

2005 Mecosta-Osceola Personnel Co-Op Proposal (to Superintendents)

The ISD and local districts have discussed shared services (in theory) over the past few years; there may be ways we can work together better to improve efficiency, quality, and the economic impact of services that we all use. One model that has been put together outside this ISD, is a Cooperative managed by the ISD, but “organized” by the locals through a shared-Board concept.

Denise Robinson and I went to Charlevoix-Emit ISD and Manistee ISD, both districts that are “up to their eyeballs” in services to the locals; mainly in the business office areas. By visiting these models, we were able to learn from them the ups and downs, the pitfalls and strengths, and the good parts of their model as well as the bad. In the end, I would like to recommend a blend of the two systems.

What we learned:

- 1) If local superintendents want to increase their quality, level of service, availability of expertise, etc... both of their models will work. This is a key reason to form it.
- 2) If locals want to save large amounts of money, this system probably won't produce that outcome. In the end, districts over 1,500 students appear to be at the cost savings point. The smaller the district, the greater the savings will be.
- 3) The best model to copy would be the model at the Manistee ISD. Once there is a Council in place as an oversight group, the political cooperation with the other local staff members is greater if the program is a Co-Op put together by the locals.
- 4) We have a sample document of the Manistee agreement. Since they have been down this road, they have already found and eliminated some of the pitfalls and snares to avoid. It was put together by Thrun. We are going to change it to be more generic to include other groups besides financial.
- 5) There is no reason why we can't set up a “personnel” Co-Op that could include technology, maintenance, and business (etc.) experts that could be shipped back to the locals in whole or part.
- 6) The ISD needs to be the fiscal agent, ultimately responsible for the employee's unemployment, administration, discipline, and responsibilities. The local Boards need to pass resolutions to be in the Co-Op so the program doesn't undergo significant changes every time a superintendent changes at the local level.
- 7) The Co-Op sets up the budget needed each year for tools, equipment, additional administration, vision, and possible needs for additional services.
- 8) There needs to be written agreements between the participating locals and the ISD to provide mutual ownership and divisions of responsibilities.
- 9) Flexibility needs to be the key concept when the set-up begins and throughout the evolutionary process. We will provide what the locals want, period.
- 10) Many of the “up-front” costs end up falling on the ISD until the program gets going and can sustain a life of its own.

As we begin the set-up stages of this agreement, it is important that all groups want to work together to provide a better system for the group. By setting up a “cooperative” arrangement, we can improve the quality of services and possibly save some money.