy: An Empirical and Institutional Analysis." 24 April 2000. Rural School and Community Trust Policy Program. 4 Dec. 2010 <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&ccd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ruraledu.org%2Fuser_uploads%2Ffile%2Fschool_consolidation_and_transportation_policy.pdf&ei=uqf6TJOLF421ngeyqO3ICg&usg=AFQjCNGPP8an4RvAj2YTuepEa106jHhEw&sig2=rqQ9U8_eKybh9wHfybzyrQ>.

³⁵ Silvernail, David L., Aaron K. Gritter, and James E. Sloan. "Analysis of the Impact of School Consolidation on Student Transportation Cost." Jan. 2007. Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation, University of Southern Maine. 4 Dec. 2010 <usm.maine.edu/cepare/Reports/Student_Transportation_Cost.pdf>.

are significant increases with increased variability.³⁶ In addition to financial costs, environmental costs can also accumulate with increased bus mileage. In the 2009-2010 academic school year, 113 out of Iowa's 367 school districts had enrollments between 500 to 1,000 students.³⁷

Case Studies

Maine

Maine passed legislation in 2007 requiring school districts to enroll at least 2,500 students. This has been one of the most aggressive consolidation reform attempts. At the time of passage, the intention was to consolidate Maine's 290 districts into 80 or less to achieve an average school district enrollment statewide of 2,500 students. School districts, regardless of size, were to work with each other to merge into larger units, or, when impractical, reorganize their own administrative structure to reduce costs.³⁸

In 2008, the law was amended to make it easier for districts to comply. The changes allowed exceptions for obstacles that make reaching a size of 2,500 impractical. Schools could create Regional School Units (RSUs) of at least 1,200 students. Schools could also be exempted by proposing alternative organizational structures, which would require them to improve efficiencies. These exceptions would have to be approved by the Commissioner of Education. Exceptions were also made for high performing districts. Rural districts with fewer than 1,200 students were made exempt, but could be no smaller than 1,000 students. Schools rejected for consolidation by all neighboring districts could also be exempted by providing an alternative plan for improving efficiencies. Schools that did not meet the requirements by July 1, 2009 received penalties, such as loss of subsidies, reduced funding, less favorable consideration for construction projects, and loss of transition adjustments.³⁹

Efforts were made in the bill to protect against closing schools or displacing students and teachers. According to the bill, school closings would require a two-thirds vote by the regional board and a vote by the municipality. Teachers and other employees would be transferred to the new unit under consolidation. All consolidation plans require approval by voters.⁴⁰

³⁶ Hanley, Paul F. "Transportation Cost Changes with Statewide School District Consolidation." Elsevier. 5 Dec. 2005. 4 Dec. 2010 <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6V6Y-4HR76N6-1&_user=440026&_coverDate=06%2F30%2F2007&_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_orig=search&_origin=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_searchStrId=1567195959&_rerunOrigin=google&_acct=C000020939&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=440026&md5=8d374f6b37684d0a82005f72dfc46d15&searchtype=a>.

³⁷ Department of Education. State of Iowa. "2009-2010 Iowa Public School District PreK-12 Enrollments by School, Grade, Race and Gender." 26 Jan. 2010. 4 Dec. 2010 <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=391&Itemid=1563>.

³⁸ Spradlin, Terry E.; Carson, Fatima R.; Hess, Sara E.; Plucker, Jonathan A. "Revisiting School District Consolidation Issues," Education Policy Brief (2010): 8.3. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy. 25 November 2010 <<http://www.indianaeconomicdigest.net/main.asp?SectionID=31&subsectionID=217&articleID=56768>>.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

The legislation faced a repeal effort in 2009. However, the law remains in effect after passage of a referendum vote, which passed by 58.51 percent.⁴¹ Critics of the measure didn't think the law made sense for smaller schools, and that it should not be mandatory. They argued the bill hadn't resulted in any cost savings and had actually cost schools more money in some cases.⁴²

A study by the Maine Legislature's Office of Fiscal and Program Review found that repealing the law would cost \$37 million a year.⁴³ In addition to requiring schools to consolidate, the law also reduced by half state aid given to districts for administrative expenses. Aid was also cut for transportation, special education, and maintenance by five percent.⁴⁴ Schools have saved from \$600,000 to \$1 annually on insurance and administration costs. Since the laws passage, schools have been able to restart art, music, physical education, advanced placement courses, universal pre-kindergarten, and gifted and talented programs that had been eliminated due to local budget cuts.⁴⁵

By 2009, 98 school districts averaging 500 students each had consolidated into 26 districts averaging 2,100 students each.⁴⁶ As of November 2010, 82 school districts were still not in compliance with the law.⁴⁷

Indiana

Indiana proposed Senate Bill 521 in 2009, which did not pass, that would have required schools with less than 500 students to merge with another school. It also would have called on the state board of education to develop standards for education opportunity and operational efficiency. School with between 500 and 1000 students would have to meet these developed standards or be forced to consolidate.⁴⁸

The bill was introduced with the purpose of saving the State of Indiana money and improving its school system. Currently, the state has 292 school districts with 49 enrolling less than 1,000 students.

⁴¹ "Maine School District Consolidation Repeal, Question 3 (2009)," Ballotopedia, 29 November 2010, <http://www.ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Maine_School_District_Consolidation_Repeal,_Question_3_%282009%29>.

⁴² Shortall, Keith. "Maine's School Consolidation Law Survives Repeal Effort," Maine Public Broadcasting Network, 4 November 2009, 25 November 2010, <<http://www.mpbn.net/News/MaineNews/tabid/181/ctl/ViewItem/mid/3475/ItemId/9641/Default.aspx>>.

⁴³ Sharp, David. "Maine Voters to Decide Fate of School District Merger Law." 17 Oct. 2009. *Boston Globe*. 16 Dec. 2010 <http://www.boston.com/news/local/maine/articles/2009/10/17/maine_voters_to_decide_fate_of_school_district_merger_law/>.

⁴⁴ Stone, Matthew. "Campaign Defends '07 School Merger Law." *Portland Press Herald*. 4 March 2010. 15 Dec. 2010 <http://www.pressherald.com/archive/campaign-defends-07-school-merger-law_2009-09-26.html>.

⁴⁵ Daigle, Michael. "Maine Law Saved School Districts Money." 12 Dec. 2010. *Daily Record*. 15 Dec. 2010 <<http://www.dailyrecord.com/article/20101212/COMMUNITIES/101211040/1005/NEWS01/Maine-law-saved-school-districts-money>>.

⁴⁶ Sharp, David. "Maine Voters to Decide Fate of School District Merger Law." 17 Oct. 2009. *Boston Globe*. 16 Dec. 2010 <http://www.boston.com/news/local/maine/articles/2009/10/17/maine_voters_to_decide_fate_of_school_district_merger_law/>.

⁴⁷ Stone, Matthew. "State Still Urging School Districts to Consolidate," *Kennebec Journal*, 9 November 2010, 25 November 2010, <http://www.kjonline.com/news/state-still-urging-school-districts-to-consolidate_2010-11-08.html>.

⁴⁸ Indiana General Assembly. "Senate Bill 521 – Digest of Introduced Bill," 2009, 28 November 2010, <<http://www.in.gov/apps/lisa/session/billwatch/billinfo?year=2009&request=getBill&docno=521>>.

Last year, one school district passed an open-enrollment policy, attracting an additional 100 students this year.⁴⁹

Terry Spradlin, associate director of the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, says that smaller schools have been meeting federal standards in Indiana. Although, larger school districts are able to offer more advanced coursework and students performed slightly better, smaller districts, did better managing expenses and using funds for classrooms. He makes the case that consolidation should be done on a case-by-case basis.⁵⁰ An Indiana University study found that mandated consolidation would not benefit students and would have a minimal impact on spending on public education. The report instead recommended tracking expenses to find ways to increase operational efficiency, expand virtual learning to expand curriculum at smaller schools, and consider joint summer school programs, open enrollment or half-day or flexible scheduling.⁵¹

Figure 1:
2009 – 2010 Iowa Public School Enrollment⁵²

Grade Level	Enrollment
Pre-K	21,744
Kindergarten	38,945
Fourth Grade	35,201
Eight Grade	35,183
Twelfth Grade	37,913
K-12	468,673
Total	490,417

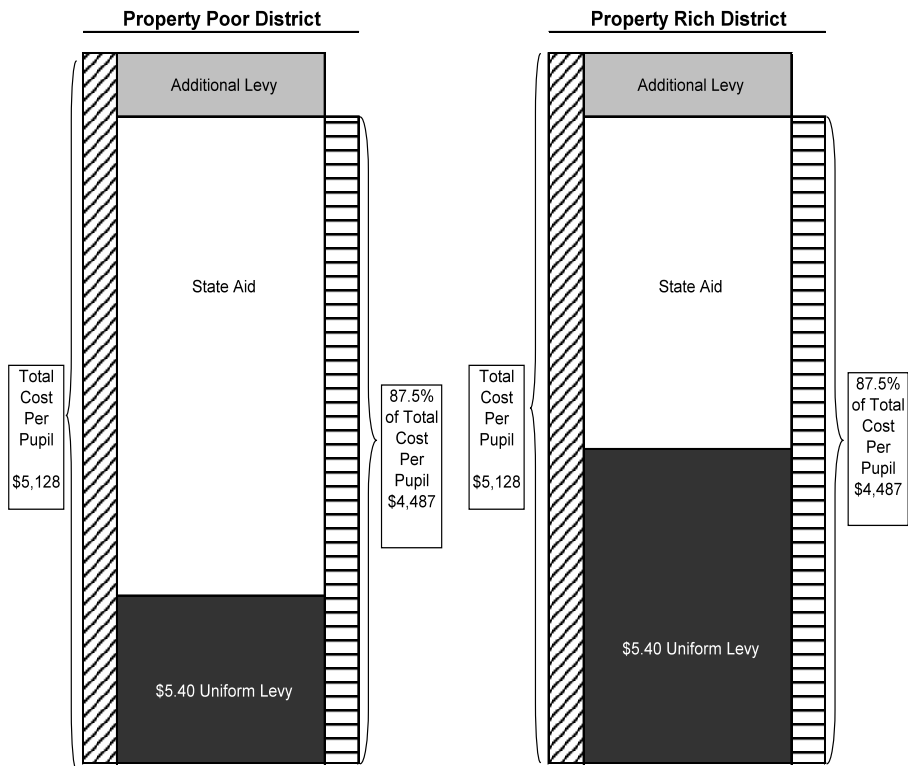
⁴⁹ McCollum, Carmen. "UI Study Says School Consolidation Should Be Handled on a Case by Case Basis," *Indiana Economic Digest*, 30 October 2010, 28 November 2010, <<http://www.indianaeconomicdigest.net/main.asp?SectionID=31&subsectionID=217&articleID=56768>>.

⁵⁰ McCollum, Carmen. "UI Study Says School Consolidation Should Be Handled on a Case by Case Basis," *Indiana Economic Digest*, 30 October 2010, 28 November 2010, <<http://www.indianaeconomicdigest.net/main.asp?SectionID=31&subsectionID=217&articleID=56768>>.

⁵¹ Rush, Danielle. "IU Study Finds Few Benefits in Indiana Public School Consolidation." *Indiana Economic Digest*. 16 Oct. 2010. 15 Dec. 2010 <<http://www.indianaeconomicdigest.net/main.asp?SectionID=31&SubSectionID=77&ArticleID=56597>>.

⁵² Iowa Department of Education, "PK - 12 Student Data: Enrollment," September 2010, [Bureau of Planning, Research, and Evaluation](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=129&Itemid=1563), <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=129&Itemid=1563>.

Figure 2:
Student Aid Formula Breakdown⁵³



⁵³ Iowa Legislative Service Agency, "Overview of School Finance in Iowa," January 2010, <http://staffweb.legis.state.ia.us/lfb/docs/k-12_ed/SchoolAidPresentation.pdf>.

Figure 3:
Number of School Districts Since 1950⁵⁴

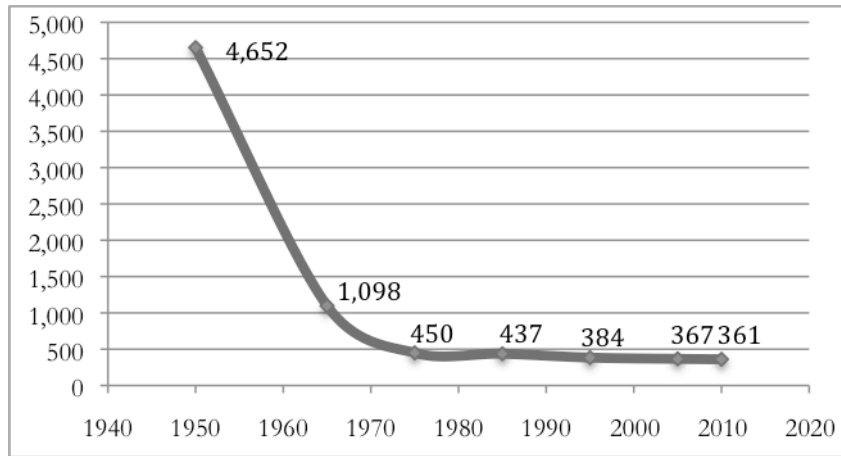


Figure 4:
Iowa Public School Districts Enrollment Levels (out of 361)⁵⁵

Parameter	School Districts Count	Percentage of Count	Drop Out Rate	Graduation Rate	Average Daily Attendance Rate
X > 10,000	7	2%	5.3%	79.7%	94.1%
X > 5,000	15	4%	3.6%	86.4%	95.8%
X > 2,500	32	9%	3.4%	87.7%	95.0%
X > 1,500	66	18%	2.7%	89.5%	95.2%
X > 1,000	113	31%	2.3%	91.3%	95.3%
X > 500	227	63%	1.7%	93.1%	95.4%
X > 250	318	88%	1.5%	93.8%	95.5%
Average			1.6%	94%	95.5%

Notes on School District Enrollment Count

- Median = 630 (with 181 public school district greater than).
- Mean = 1,298 (with 81 or 22% public school districts greater than).

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Iowa Department of Education, "PK - 12 Student Data: Enrollment," September 2010, Bureau of Planning, Research, and Evaluation,

<http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=129&Itemid=1563>.

Figure 5: Median School District Enrollment by State (2007 – 2008)^{56, 57}

State	Median Enrollment	Total Public School Districts
Alabama	3,000 - 4,999	133
Alaska	500 - 999	53
Arizona	1,000 - 2,999	225
Arkansas	1,000 - 2,999	245
California	1,000 - 2,999	960
Colorado	500 - 999	178
Connecticut	1,000 - 2,999	166
Delaware	3,000 - 4,999	19
Florida	10,000 - 99,999	67
Georgia	3,000 - 4,999	180
Hawaii	100,000 or more	1
Idaho	500 - 999	115
Illinois	500 - 999	869
Indiana	1,000 - 2,999	294
Iowa	500 - 999	362
Kansas	500 - 999	318
Kentucky	1,000 - 2,999	174
Louisiana	3,000 - 4,999	69
Maine	500 - 999	283
Maryland	10,000 - 99,999	24
Massachusetts	3,000 - 4,999	352
Michigan	1,000 - 2,999	552
Minnesota	500 - 999	340
Mississippi	1,000 - 2,999	152
Missouri	500 - 999	523
Montana	500 - 999	420
Nebraska	500 - 999	256
Nevada	3,000 - 4,999	17
New Hampshire	500 - 999	178
New Jersey	1,000 - 2,999	616
New Mexico	500 - 999	89
New York	1,000 - 2,999	696
North Carolina	5,000 - 9,999	116
North Dakota	500 - 999	187
Ohio	1,000 - 2,999	614
Oklahoma	500 - 999	534
Oregon	500 - 999	194
Pennsylvania	1,000 - 2,999	501
Rhode Island	3,000 - 4,999	32
South Carolina	3,000 - 4,999	85
South Dakota	500 - 999	161
Tennessee	3,000 - 4,999	136
Texas	500 - 999	1,032
Utah	3,000 - 4,999	40
Vermont	500 - 999	292
Virginia	3,000 - 4,999	134
Washington	1,000 - 2,999	295
West Virginia	3,000 - 4,999	55
Wisconsin	500 - 999	426
Wyoming	500 - 999	48

⁵⁶ National Center for Education Statistics, "Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by level, grade, and state or jurisdiction," *Digest of Education Statistics* (Fall 2007).

⁵⁷ National Center for Educational Statistics, "Number of public school districts, by state: 2007–08," *Schools and Staffing Survey* (2007).

Note

- United States has 13,809 public school districts with a median enrollment of 1,000 – 2,999 students per school district.

This report was prepared in December 2010 by the Iowa Policy Research Organization (IPRO), a non-partisan public policy undergraduate research group at the University of Iowa. For additional research on this or other issues, please visit our website at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~ipro/> or contact us at caroline-tolbert@uiowa.edu.