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# Enhancing Cooperative Education Programs for Indian Valley Conference High Schools

William R. Estes III

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Author

Enhancing Cooperative Education Programs

for Indian Valley Conference High Schools  
(TITLE)

BY

William R. Estes, III

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist In Education

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
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1991  
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
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Enhancing Cooperative Education Programs  
for Indian Valley Conference High Schools

William R. Estes, III

Eastern Illinois University

EDA 6910, Fall, 1990

### Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine the alternatives by which small rural schools in the Indian Valley Conference could offer a broader education base for their students through cooperative education programs. Data was collected by personal interviews from the principals of the thirteen Indian Valley Conference high schools. The study focused on four areas, a) the factors necessary for effective cooperative education programs, b) the advantages of cooperative education programs, c) the disadvantages of cooperative education programs, d) and the desire for increased participation in cooperative education programs.

The survey results, relative to the cooperative education program needs of the schools of the Indian Valley Conference, are analyzed qualitatively for type of response and quantitatively by frequency.

The research reviewed revealed that the factors for effective cooperative education programs include district and community involvement, program accessibility, and academic need. Financial need played a very small role as a factor for effective cooperative education programs. The primary advantage is academic, with economic and district advantages as minor factors. The major disadvantages are travel and scheduling. Ten of the thirteen schools indicated a desire to increase participation in cooperative education programs.

The study concludes with recommendations to successfully increase cooperative education programs to help solve academic limitations of the Indian Valley Conference districts. One recommendation is that cooperative education programs be organized in clusters to minimize the travel disadvantages. Another recommendation is that the programs be organized in two-period exchanges at the beginning and end of the day to minimize scheduling and travel problems. A third recommendation is that districts increase participation in satellite education. A final recommendation is that districts provide inservice (to present the facts as to the need for and advantages of cooperative education programs) to increase commitment from the school board, administrators, faculty, students, and community.

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## Chapter 1

### Overview of the Problem

Declining enrollments, which have resulted in decreased class sizes as well as the elimination of some programs, have brought about the sharing of academic classes between many small school districts. As shown in Table 1, in 1990-91 the thirteen high schools in the Indian Valley Conference have enrollments ranging from 42 to 145 students. Table 1 also depicts the general decline in enrollment for 1983-84 through 1990-91. Indian Valley Conference high schools are presently participating in cooperative education programs in order to provide the best education to their students. These cooperative education programs are of two types: (a) sharing of instructors and (b) sharing of students. The researcher is the principal of Wyanet High School.

Table 2 presents information regarding the present cooperative education arrangements. As a cost containment measure, Wyanet dropped a half-time Industrial Arts position. This reduction was possible because Western has a state certified industrial arts program. The cooperative saved approximately \$12,000 for Wyanet.

Due to the declining enrollment, Wyanet students attend Western for band. In a reciprocal agreement, Western sends its students to Wyanet for art classes. This cooperative agreement saves the salary of an art teacher (\$16,000), plus

Table 1

Enrollments of the  
Indian Valley Conference High Schools

<u>District</u>	<u>1983-84</u>	<u>1987-88</u>	<u>1990-91</u>
Neponset	70	52	42
Ohio	72	54	53
Wyanet	96	80	72
Depue	110	115	80
Manlius	85	79	83
Bradford	150	135	112
Tiskilwa	174	122	113
LaMoille	122	120	123
Annawan	173	163	124
Tampico	130	157	136
Wyoming	167	155	138
Western	127	134	141
Walnut	175	202	145
Totals	1651	1568	1362

all of the art equipment. In order to enhance offerings, commencing with the 1990-91 school year, the first two periods of the day are being used in some districts for the shared programs.

Table 2

Academic Cooperative Education  
Indian Valley Conference  
for 1990-1991

<u>District</u> <u>Sending Students</u> <u>to Cooperative</u> <u>Classes</u>	<u>District Providing</u> <u>Cooperative Class</u>
Neponset	Kewanee
Ohio	Princeton, Whiteside County
Wyanet	Western, Manlius, Tiskilwa
Depue	Hall
Manlius	Wyanet
Bradford	Wyoming
Tiskilwa	Wyanet
LaMoille	LaSalle-Peru
Annawan	Kewanee
Tampico	Sterling, Whiteside County
Wyoming	Bradford, Stark County
Western	Wyanet
Walnut	LaSalle-Peru
All	LaSalle-Peru (Area Vocational Center)

Other schools have taken advantage of the cooperative education programs in order to meet state mandates. Manlius

and Tiskilwa also send art students to Wyanet. Spanish and home economics have also been shared programs between these districts.

Wyoming and Toulon also share academic courses.

Industrial arts, art, English, and physical education are provided cooperatively in a two period exchange. Neponset shares academic classes with Kewanee in industrial arts, agriculture, art, English and physical education. To meet needs for advanced vocational courses, most of the schools in the Indian Valley Conference send students to the Area Vocational Center at LaSalle-Peru.

Through these cooperative programs, the Indian Valley Conference high schools have broadened curriculum offerings. Declining enrollment has been a driving force behind these cooperative education programs.

Declining revenues due to decreases in the assessed valuation of property is a major problem faced by Indian Valley Conference districts. Based on the data in Table 3, the assessed valuation of property for the Wyanet School District has decreased 23% from 1983-84 to 1990-91.

Wyanet, Annawan, and Western participate in United Star Network System. This means that each of these districts is able to offer courses via satellite that would not be available to students absent the TI-IN United Star Network program. The possible courses which could be offered by the

Table 3

Assessed Valuation of All Property for  
Wyanet School District

<u>1983-84</u>	<u>1987-88</u>	<u>Estimated 1990-91</u>
\$11,545,750	\$10,233,630	\$8,900,000

three districts are Latin I, Spanish I and II, AP/Honors English Literature, Anatomy and Physiology, Physics, Astronomy, Marine Science, Japanese, Trigonometry, Elementary Analysis, French I, German I, Psychology, Sociology, Russian, AP/Honors United States Government, and Staff Development Programs. The courses offered at Wyanet are AP/Honors English Literature, Astronomy, Marine Science, French I, and Staff Development. In addition, Wyanet has a C band receiver for satellite educational programs from other sources, both national and international. Annawan and Western also have down links with TI-IN.

Cooperative arrangements are also utilized for inter-scholastic athletics among the high schools. Almost all schools in the Indian Valley Conference are involved in cooperative football programs. Many schools have cooperative track programs. Without the cooperative programs, schools would be forced to terminate these athletic programs. Tables

4 and 5 show the cooperative athletic teams in football and track for the Indian Valley Conference schools.

Table 4

Extra-Curricular Cooperative Athletics  
Cooperative Teams for Football  
Indian Valley Conference  
for 1990-1991

---

<u>District</u>	<u>Cooperative District</u>
Annawan	Does not coop at this time
Bradford	Tiskilwa
Depue	Hall High School (not an IVC school)
LaMoille	Walnut
Manlius	Tampico
Neponset	Kewanee High School (not an IVC school)
Ohio	Does not have a team
Wyanet	Western
Wyoming	Princeville (not an IVC school)

---

As indicated in the preceding pages, schools in the Indian Valley Conference are utilizing cooperative

Table 5

Extra-Curricular Cooperative Athletics  
Cooperative Teams for Track  
Indian Valley Conference  
for 1990-1991

<u>District</u>	<u>Cooperative District</u>
Bradford	Tiskilwa
Manlius	Tampico
Wyanet	Western
Wyoming	Toulon (not an IVC school)

education programs as a means of ensuring that they meet state mandates and provide students with the broadest curriculum possible.

Problem

The thirteen Indian Valley Conference districts are within a thirty mile radius of Wyanet. (Wyanet is located approximately sixty miles north of Peoria, Illinois.) These districts, all of which are rural, are attempting to provide quality education. As enrollments decline and financial burdens increase, the schools are resorting to more cooperative education program agreements and telecommunication education.

Without cooperative education programs, Wyanet and the other Indian Valley Conference schools may have to annex or consolidate in order to survive. Through cooperative education programs these districts may be able to survive. The problem addressed by this study is: How can cooperative education programs within the Indian Valley Conference high schools be expanded?

#### Delimitations

The sample is limited because it includes only the principals from the thirteen Indian Valley Conference schools. For this reason, the results may be applicable only to the Indian Valley Conference schools. By design, the research questions focused on cooperative education programs. Thus, there was no attempt to pursue advantages and disadvantages of other types of organizational arrangements.

#### Definitions

The term *cooperative education program* refers to two or more districts sharing human resources and material resources. The term *telecommunication education* refers to courses taught via satellite.



## Chapter 2

### Rationale and Review of the Literature and Research

#### Rationale

Small rural school districts are facing crises in education due to declining enrollments and increasing financial problems. Possible responses to these problems include annexation, consolidation, and cooperative education programs. Annexation is the joining of one school district with an adjacent district. The absorbed school district has no assurance of representation on the school board. Consolidation is the process by which two or more districts combine to form a new district. A new board is elected for the consolidated district.

Since most small rural districts desire to maintain community control, annexation and consolidation may not be considered to be attractive alternatives. Research shows that small schools have some significant advantages over large schools (e.g., Barker, 1984). Cooperative education programs can provide districts with the means to increase curriculum offerings, share financial burdens, and maintain their existence.

The organization of this section includes advantages of small schools, research on cooperative education programs, and a summary of the research and literature.

### Advantages of Small Schools

O'Connell and Hagens (1985) found that advantages of small schools from the perspective of achievement are that the teachers are more likely to: (a) try innovative techniques, (b) perform administrative responsibilities, (c) work in a less pressured environment, and (d) be involved with the students and parents. Further, they indicate that smaller class size results in a less stressful environment and that teachers perceived that this has a positive influence on their morale and student achievement.

Since teachers in small schools suffer less from stress, their performance is enhanced. Small schools have the advantage of greater student and parent involvement. The interaction among students, parents, and teachers is often more personal than in larger schools. This personal interaction is beneficial for all parties involved.

Barker (1986), an advocate of small high schools with enrollments of less than 300, believes that small schools have lead the way for many educational innovations such as non-graded classrooms, individualized instruction, cross-age groupings, peer tutoring, and emphasis on basics. Efforts to reduce class size, use of community resources, and mainstreaming of mildly handicapped pupils also have their roots in small schools. Barker also indicates that there are other advantages in areas such as personal relationships, student morale, and teacher-student interaction.

According to Barker, smaller classes are more conducive to improved pupil performance and provide more opportunities to meet individual student needs. Students in smaller classes have more interest in learning. Teacher morale is also higher when classes are smaller.

Smaller schools can be more effective because they are safer, more orderly, offer an attractive school climate, have a clear mission, have higher expectations for student achievement, and have school leaders who emphasize instruction. In general, Barker concludes that small schools have many characteristics of effective schools and are, therefore, very advantageous.

Jones (1985) states that since small schools have advantages, any decision to close them should begin at the local level where choices of school district size can depend on parents' values. One argument that Jones presents is that the dropout rate is higher in larger schools. Jones questions the advantages reorganization offers to the one-fourth or more students who will not graduate as a result of having to attend a larger school.

#### Research on Cooperative Education

A committee from Hancock County, Michigan, conducted a study of nine small secondary schools with declining enrollments in Copper County, Michigan. There were eight considerations and options for cooperative education program sharing identified to the Michigan State Board of Education.

The four options that seemed to promote the highest interest for cooperative program sharing were:

1. Sharing in small school clusters--this method specifically refers to distance between schools and the amount of time it takes to get between schools to make the sharing workable.
2. Sharing in vocational education--different schools house specific areas of the total vocational programs.
3. Sharing by telecommunication--the technology of telecommunication provides courses, not economically feasible for the school, to rural schools to broaden the curriculum.
4. Sharing with higher education--this method helps keep schools abreast of current changes in education (Bruss, 1985).

Hull (1986) describes cooperation among rural schools as a means of improving education. For example, if one school has a good Spanish program and another school has a good French program, they could broaden each other's curriculum by cooperatively sharing. Special education cooperatives have been in existence for many years due to schools not having a large enough enrollment of special needs children to warrant classes. Cooperatives enables the smaller schools to provide a better education for their special needs children.

Vocational education is another area which has benefitted from cooperative education programs. With the expense of vocational education learning materials, it helps

financially and educationally for the smaller districts to send their students to one location.

Kidd (1986), based on experiences in Indiana, contends that consolidated school superiority is exaggerated. With proper planning and innovation, small schools can effectively share human, material, and financial resources. In addition, with the innovation of TI-IN and other satellite television networks throughout the country, students in smaller school districts can have the same courses available to larger schools.

#### Summary

Small schools do have many advantages for students. While small schools have financial and enrollment limitations, by using cooperative education programs in "clusters" small schools can broaden their curriculum to provide better educational opportunities. In addition, telecommunication technology provides the opportunity for offering classes which will help college bound students who otherwise might not have the opportunity.

The research cited gives credence to the idea of maintaining small school districts through cooperative education arrangements that broaden and enhance the curriculum.

### Chapter 3

#### Design of the Study

##### Design

The study employed qualitative research methods to identify factors necessary for effective cooperative education programs in the Indian Valley Conference. The factors necessary for cooperative education to work effectively were studied, as well as the perceptions which districts had regarding the advantages and disadvantages of cooperative education programs.

##### Sample

The sample is the principals of the thirteen high schools within the Indian Valley Conference. Not all of the high schools currently participate in cooperative education programs. The principals of the high schools were chosen because they manage the cooperative education programs and have the responsibility for solving related problems.

##### Instrument

The survey instrument was designed to determine the criteria for a successful cooperative education programs for the schools in the Indian Valley Conference. It utilized an open-ended format in order to elicit each principal's opinions. Four aspects of cooperative education programs were explored. The first question addressed the factors necessary for cooperative education programs to work

effectively. The second and third questions focused on advantages and disadvantages of cooperative education programs. The final question measured the desire for increased participation in cooperative education programs.

#### Data Collection

The data were collected by personal interviews for ten of the thirteen high school principals in the Indian Valley Conference. Three principals were unavailable for the personal interviews and were contacted by phone. All items for each survey were completed.

#### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively. Frequency of response types was also utilized. The results were compiled and compared across questions to determine optimum cooperative education programs for the Indian Valley Conference.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### Overview

The four research questions addressed are:

1. What factors are necessary for all cooperatives to work effectively from the perspective of your district?
2. From the perspective of your district, what are the advantages of cooperative education?
3. From the perspective of your district, what are the disadvantages of cooperative education?
4. Do you perceive that your district wants to increase participation in cooperative education?

The results are presented separately for each question, followed by a summary which presents the researcher's interpretation of their meaning.

#### Results for Question 1

Question 1: What factors are necessary for all cooperatives to work effectively from the perspective of your district?

The results for question 1 are presented in Table 6. Overall there were 44 responses. The quantitative analysis reveals that the responses represent four general categories: (a) district and community involvement, (b) program accessibility, (c) academic need, and (d) financial need. The specific concerns for each district are listed under each category.



Table 6

Survey ResultsQuestion 1


---

What factors are necessary for all cooperatives to work effectively from the perspective of your district?

---

District and Community Commitment

(16 Responses)

Annawan	Mutual cooperation Open communication
Bradford	Supervisors
Manlius	Understanding that coop is not as smooth as with students coming only from your own school Agreement outlining what all parties will provide
Neponset	Common need
Ohio	Desire for cooperation of all districts involved Commitment to do what is best for the students
Tampico	Common bond, citizens working together
Tiskilwa	Cooperative attitude between districts Excellence of teaching staff
Walnut	Student oriented programs, not mandated
Western	Agree to remain flexible
Wyanet	Understanding between the communities
Wyoming	Administration willing to solve problems as they occur Teacher must be good and want the program to succeed

Program Accessibility

(12 Responses)

Travel Time

Bradford	Proximity of work stations to district
Depue	Proximity to school, time to transport
LaMoille	Accessible to students
Manlius	Proximity to school
Tampico	Geography
Wyoming	Students willing to travel

Scheduling

Bradford	Adequate number of work stations
Depue	Availability of a class
Depue	School calendars
LaMoille	Schedule that allows schools to participate
Manlius	Schedule that allows schools to participate
Wyanet	Flexibility in scheduling

Academic Need

(11 Responses)

Bradford	Student interest in program
Depue	Academically sound
Depue	Actual need, not a fad
LaMoille	Program need, not met through other means
LaMoille	Programs not currently offered, desirable but not necessary
Neponset	Common need for the program
Tiskilwa	Need the program
Walnut	Improve, increase or embellish student learning
Wyanet	Academic need by both schools
Wyoming	Public must see a need for the program
Wyoming	Student interest in the program

Financial Need

(5 Responses)

Annawan	Proportional financial sharing
Depue	Economics
LaMoille	More economical
Neponset	Unable to provide on your own
Ohio	Agreement on financial costs

---

Of the 44 total responses, 16 (34%) were in the district and community commitment category. The category titled program accessibility accounted for 12 (27%) responses. Academic need, the third category, accounted for 11 (25%) responses, with the last category (financial need) having 5 (11%) responses.

Increased program accessibility would require cooperative education programs to be arranged in clusters with school districts relatively close to each other. In order for cooperative education programs to succeed, districts and communities must value the programs. The school districts must promote the programs to students, staff, and community. In sum, according to the principals, the important factors necessary for all cooperatives to work effectively are district and community commitment, program accessibility, and academic need. Principals viewed financial need as less important.

#### Results for Question 2

Question 2: From the perspective of your district, what are the advantages of cooperative education?

The results for question 2 are presented in Table 7. Overall there were 27 responses. The quantitative analysis reveals that the responses represent three general categories of advantages: (a) academic, (b) economic, and (c) district.

Of the 27 total responses, 16 (59%) were in the category of academic advantages. The second category, economic advantages, accounted for 7 (26%) responses, while district advantages, the third category, accounted for 4 (15%) responses. From the perspectives of the respondents, the primary advantages of cooperative education are academic

Table 7

Survey Results  
Question 2

---

From the perspective of your district, what are the advantages of cooperative education?

---

Academic Advantages

(16 Responses)

Annawan	Increased curriculum Increased motivation for learning
Bradford	Increased curriculum providing additional opportunities for students entering the work force after high-school graduation
Depue	Increase curriculum, teachers of small groups will be relieved for other course offerings Increase curriculum to offer high priority low enrollment courses
LaMoille	Provide the best educational opportunity for the students.
Manlius	Increase curriculum to include classes unavailable in the current course offerings
Neponset	Increase curriculum, broaden offerings Provide better education, meet more student needs
Ohio	Challenge students to their full potential
Tiskilwa	Increase curriculum by providing programs that the district cannot offer. Increase curriculum, broaden curriculum base.
Walnut	Increase curriculum through increased course offerings Increased teaching effectiveness as a result of intense focus on a particular area
Western	Increase curriculum by providing programs that the district cannot offer
Wyoming	Increase curriculum, broaden curriculum base.

Economic Advantages

(7 Responses)

## Cooperative Education Programs

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Depue	Cheaper to send a student to coop for 1 or 2 classes than to pay a teacher to teach 1 or 2 students
Manlius	Financially advantageous
Neponset	Cost saving
Tampico	Financial savings
Walnut	Shared costs.
Wyanet	Save money by reduction in staff
Wyoming	More cost effective education

### District advantages

(4 Responses)

Manlius	Cooperatives will be the predecessors to school consolidation, eliminating rural high schools of fewer than 100 students, creating consolidated schools of 400 to 500 students.
Western	Cooperative programs enable districts to meet the mandates imposed by the 1985 Educational Reform Act. Cooperative programs enable districts to receive full recognition from ISBE.
Wyanet	Cooperative programs enable districts to meet state mandates

---

advantages. Economic and district factors were identified as advantages by far fewer principals. In sum, the primary advantages of cooperative education are academic advantages.

### Results for Question 3

Question 3: From the perspective of your district, what are the disadvantages of cooperative education?

The results for question 3 are presented in Table 8. The respondents provided a total of 26 responses. The quantitative analysis reveals that the responses reflect three general categories: (a) distance disadvantages, (b) scheduling disadvantages, and (c) district disadvantages.

Table 8

Survey Results  
Question 3

---

From the perspective of your district, what are the disadvantages of cooperative education?

---

Distance Disadvantages

(15 Responses)

Annawan	Time spent traveling as well as safety factors
Bradford	Trying to locate work stations that are within a reasonable proximity of the school
LaMoille	Student time away from the home district lessens district control and lessens parent involvement Cooperative education sacrifices educational time for travel time
Manlius	Travel time for either the student or the teacher is time lost from educational time.
Neponset	Problems providing transportation Travel time is time lost from educational time
Tiskilwa	Transportation problems
Walnut	Generally increase transportation needs and costs Travel time to and from coops detracts from a student's productive in-school time
Western	Schools need to offer multiple sections to cut down on loss of instructional time due to transportation
Wyanet	Transportation requires extra routes Travel time takes up time for education
Wyoming	Transportation requirements are increased due to cooperative programs Educational time is reduced due to travel time

Scheduling Disadvantages

(8 Responses)

LaMoille	Calendars do not always match causing scheduling conflicts for students
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Manlius	Scheduling is often difficult, if not impossible, to mesh for participating schools Area vocational class offerings infringe on the local district's scheduling abilities
Neponset	Difficulties in working out schedules
Tiskilwa	Difficulties with scheduling
Western	Scheduling problems require school day and school calendars to be as similar as possible
Wyanet	Schools must cooperate in scheduling classes and times
Wyoming	Scheduling problems for students

District Disadvantages

(3 Responses)

Tampico	Cooperative programs might lead to possible consolidation, an unacceptable concept for the community
Walnut	Much time and effort is expended by the administrative district to meet legal requirements Additional buildings are needed to house cooperative programs

District disadvantages accounted for 15 (58%) of the 26 total responses. The second category, scheduling disadvantages, accounted for 8 (31%) responses. District disadvantages, the final category, accounted for 3 (12%) responses. The major disadvantages of cooperative programs involve travel time and transportation problems. Almost a third of the principals cited scheduling disadvantages. Three other disadvantages were mentioned by two principals.

Cooperative education programs organized in clusters, among districts relatively close to each other, can minimize the travel disadvantages. Scheduling cooperative education

programs in two-period blocks of time, at the beginning and the end of the day, can minimize schedule disadvantages as well as travel disadvantages.

The factors identified as necessary for effective cooperatives determined in Table 6 were compared with the categories for advantages identified in Table 7 and the disadvantages identified in Table 8. Table 9 displays a matrix comparing factors for effective cooperative education programs with identified advantages and disadvantages. Of the 44 factors for effective cooperative education programs, 17 were in the advantages categories, 12 were in the

Table 9

Factors Necessary for  
Effective Cooperative Education Programs  
Compared Against Advantages and Disadvantages

	<u>Advan-</u> <u>tages</u>	<u>Disadvan-</u> <u>tages</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Total</u>
Program				
Accessibility	0	12	0	12
District and 4 Community Commitment	0	12	16	
Academic Need	8	0	3	11
Financial Need	5	0	0	5
Total	17	12	15	44



disadvantages category, and 15 were in the neutral category (neither an advantage nor a disadvantage). The category of program accessibility accounted for all of the listed disadvantages. In summary, effective cooperative education programs must maximize the advantages, including the district and community commitment, academic need, and financial need. At the same time, effective cooperative education programs must minimize the disadvantages, program accessibility.

#### Results for Question 4

Question 4: Do you perceive that your district wants to increase participation in cooperative education?

The results for question 4 are presented in Table 10. Ten of the 13 schools (77%) wanted to increase their level of participation, while only three (23%) chose not to increase their participation. The responses indicate that a majority of the districts want to increase their participation in cooperative education.

Survey results indicate that the principals perceive distinct advantages and disadvantages for cooperative education programs. Principals have definite ideas about the factors needed to ensure effective cooperative education programs for the Indian Valley Conference schools. While some schools are not interested in increasing their participation in cooperative education programs, most schools are interested.

Table 10

Survey ResultsQuestion 4


---

Do you perceive that your district wants to increase participation in cooperative education?

---

Yes

Annawan	Increased curriculum offerings and efficient expenditures
Manlius	Due to loss of staff and necessity of cost conservation, but move slowly, after scheduling and travel problems have been resolved
Neponset	Maintain school identity (as opposed to annexation or consolidation)
Ohio	Academic cooperatives to provide required classes for graduation as well as challenging classes otherwise unavailable
Tampico	Only if cooperative programs do not lead to consolidation
Tiskilwa	If cannot attract quality teachers
Walnut	Increased and improved student offerings and increased student participation
Western	To provide vocational education
Wyanet	To provide a broader curriculum and to survive as a community school
Wyoming	Opportunity for students to take programs not otherwise available

No

Bradford	Previous problems with securing work stations and not enough student interest
Depue	Cooperative programs will help now, but state will intensify towards reorganization which the community does not want
LaMoille	No loss of educational time due to travel, no schedule conflicts, safer to maintain program within district, own district provides community-school contact and support, and economic advantages

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## Chapter 5

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Summary

Many small rural Illinois school districts are facing financial difficulty due to declining enrollments and decreases in assessed valuation of farm land. This study investigated the opportunities available to provide students quality education through cooperative education programs between school districts and through telecommunication education via satellite. This study also used survey techniques to examine the perceptions of administrators relative to the cooperative education needs of the schools in the Indian Valley Conference. Research and literature were reviewed to gain perspective as to what has been done with cooperative education programs to make them effective.

The administrators (principals) of the Indian Valley Conference were surveyed regarding various aspects of cooperative education as to how it would affect each school district. The research focused on four areas: (a) factors that make cooperative education programs effective, (b) advantages of cooperative education programs, (c) disadvantages of cooperative education programs, and (d) the desire of districts to increase cooperative education programs.

Summary of Results for Question 1

Question 1: What factors are necessary for all cooperatives to work effectively from the perspective of your district?

From the perspective of the principals, the factors necessary for cooperative education programs to work effectively include four general categories: (a) district and community commitment, (b) program accessibility, (c) academic need, and (d) financial need. District and community commitment include mutual cooperation to do what is best for the students, teachers and administrators who want the program to succeed, and communication to insure understanding between the communities and schools. Program accessibility includes proper planning to allow participation in spite of the travel (time and distance) and scheduling limitations. Academic need includes student and community interest in courses that are necessary, but not currently available. Financial need focuses on the ability to provide more economical education through shared programs.

Summary Results for Question 2

Question 2: From the perspective of your district, what are the advantages of cooperative education?

The principals' replies indicated that the advantages of cooperative education could be categorized into three types:

- (a) academic advantages, (b) economic advantages, and
- (c) district advantages. Academic advantages include

increased curriculum and increased opportunities to meet students' needs. Economic advantages include more cost-effective programs made possible through shared costs and shared programs. District advantages included the ability to meet state mandated programs through cooperative education programs.

#### Summary Results for Question 3

Question 3: From the perspective of your district, what are the disadvantages of cooperative education?

Responses from the principals indicated that the disadvantages of cooperative education programs include travel disadvantages, scheduling disadvantages, and district disadvantages. Travel disadvantages focused on travel time to cooperative education programs and on increased transportation requirements. Schedule disadvantages included difficulties in working out schedules both at the daily level and at the calendar-year level. District disadvantages include additional administration time and effort, and the possibility of cooperative education programs leading to consolidation.

#### Summary Results for Question 4

Question 4: Do you perceive that your district wants to increase participation in cooperative education?

In summary, the responses indicated that a majority of the districts desired to increase their participation in

cooperative education programs. The school administrators who did not want to increase participation cited problems with scheduling or travel time and a concern that cooperative education programs will lead to consolidated programs, rather than community-based programs.

### Conclusions

Cooperative education programs, including use of telecommunications, provide one solution to the financial and enrollment difficulties faced by the small rural high schools in the Indian Valley Conference in the context of offering a quality education program. Cooperative education programs must be designed to incorporate the factors identified through the research as necessary to be effective. Three of the four factors--district and community involvement, academic need, and financial need--were listed as advantages. The fourth factor, program accessibility, was the major disadvantage listed. When properly organized, cooperative education programs can enable districts to increase curriculum offering and to share costs of providing programs. Through careful planning, the major disadvantages of cooperative education programs--distance and travel time--can be minimized. One major advantage of cooperative education programs is that they maintain the community-based schools as opposed to the other reorganizational plans (annexation and consolidation) which create new school districts.

### Recommendations

The writer recommends that the high schools in the Indian Valley Conference increase their cooperative education programs. However, the increased cooperative education programs must be well planned to maximize the advantages and to minimize the disadvantages that were identified by the survey results.

The writer also recommends that the cooperative education programs be organized in *clusters* to provide maximum effectiveness and to minimize the time and distance disadvantages. The concept of clusters implies that the cooperative arrangements be made with schools which are relatively close in distance. Minimizing the distances traveled will diminish problems with the amount of travel time.

The writer also recommends that the arrangements be made in two-period time blocks to provide maximum opportunity for students to participate and also to reduce travel-time constraints. These two-period time blocks should be scheduled for the first and last two periods of the school day. This two-period organization minimizes schedule problems within the individual daily school schedules, since students will complete two classes at the cooperative school. This organization also reduces travel constraints because there is only one interruption during the school day.

The researcher further recommends that schools increase participation in telecommunication education.

Telecommunication education provides a broader base of educational opportunities such as foreign languages and advanced placement courses. Schools which have satellite communication accessibility would provide cooperative opportunities for other schools within the clusters.

In order for the cooperative education programs to work, there must be a commitment from the school board, administrators, teachers, students, and also from the community. The school administrators should provide inservice programs for the faculty and staff. The administrators should conduct faculty and staff meetings to present the facts as to the need for cooperative education programs. Administrators should emphasize the advantages, especially the academic advantages, for cooperative education programs. The time and distance disadvantages should also be discussed. After building commitment within the faculty and staff, the administrators should provide similar programs to inform the students and the community. In particular, these informative programs should stress the ability to maintain the community-based schools while providing increased educational opportunities for the students. The ultimate goal is to create the school and community support necessary for effective cooperative education programs.



Cooperative education programs among clusters of schools can provide academic, vocational, athletic, and financial support to supplement existing community schools. Through well planned and implemented cooperative education programs, schools can continue to be community-based schools.

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