

Iowa Falls School Board

Sharing Statement March 14th, 2016

Presented at the Joint Board Meeting
Copy provided to Iowa Falls Times Citizen

On behalf of the Iowa Falls School Board, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Alden School Board, administration, staff, and community for the past twelve years as our partners in education. As elected school board members of the Iowa Falls Community School District, it is our duty and obligation to make informed decisions that are in the best interest of our students, staff, and community. Having reviewed extensive research, data, and findings we have concluded that Iowa Falls' 6th grade students are best educated in Iowa Falls.

In the April 28th, 2015 Study Committee report, it states that "in general, the fewer the transitions the better it is for students." Research shows that the fewer transitions students must make between school buildings during their PK-12 education, the better they learn. Fewer transitions mean that longer relationships develop between students, teachers, and parents. In general, the longer the relationships, the better it is for student learning. Research has also documented that there is an overall drop in achievement in the first year when students transition from one school to another school. Some students regain what is lost the following year. However, there would be no need for the make-up of lost achievement if the transition did not take place.

After a thorough review of our own Iowa Falls students' test scores, the results substantiate and prove the research. It is in the educational best interest of the Iowa Falls students to eliminate one transition in their academic career. According to research and the history of achievement scores, Iowa Falls is the correct place for the Iowa Falls 6th graders to learn and continue their education. This will also eliminate approximately 30 minutes per day of lost instructional time due to transportation. In a given year, Iowa Falls' 6th grade students have approximately 14 fewer instructional days in comparison to Alden 6th grade students, and five fewer instructional days than students who are educated at Riverbend Middle School.

Posted below is an excerpt from our data analysis on student achievement:

TRANSITION COMPARISONS: IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

Iowa Falls' students have a transition from 5th grade to 6th grade whether they attend school in Iowa Falls or Alden. Based on research, scores are likely to drop during the first year of a transition. So, is there a difference in the percent of student proficiency for Iowa Falls' students when they transitioned from Rock Run Elementary School to Riverbend Middle School before the start of whole grade sharing compared to when they transitioned from Rock Run Elementary School to Alden Elementary School after the start of whole grade sharing? The table below displays the average drop in the percent of proficiency for Iowa Falls' 5th grade students five years prior to whole grade sharing and after the start of whole grade sharing.

	Before Whole Grade Sharing Drop in Percent Proficient * From 5th to 6th Grade Transition	After Whole Grade Sharing Drop in Percent Proficient * From 5th to 6th Grade Transition	Difference Before and After Whole Grade Sharing
Reading	- 3.60%	- 15.56%	11.96%
Math	- 4.80%	- 9.78%	4.98%
Science	- 1.60%	- 8.00%	6.40%

* Based on scores on the Iowa Assessments as provided by Iowa Testing Programs.

The answer to the aforementioned question is "yes". Yes, there is a difference in the drop in student proficiency before and after whole grade sharing. Iowa Falls' 5th grade students experienced a bigger drop in the percent of proficiency when they transitioned to Alden instead of Riverbend - especially in reading.

In his presentation to the Iowa Falls-Alden Joint School Board Meeting on March 18, 2013, AEA 267 Chief, Roark Horn stressed the importance of keeping a sharp focus on student opportunities and student achievement. He advised both school boards to, ***"Continue to make decisions based on student opportunities and student achievement. There are other factors such as staffing, facilities, tax rates, transportation, student activities, etc.), but nothing trumps student opportunities and student achievement."*** The Iowa Falls School Board will not ignore the statistical findings and research. We would not be fulfilling our duties as a school board if we did not make a decision in the best educational interest of the Iowa Falls students. We have the space and the resources to educate the Iowa Falls 6th graders in Iowa Falls in a nurturing and safe environment while providing them with a quality education without an unnecessary transition.

The Iowa Falls School District has the financial ability to educate the Iowa Falls students with or without a sharing agreement. Our need to keep the Iowa Falls 6th graders in Iowa Falls is based solely on their best interests and educational needs. In Alden's Whole Grade Sharing Statement, the board states that Iowa Falls would retain \$125,000 based on the current 6th grade sharing agreement. This number is irrelevant in our findings. Our decision to keep the Iowa Falls 6th grade students in Iowa Falls is not based on a financial gain nor loss. However, since the financial issue has been raised it's important to know that Iowa Falls will retain \$94,443.00 not \$125,000 in the 2015-2016 Fiscal Year. Further, this number is offset by transportation costs estimated to be approximately \$48,500 for a total retention of \$45,943.00. In addition, the Alden Community School District will retain at least \$83,403 by sending their 7th through 12th graders to Iowa Falls.

Therefore, it is the intent of the Iowa Falls School Board to educate Iowa Falls 6th graders in Iowa Falls after the current sharing agreement expires. We respectfully disagree with the Alden School Board's statement that "any change from our current agreement would be a step backwards and provide no discernable benefit to the educational experience we provide our children." To not make a change for the Iowa Falls 6th graders would be a step backwards in their academic progress due to the additional transition.

The current sharing agreement was originally put in place with the hope of future consolidation. As a board, we respect Alden's resolve not to consolidate at this time. (Alden School Board Whole Grade Sharing Statement, Feb. 15, 2016). The Iowa Falls School Board values a sharing agreement with the Alden Community School District, and extends an invitation to the Alden School Board to engage in a one-way sharing agreement with whatever grade levels Alden determines best for their students' education once the current sharing agreement expires.

Once again, we thank the Alden School Board, administration, staff, and community for the past twelve years as sharing agreement partners.

Respectfully submitted,
Iowa Falls Community School Board

