

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

Boards and administrators in Westmer Community Unit School District #203 and Aledo Community Unit School District #201 have been discussing various reorganization possibilities for their respective districts for many years. They have conducted multiple studies about the possibilities of merging. Interest by the current boards in looking at the future of these districts resulted in a decision to apprise themselves of the possibilities for reorganization, the pluses and minuses of reorganization and the impact of remaining in the current separate districts. These actions have been precipitated by: the drops in student numbers, the increasing difficulty of maintaining sufficient funds to operate districts, and the increased needs of students in the rapidly changing world we live in today. With these concerns in mind, the two districts, through a joint meeting of their Boards of Education, agreed to participate in a study of a possible merger of the two districts. Consultants were hired at that joint meeting. A State grant to pay the study costs was obtained by Regional Superintendent of Schools Bill Braden.

The two districts involved in the study are:

**Westmer Community Unit School District #203**

and **Aledo Community Unit School District #201**

The consultants were directed to examine a wide spectrum of current conditions in the two districts and to project somewhat into the future of the districts. The consultants sought to answer the questions specified by the State of Illinois and such other questions as were raised by the participating school districts. The consultants have met with and/or surveyed representatives of many different constituencies of the two districts. These have included: administrators, boards, staff from the two districts, students from both districts, the Regional Superintendent of schools, county officials, and community members. With the large variety of interest groups

spread between the two districts, the consultants do not claim to have met with all interested parties, they have, instead, attempted to involve a representative audience.

### **INFORMATION AND TOPICS REQUIRED BY REORGANIZATION LAW**

With the purposes required by the State of Illinois for feasibility studies in mind, the two Boards contracted with the consultants to conduct a feasibility study. The three consultants, Dr. Harold Ford, Mr. William Schehl, and Mr. Tom Steele, have assembled the information contained in this report.

The report will encompass all of the performance items required by state statute. They are:

- Transportation
- Facilities
- Curriculum
- Finance
- Enrollment
- Staffing
- Demographics
- Extra-Curriculum Activities
- Justification of and recommendation on type of reorganization and combination of districts

In this report, the order of the above performance items are modified to begin with a section describing direct pupil areas of: curriculum, enrollment, demographics, and extra-curriculum activities. The second section of the report will address the operational areas of:

staffing, transportation, facilities, and finance. These two sections will be a report of what has been happening over the last one to five years, what the current situation is, and in some cases, what the next five years might bring with the current configuration.

Having completed a look at the current district configurations, the consultants will present a justification and recommendation section based on all of the performance items contained in the first two major sections of the report. It is hoped that the background given and the recommendations outlined will constitute a starting point for specific reorganizations that could be discussed by boards and communities and ultimately decided by the voters.

# SECTION I – PUPIL MEASUREMENTS

## CURRICULUM

A primary goal in adopting a reorganization plan is to improve the educational process for students by increasing and enriching course offerings. Listed below is a comparative file of current courses offered in the Aledo C.U.S.D. #201 and the Westmer C.U.S.D. #203 during the 2006-2007 school year.

### COURSE COMPARISONS (sections offered, course titles, number of students)

	ALEDO		WESTMER	
<b>Agriculture</b>	1 Ag. Science I	20*	1 Ag. Science	7***
	1 Ag. Science II	21**	1 Intro. to Ag.	15***
	2 Intro. to Ag. I	24*	1 Ag. Bus. Mang.	6***
	2 Intro. to Ag. II	29**	1 Landscape	1*
	1 Hort. Prod. I	24*	1. Landscape/Turf	6***
	1 Hort. Prod. II	22**	1 PSAA	3***
	2 Greenhouse I	35*		
	2 Greenhouse II	35**		
	3 Ag. Mach/Power	25*		
	3 Ag. Mach/Power	24**		
	2 Ag. Const.	24*		
	2 Ag. Const.	13**		
	1 Resource/Conserv.	11*		
	1 Resource/Conserv.	14**		
	1 Resource/Mang.	14*		
	1 Resource/Mang.	14**		
<b>Business</b>	1 Accounting	7***	1 Accounting	12***
	3 Computer Software	19**	1 Accounting II	2***
	4 Keyboarding	46*	1 Keyboarding	18*
	1 Keyboarding	10**	1 Computers	18**
	2 Business Tech.	23***		

\* = first semester course      \*\* = second semester course      \*\*\* = full year offering

**COURSE COMPARISONS**  
(sections offered, course titles, number of students)

	<b>ALEDO</b>		<b>WESTMER</b>	
<b>Driver Ed/Health</b>	2 Health	31*	1 Health	25*
	2 Health	35**	1 Health	25**
	2 Driver Ed	36*	1 Dr. Ed./First Aid	22*
	2 Driver Ed	34**	1 Dr. Ed./First Aid	18**
<b>English</b>	4 English I	70***	2 English I	43***
	4 English II	63***	2 English II	32***
	4 English III	67***	2 English III	45***
	4 English IV	65***	1 English IV	15***
	1 English Comp 101	6**	1 Short Stories	6*
	1 Journalism	11*	1 Creative Writing	7**
	1 Speech	19**	1 Yearbook	14***
			1 Theatre	18***
<b>Family/Consumer Science</b>	2 Life	20***	2 Life	20***
	1 Child Growth	5*	1 Child Development	11*
	1 Adult Living	4*	1 Foods	17**
	1 Living Environment	3**	1 Restaurant Mtg.	16*
	1 Parenting	5**	1 Restaurant Mtg.	15**
	2 Study Skills	29***		
<b>Fine Arts</b>	1 Band	80***	1 Band	20***
	1 Chorus	43***	1 Chorus	26***
	2 Intro to Art I	39*	3 Orientation to Art	14**
	2 Intro to Art II	32**	3 Art II	6***
	1 Art I, III, V	22*	2 Advanced Art	6***
	1 Art III, IV, V	22**		
	1 2-D Design	16*		
	3 Multi-Media Art III	51*		
	3 Multi-Media Art IV	57*		
<b>Foreign Language</b>	3 Spanish I	53***	2 Spanish I	32***
	2 Spanish II	34***	1 Spanish II & III	7***
	1 Spanish III	13***	1 French I	4***
	1 Spanish IV	14***	1 French II & III	4***
	1 French I	11***		
	1 French II	8***		

\* = first semester course      \*\* = second semester course      \*\*\* = full year offering

**COURSE COMPARISONS**  
(sections offered, course titles, number of students)

	<b>ALEDO</b>		<b>WESTMER</b>	
<b>Industrial Arts/Vocational</b>	1 Intro to Woods	7***	3 Intro to Woods	24***
			2 Woodworking	16**
			2 Advanced Woods	6*
			1 Welding	5***
<b>Math</b>	3 Pre-Algebra	49***	2 Pre-Algebra	20***
	3 Algebra I	55***	2 Algebra I	47***
	3 Geometry	42***	2 Geometry	35***
	2 Algebra II	44***	1 Algebra II	21***
	2 Pre-Calculus	29***	1 Trigonometry	11***
	2 Calculus	23***	2 Math Review	41***
	1 Robotics	14***	1 PDM	7***
			1 Applied Math	9***
<b>Physical Education</b>	12 P.E.	228***	7 P.E.	139***
	3 Body Conditioning	46***		
<b>Science</b>	4 Biology	77***	3 Biology	40***
	2 Chemistry I	20***	1 Chemistry I	11***
	1 Chemistry II	3***	1 Chemistry II	3***
	4 Physical Science	71***	2 Physical Science	46***
	2 Physics I	19***	1 Physics	12***
	1 Physics II	7***	1 Earth Science	16*
	1 Applied Science	12***	1 Earth Science	21**
	3 Anatomy/Physiology	57***	1 Zoology	3*
			1 Anatomy	3**
<b>Social Studies</b>	4 American History	67***	2 U.S. History	43***
	1 Political Science	13*	1 Civics	15*
	1 Political Science	6**	1 Civics	15**
	1 World History	14***	2 World History	36***
	1 Sociology	36**	1 Sociology	12*
	4 Civics	75*	1 Psychology	14**
	1 Geography E.H.	10*	1 Geography	47***
	4 Geography W.H.	72**		
	1 Geography E.H.	10**		
2 World Government	19*			

\* = first semester course      \*\* = second semester course      \*\*\* = full year offering

Upon reviewing the high school curriculum offerings, it is evident that both school districts have made extensive efforts to maximize their resources to provide the best curriculum possible and to offer a variety of courses. Listed below is a comparison of the course offerings in each school district by selected academic disciplines for the 2006-2007 school year.

<u>Department</u>	<u>Aledo</u>	<u>Westmer</u>
Agriculture	12	6
Business	4	4
English	7	8
Family & Consumer Science	5	4
Fine Arts	10	5
Foreign Language	6	6
Math	7	8
Science	8	8
Social Studies	8	6
Vocational Arts	1	4

The two schools offer similar courses. Aledo offers 73 courses with 164 sections of those courses available to their students. Westmer offers 62 courses with 94 sections of those courses available to their students. Twelve of the 73 courses offered at Aledo have a student enrollment of 11 or less (16%). Twenty of the 62 courses offered at Westmer have a student enrollment of 11 or less (32%). Thirty-seven of Aledo's course offerings (51%) are only offered at one time on the course schedule. Forty-five of Westmer's course offerings (72%) are only offered at one time on the course schedule.

**ENROLLMENT**

Enrollment in the two school districts has been dropping steadily over the last decade. Both of these districts are rural in nature with Aledo (3,591) and New Boston (632) being the main towns in each district. The area has suffered from the loss of industrial positions in the Quad Cities to the north and Monmouth and Galesburg to the east. These lost jobs have

translated into a steadily dropping population. Farms have also increasingly become larger in size. As farm size and equipment increased in size, more and more rural houses were abandoned or torn down. All of these factors have led to a decrease in jobs and homes available. These in turn have led to a drop in the student enrollment.

A few new businesses may well be coming to the area. The new factory to build house sections in Aledo is a hopeful sign for the future but that appears to be the question. The new Super Walmart is apparently on hold. There is an overabundance of workforce already located in the area, which will fill most of the new positions. No huge turnaround in employment is likely to occur to change the trends of the last two decades.

The individual district projections for the school years 2007/2008 through 2011/2012 found on the following pages were compiled by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University, using current enrollments from the Illinois Department of Public Health birth statistics. The charts show a summary of the two district's enrollments in 1997, 2006, and those projected for 2011. The percentage of change over the last ten years and the projections for the upcoming five years are also given.

**A 15-Year Look at Enrollment Changes in the Two School Districts**

	<u>Fall 1997</u>	<u>Spring 2007</u>	<u>9 1/2 Year Change in Enrollment</u>	<u>Projected Fall 2011</u>	<u>Next 5 Yrs. Change in Enrollment</u>	<u>Projected 14 Year Change</u>
<b>Aledo</b>	1,083	892	-17.64%	829	-7.06%	-23.45%
<b>Westmer</b>	653	519	-20.52%	508	-2.12%	-22.21%
<b>Combined</b>	1,736	1,411	-18.72%	1,337	-5.24%	-22.98%

The preceding table shows negative enrollment history for both districts with a continuation of this trend through at least the 2011-2012 school year for both of the districts. Westmer has lost over twenty percent in the last nine and one-half years, but if projections are accurate, the district will lose less than one-half percent per year over the next five years (2.12% total). This would suggest that the huge losses of the last few years might well be over.

Over the 14-year period, Westmer will have lost 22.21% of its total student enrollment – leaving average class sizes of 39 students. This size creates two sections of 19 to 22 students each in the elementary. Obviously, this is too large for a one-section grade, but makes a somewhat small but workable two section per grade division. This would suggest that the elementary classes are at a nice size to maintain the two sections. The bigger problem occurs with the high school where the limited numbers will make it very difficult to justify or afford a broad and deep curriculum. It will mean a lot of singleton classes which are difficult to schedule and very expensive to operate. Combining with another district will alleviate some of this problem.

Aledo is in a very similar position, having lost 17.64 percent over the last nine and one-half years. While this is less of a loss than for Westmer, Aledo continues to lose at a fairly high rate over the next five years. The loss is projected to run at 1.4% per year for each of those five years; leaving a total loss of 23.45% over the 14 years. The projections suggest that Aledo will have two very nice sized sections per grade level. Class sizes will run at 23 to 24 in the lower elementary with at least two of the upper elementary grades requiring three sections. These three section grades will be somewhat expensive because of smaller section sizes.

Combining both districts, the projection is that the new district would have lost 23% over the fourteen-year period. By 2011, the combined district is projected to have an enrollment of

1,337 students. With a per grade average of 103 students, the district could have four sections of each grade at 26 students or five sections of 21 each. However, the grade level enrollment is actually lower in the primary grades in 2011-2012. The Kdg-2nd grade average size is 83 students. This means four sections of slightly less than 21 students per class. This is a nice number for the teachers, and an affordable level for the school district. For the higher grades, it would appear five sections of a nice size are feasible.

The projections for the next five years are based on the best information now available. The actual counts will vary based on what happens with employment in the area. The projections are for a continued loss but at a somewhat slower rate than over the last nine and one-half years. The high school would average about 105 students per class (419 total). This is still a workable sized high school in terms of being able to offer a good curriculum.

**WESTMER – C.U.S.D. #203**

Grade	Enroll 97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	Project 07-08	Enroll 08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12
K	48	39	37	54	31	43	47	40	34	52	43	43	38	38	38
1	53	44	39	38	48	32	39	45	46	32	51	42	43	37	37
2	52	52	49	42	40	46	31	34	47	38	32	52	42	43	37
3	50	56	50	49	43	36	42	34	36	50	38	32	52	42	43
4	41	52	55	54	46	45	35	41	36	39	51	39	33	52	43
5	44	43	56	55	53	52	39	35	48	33	40	52	40	34	54
6	45	47	44	53	58	50	49	42	30	43	33	40	52	39	34
7	54	53	46	50	46	54	38	47	41	31	42	32	39	50	38
8	58	55	54	45	45	44	49	43	49	38	31	42	32	39	50
9	51	58	53	58	50	60	60	54	44	52	43	35	47	35	43
10	57	53	55	50	46	43	48	47	52	38	46	38	31	42	32
11	44	55	49	43	41	33	33	29	38	40	30	37	30	25	33
12	56	40	46	48	44	44	39	34	35	33	41	31	38	31	25
Sum	653	647	633	639	591	582	549	525	536	519	521	514	515	508	508
Change		(6)	(14)	6	(48)	(9)	(33)	(24)	11	(17)	2	(7)	1	(7)	0

**ALEDO – C.U.S.D. #201**

Grade	Enroll 97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	Project 07-08	Enroll 08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12
K	85	67	78	64	61	79	73	67	62	65	53	54	47	47	47
1	67	88	71	71	72	59	81	71	65	64	63	51	53	45	45
2	73	62	79	70	66	73	58	79	69	60	65	64	52	53	46
3	87	75	63	76	71	74	76	57	77	66	67	73	71	58	60
4	77	87	77	64	75	67	71	72	54	79	62	63	69	67	55
5	83	81	88	75	66	77	65	71	71	55	81	64	65	70	69
6	73	77	79	83	78	75	79	67	73	65	63	92	73	74	80
7	88	73	81	83	88	76	75	76	65	73	63	61	90	71	72
8	86	94	74	76	83	85	80	74	75	63	71	61	59	87	68
9	91	82	93	70	69	82	86	77	79	74	62	70	60	58	86
10	94	86	90	90	72	71	77	83	72	75	76	64	72	62	60
11	86	97	85	89	89	76	71	77	86	76	79	80	68	76	66
12	93	82	101	80	84	88	72	72	72	77	75	78	79	67	75
Sum	1,083	1,051	1,059	991	974	982	964	943	920	892	881	876	857	836	829
Change		(32)	8	(68)	(17)	8	(18)	(21)	(23)	(28)	(11)	(4)	(19)	(21)	(7)

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA

The “Academic Performance” section of the 2006 Illinois District Report Card measures student performance based upon annual testing. The specific tests used to measure student performance are the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) and the American College Test (ACT). The ISAT annually measures student progress in reading and math by testing students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The ISAT annually measures student progress in science by testing students in grades 4 and 7. The PSAE and the ACT exams are given at the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and are used to measure educational retention for students in the areas of English, math, reading and science.

State and federal authorities examine the results of the testing. The federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) Act was passed in 2001 to monitor the academic progress of all public school districts. The NCLB Act requires that highly qualified teachers teach all students, that all students be educated in a safe, drug free environment and that all students graduate from high school. By 2013-2014, the Act requires high standards of achievement in the areas of reading, math and English. For the 2005-2006 school year, the Act required that 95% of all students be tested; that 47.5% of those tested must meet or exceed state standards in math and reading; that elementary attendance rates must be at least 89% and that high school graduation rates must be at least 69%. As noted below, students in the Aledo and Westmer school districts have exceeded the NCLB goals for the 2005-2006 school year.

	<b><u>Tested</u></b>	<b><u>Reading</u></b>	<b><u>Math</u></b>	<b><u>Attendance</u></b>	<b><u>Graduation</u></b>
<b>Aledo</b>	<b>99.8%</b>	<b>76.1%</b>	<b>86.2%</b>	<b>94.9%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Westmer</b>	<b>98.9%</b>	<b>58.4%</b>	<b>72.7%</b>	<b>94.8%</b>	<b>83.7%</b>
<b>NCLB</b>	<b>95.0%</b>	<b>47.5%</b>	<b>47.5%</b>	<b>89.0%</b>	<b>69.0%</b>

The following information is the reported results for the 2004-2005/**2005-2006** school year on the ISAT, PSAE and ACT exams:

# Illinois Standard Achievement Test Scores

(% of Students Who Met or Exceeded the State Standards)

2005 Results/2006 Results

<u>Grade 3</u>	Reading	Math	<u>Grade 4</u>	Science	Reading	Math
<b>Aledo</b>	86.0/77.6	87.7/94.7		91.7/98.2	<b>85.5</b>	<b>96.4</b>
<b>Westmer</b>	79.4/50.0	80.0/77.8		61.9/75.0	<b>61.1</b>	<b>72.9</b>
<b>State</b>	66.6/70.7	79.2/85.6		71.4/79.8	<b>72.9</b>	<b>84.8</b>
<u>Grade 5</u>	Reading	Math	<u>Grade 6</u>	Reading	Math	
<b>Aledo</b>	75.0/80.0	83.3/94.3		<b>79.4</b>	<b>88.2</b>	
<b>Westmer</b>	36.4/43.1	69.7/62.7		<b>48.5</b>	<b>78.8</b>	
<b>State</b>	62.8/68.5	73.1/78.6		<b>72.8</b>	<b>79.1</b>	
<u>Grade 7</u>	Science	Reading	Math	<u>Grade 8</u>	Reading	Math
<b>Aledo</b>	85.5/90.6	<b>73.4</b>	<b>82.8</b>		83.3/82.4	55.1/89.2
<b>Westmer</b>	89.4/76.9	<b>64.1</b>	<b>79.5</b>		76.7/80.9	53.5/85.1
<b>State</b>	74.6/80.9	<b>72.0</b>	<b>76.1</b>		72.7/79.2	54.3/78.2

## Prairie State Achievement Exam

(Percentage of Students Who Met or Exceeded the State Standards)

<u>Grade 11</u>	Reading	Math	Science
<b>Aledo</b>	54.2/52.4	59.7/58.3	50.0/52.4
<b>Westmer</b>	66.7/47.2	33.3/38.9	33.3/30.6
<b>State</b>	59.5/58.4	52.8/53.6	52.5/50.8

## American College Test (ACT)

	Composite	English	Math	Reading	Science
<b>Aledo</b>	20.6/20.1	20.5/19.6	19.9/19.9	20.7/20.2	20.4/20.3
<b>Westmer</b>	18.0/18.3	16.5/16.6	17.8/17.5	16.1/19.2	18.9/19.0
<b>State</b>	20.1/20.3	19.6/20.0	20.1/20.2	20.0/20.4	20.2/20.2

**Overall Performance  
(Percentage of Students Who Met or Exceeded the State Standards)**

	All State Tests	ISAT	PSAE
<b>Aledo</b>	73.3/ <b>79.6</b>	80.4/ <b>86.4</b>	54.6/ <b>54.4</b>
<b>Westmer</b>	63.9/ <b>63.3</b>	69.0/ <b>68.3</b>	44.4/ <b>38.9</b>
<b>State</b>	66.2/ <b>72.9</b>	69.2/ <b>77.0</b>	54.9/ <b>54.3</b>

When examining the student performance section of the 2006 Illinois District Report Cards for the two school districts, there are some areas in which student performance levels were below the State average. The 2006 State Report Card records student performance in the areas of reading and math at grade levels 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11. Student performance in the area of science is recorded at grades 4, 7 and 11. In 2006, Aledo's student scores were higher than the State average in all categories except in the Composite, English and Math categories of the ACT. Westmer student scores were below the State average in the following categories: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading and math; 4<sup>th</sup> grade science, reading and math; 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math; 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math; 7<sup>th</sup> grade science and reading; 11<sup>th</sup> grade reading, math and science, and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade ACT categories of composite, English, math, reading and science.

Both districts exceeded the NCLB guidelines for 2006.

**Extra-Curriculum Activities**

The following charts show the current extra-curriculum activities that are available during the 2006-2007 school year in the Aledo and Westmer school districts. There are 23 extra-curriculum activities available at Aledo High School and 10 extra-curriculum activities available at the Aledo Middle School. Westmer offers 19 extra-curriculum activities at Westmer High School and eight extra-curriculum activities at the Westmer Middle School.

### HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

	<b>ALEDO</b>	<b>WESTMER</b>
Football	54	38
Boys B.B.	19	22
Baseball	19	
Boys Golf	21	
Boys Track	30	20
Wrestling	26	
Cross Country Track		1
Girls B.B.	18	21
Softball	26	
Girls Golf	6	
Girls Track	20	19
Volleyball	29	37
Cheerleaders	20	12
Pom Pon	14	11
Band	80	72
Jazz Band	20	21
Chorus	44	21
Swing Choir	20	20
Vocal Music	44	54
Yearbook	24	14
Student Senate	0	12
Student Council	32	8
FAA	127	28
Scholastic Bowl	20	12
Spanish/French Club	12	47

### MIDDLE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

	<b>ALEDO</b>	<b>WESTMER</b>
Football	40	39
Boys B.B.	30	18
Boys Track	40	18
Wrestling	26	
Girls B.B.	30	32
Girls Track	30	14
Volleyball	30	34
Cheerleaders	16	8
Scholastic Bowl	20	12
Swing Choir	24	