

Select Committee on Tribal Relations Report

As submitted by Fremont County Schools



Introduction

At the request of the Wyoming Legislature's Select Committee on Tribal Relations, Fremont County Schools have compiled the number and percentage of Native American students and staff in each district. The Committee also requested that schools discuss and report back on pros and cons of consolidation and ways to become more effective and efficient in operations.

Native American School Statistics

The population of Fremont County, as of the 2010 census, was 40,123. The Native American population accounts for 8,498 of the county's 40,123 residents according to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Fremont County is one of the larger counties in the state and encompasses 9,266 square miles.

The Wyoming Department of Education reports student enrollment in Fremont County public schools in 2016-17 as 6,645 students, of which 2,243 or 33.75% were Native American students.

The enrollment figures below were provided by Fremont County schools for the 2017-18 school year.

Fremont C.S.D.#1

Fremont County School District #1, located in Lander, serves 1,819 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 205 Native American students and employs 2 Native American staff.

Fremont C.S.D.#2

Fremont County School District #2, located in Dubois, serves 146 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 4 Native American students and employs no Native American staff.

Fremont C.S.D.#6

Fremont County School District #6, located in Pavillion, serves 415 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 114 Native American students and employs 3 Native American staff.

Fremont C.S.D.#14

Fremont County School District #14, located in Ethete, serves 632 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 618 Native American students and employs 13 Native American staff.

Fremont C.S.D.#21

Fremont County School District #21, located in Fort Washakie, serves 516 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 516 Native American students and employs 18 Native American staff.

Fremont C.S.D.#24

Fremont County School District #24, located in Shoshoni, serves 391 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 10 Native American students and employs 2 Native American staff.

Fremont C.S.D.#25

Fremont County School District #25, located in Riverton, serves 2,542 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 662 Native American students and employs 13 Native American staff and 2 Native American School Resource Officers.

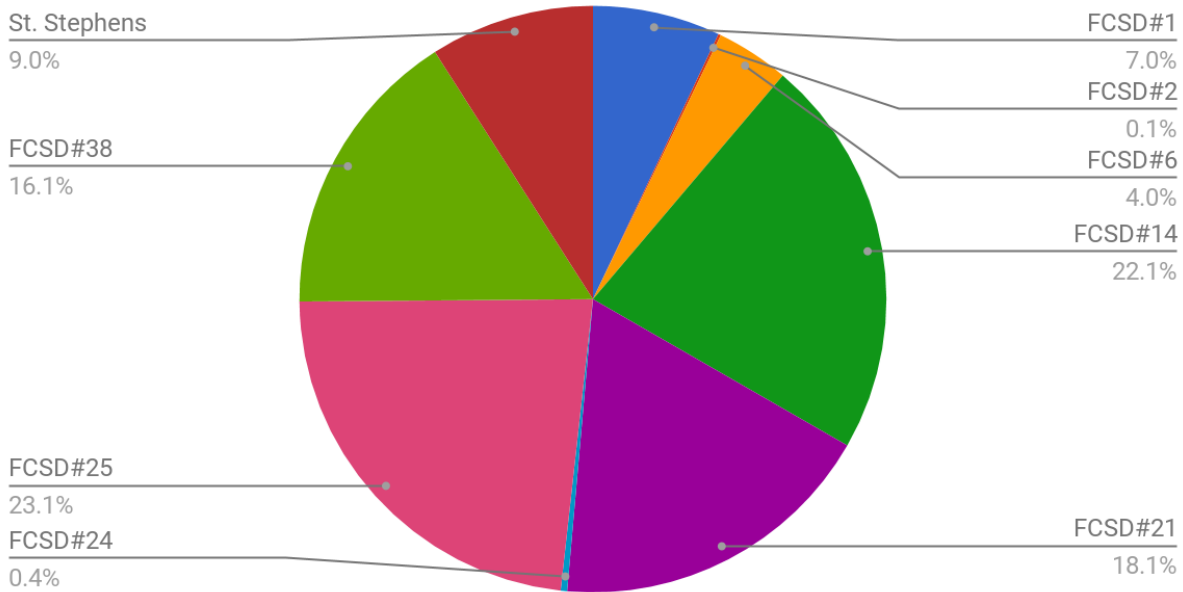
Fremont C.S.D.#38

Fremont County School District #38, located in Arapahoe, serves 450 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 444 Native American students and employs 11 Native American staff.

St. Stephens BIE School

St. Stephens Bureau of Indian Education School, located in St. Stephens, serves 248 students K-12. The district provides educational services for 248 Native American students and employs 7 Native American staff.

Percentage of County-wide Native American Students Enrolled Per District



Consolidation

Fremont County School District Superintendents and Business Managers met on numerous occasions to discuss the pros and cons associated with consolidation. It is the consensus of the group that collaboration between districts capitalizes on the efficiencies of consolidation pros without the cons.

Pros

From a cost reduction perspective, the pros of consolidation are:

- Decreased costs through the reduction of administrative positions. However, those positions would be replaced by lower paid assistant positions due to the increased responsibilities the larger districts would absorb and the volume of reporting required by the State and federal government. Typically, the lower paid assistant positions in larger districts are similar to the pay of top positions in smaller districts due to lower salary schedules.
- Consolidation of services and leveraging purchasing power. This pro is being reviewed further in discussions with the Fremont County Administrators Association (FCAA).

Cons

The disadvantages of consolidation are:

- Reduction of the level of local control and sense of school ownership in rural areas
- Adverse economic impact on small communities with districts as the number one employer and those employees as consumers/residents within their communities
- State efforts, such as ENDOW, look to “keep our young people in Wyoming” and seek to promote the availability of jobs in Wyoming for holders of bachelors’ and masters’ degrees. Young families will look not only for job availability but seek quality communities and schools.
- Large dollar savings in consolidation come with the closure of schools.
- Closure of schools would result in increased travel time for students. Some students currently ride the bus over one hour to get to the nearest school.
- Federal Impact Aid funding would be negatively affected along with federal requirements on the State to negate that negative impact
- Increase travel time and costs for staff to travel to rural schools

Current Areas of Collaboration Between Fremont County School Districts

The Fremont County Administrators Association (FCAA) bring together school superintendents, Central Wyoming College BOCHES, and Fremont County BOCES. The following is a list of projects/initiatives that have been generated through this county-wide association:

- Professional Development - Partnering with districts, TLQ grants
- Job Corp
- Training for substitute teachers
- Training for bus drivers
- Course offerings in Career Technical Education
- The Native American Education/Career Conference held annually to promote college and career readiness
- Dual/concurrent enrollment courses
- Common academic outcomes for transitioning from Fremont County high schools to Central Wyoming College to reduce the need for college remedial courses
- Student training through Fremont County Prevention Services
- The establishment of the Fremont County Day Reporting Center (formerly the juvenile detention center) to serve the educational needs of any student in juvenile detention or experiencing school expulsion

Members of the FCAA are holding discussions on collaborative efforts for shared contracts for special education services (Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech Language Pathologist), procurement policies to leverage purchasing power, and development of computer science courses.

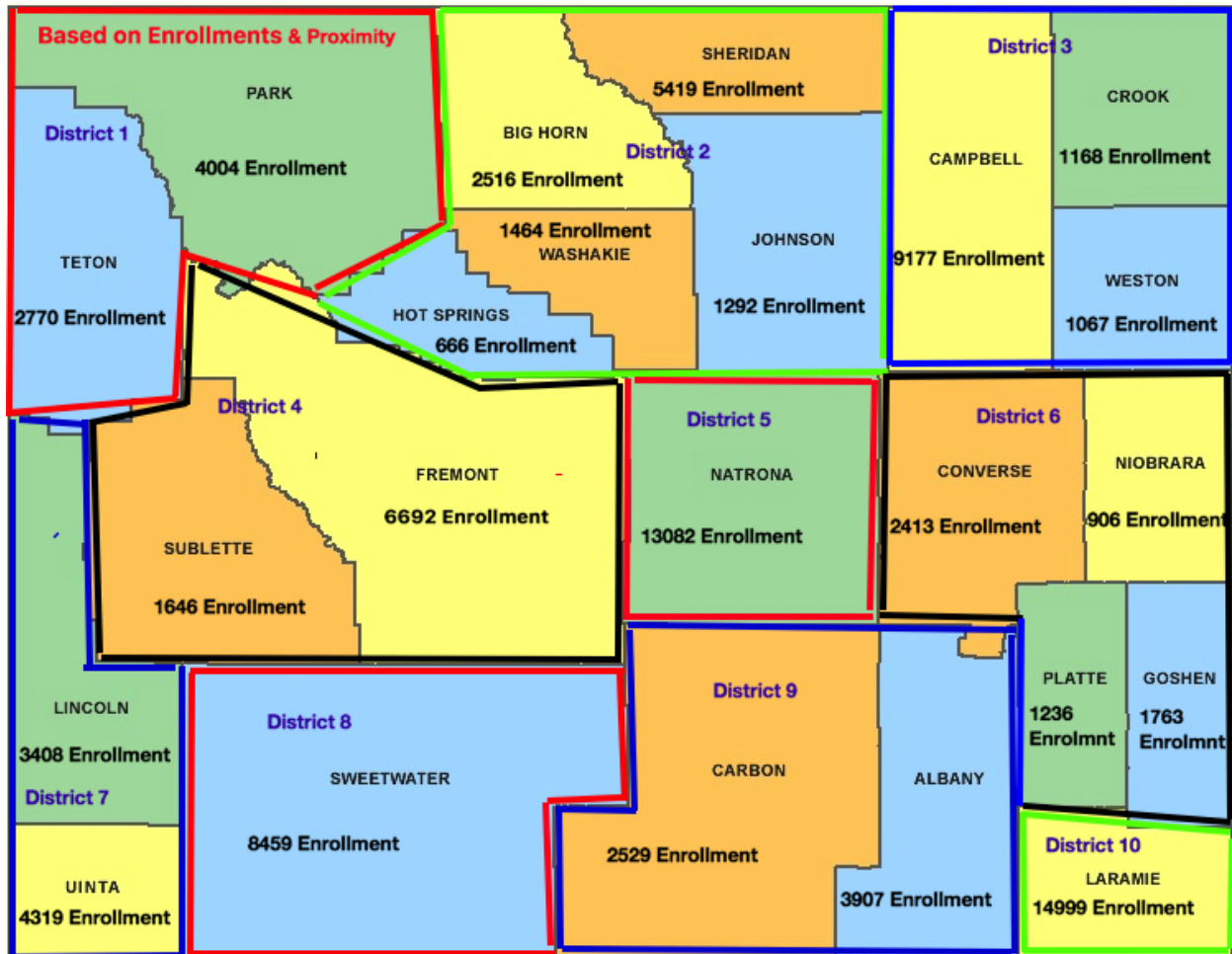
Number of Districts for Consolidation

Question: Is 48 a reasonable number of school districts for the State of Wyoming? School consolidations have occurred across the states. For example, in 1985 Nebraska had 984 school districts. In 2014 it had 254 school districts with an average of 1,211 students per district. South Dakota has 869 students per district. Montana and North Dakota have fewer students per district than South Dakota. Wyoming has 93,261 students in its 48 school districts for 1,942 students per district. Maybe the number should be higher or maybe it should be lower, but it definitely appears 48 school districts for the State of Wyoming is reasonable.

What measure of equity would Wyoming use if considering consolidation?

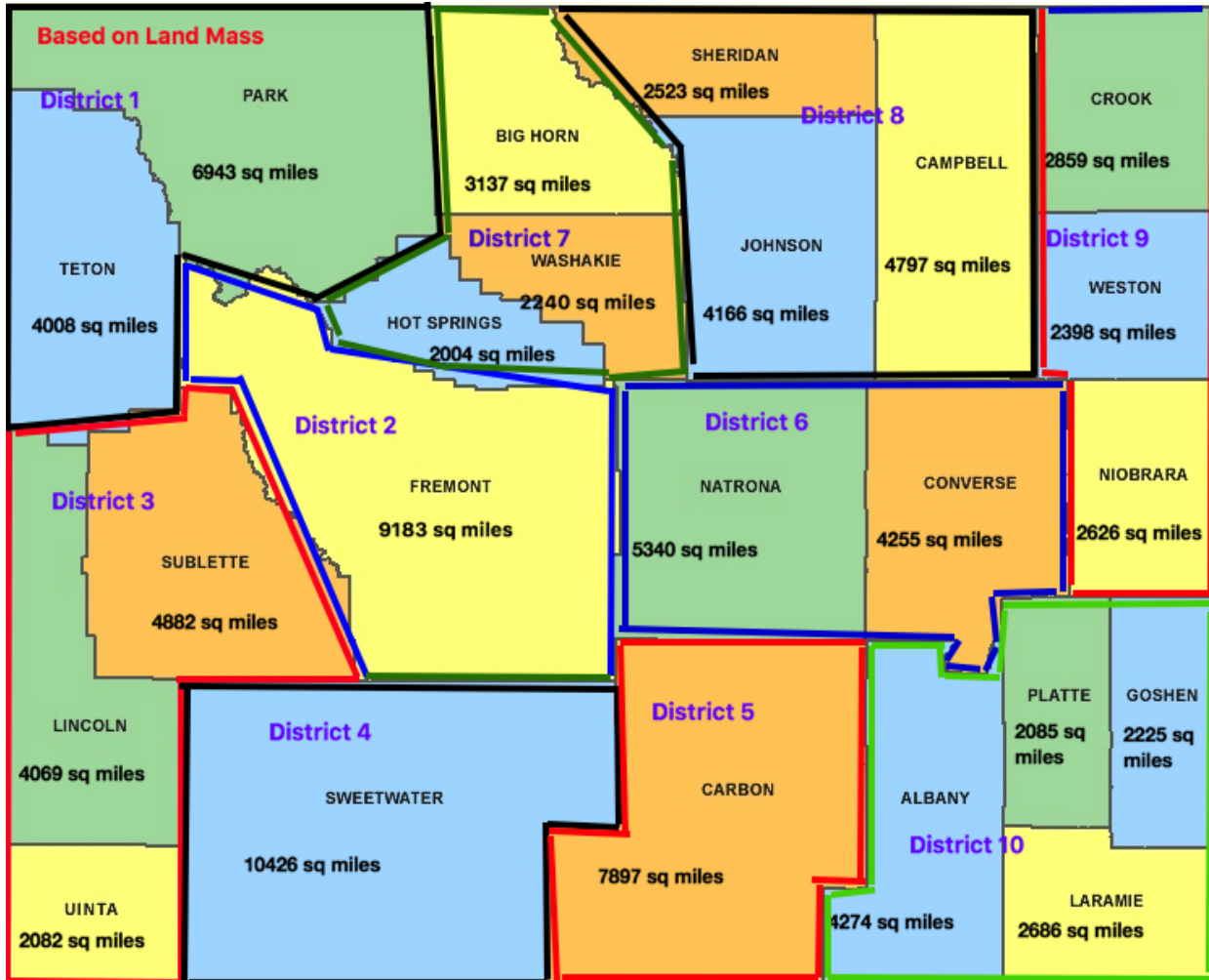
If the State of Wyoming were to consolidate school districts based upon the number of students, then equity would dictate that the entire state should be considered. On this note, a map was developed to represent what consolidation could potentially look like based upon similar enrollments and reasonably close proximity.

Enrollment & Proximity



Another approach for consolidation may be based on approximate geographic size. If Fremont County, which encompasses about 9200 square miles, were used the State of Wyoming would potentially only have 10 school districts. A map representing districts by size and reasonably close proximity is shown below.

Geographic Size & Proximity



Closing Remarks

Fremont County and the Wind River Indian Reservation has a rich and diverse history. That history includes the evolution of the education system that exists today. Districts, such as Fremont County School District #14, remember the struggle faced to establish a public school within the reservation boundaries and the local control Native American communities obtained through self-governance of their local school board. Other districts recall their own history of consolidation and the impact made on communities and families as schools closed and student travel increased.

Maintaining the Native American cultural and the Native American Language of each tribe are high priorities for Native Americans across all of the United States. The consolidation of our reservation schools would work against these goals.

Wyoming faces many challenges and Fremont County School Districts appreciate the Select Committee on Tribal Relations reaching out with questions and open discussion on the education of our Native American children and youth.