

To the citizens of Girard Unit District #3 from the Virden Community Unit District #4 Board:

We received an e-mailed list of questions from Girard board members on Sunday, March 1, with the request that we answer them in writing in March 11.

The answers to many of these questions could be found on the Virden website, have been answered in other forms or forums, or must be resolved by the newly elected board of the consolidated district. Since we wanted a consensus from Unit 4 board members, we responded to Girard on Monday, March 2, by phone and letter that we would take them up at our next regularly scheduled board meeting March 18.

Last night, we discussed our answers and arrived at the consensus we sought. Now we are providing to the citizens of both districts both the list of the questions and our answers.

- 1. During the presentation of the original 2003 Virden/Girard consolidation study, a mention was made of this only being a band-aid to the problem. The study itself suggested enlarging the size and scope of the consolidation by considering the addition of other schools in the potential consolidation. What would you think about the addition of Northwestern and/or Carlinville to a possible consolidation?**

Northwestern declined the invitation last year and Carlinville has not been considered.

- 2. What schools were contacted (formally or informally) to explore possible consolidation with Virden over the last 5+ years? What were their responses?**

1. Girard
2. Waverly
3. Northwestern
4. Auburn
5. Raymond

Only Girard responded positively for a feasibility study.

- 3. Please list your opinion of any significant improvements from the 2003 to the 2008 Virden / Girard consolidation study.**

Both studies showed that a consolidating is possible. The biggest difference is not so much the study, it is the economy at this time.

Economics and school funding are sub par to support the needs of small school districts. Virden has had to make over \$200,000 in cuts since 2003 and that downward trend does not serve well. The cost of goods and services has increased exponentially which only further strains a small district. The loss of money equates to the loss of classes, teachers, students, etc. and those losses directly conflict with a districts ability and resources to provide an "excellent education". Virden has worked very hard to maintain its levels of education and has refrained from investing in large building projects that only increase our debt

with no additional funding sources available. We have made difficult cuts and worked tirelessly to be fiscally responsible to our tax payers and citizens while maintaining the current level of education. With the loss of students, lack of additional funding, and increase in operating costs, it is past time to move toward consolidation.

Additionally, larger schools are able to provide kids with a greater investment into their college bank through dual credit courses. Virden has been actively working on offering more dual credit classes for many years. We even provided a financial incentive in our last budget for teachers who teach dual credit courses. Many college bound kids in larger schools either enter post secondary education with enough credits to be a second semester freshman or first year sophomore. Giving the kids the opportunity to deposit credits into the “college bank” makes it easier and more desirable for them to continue with post-secondary education.

Times have changed and in order for our children to be prepared for life where ever that will take them, we need to give them all the tools and resources possible for success.

4. Given the number of credits needed to graduate at this time, how many elective classes does the average student get to take during 4 years of high school? Does that number vary depending on if the student plans to attend college and takes a more college prep course of study?

We have changed the number of hours in the schedule from 7 hours to 8. Because of that change the number of credits to graduate also changed. Therefore the number of electives will change.

No

	Credits needed to graduate	Electives
2009 –	21	9
2010 –	22	10
2011 –	23	10
2012 –	24	10.5

In point of fact, however, the new district’s classes and policies will be decided by the new board.

5. Can you provide a breakdown of student travel time for your current bus routes? How many high school students currently ride the bus to school?

Bus 10: 45 min	Bus 8: 40 min	CACC Route
Bus 3: 35 min	Bus 1: 30 min	Jacksonville Route
Bus 5: 30 min	Bus 2: 20 min	Hope School
Bus 9: 30 min	Bus 12: 45 min (special ed route)	
Bus 6: 35 min		

120 High School students are on the bus list.

- 6. It appears that much of the money the new district would receive from the state would be spent in salary equalization when the districts' teachers are combined into one new matrix. How will the district be able to maintain those additional costs in the future plus pay for other expenses incurred as part of consolidation (such as textbook alignment, new uniforms, etc)?**

The salary equalization monies will help the new district the first four years (page 212 of the feasibility study). The new district will have approximately \$600,000 in new money each year in the education fund, plus the state helps with textbooks.

- 7. How would positions such as coaches and activity stipends be assigned in a consolidated school?**

Both schools would need to work toward this goal. Ultimately, it is up to the new board to hire the new coaches.

- 8. What do you see in the way of administrative personnel needs for the new district?**

Currently, there are 7 administrators in both districts. If consolidation passes, 6 administrators at a minimum. (2 elementary, 1 middle school, 1 high school, 1 assistant/AD, 1 superintendent.) The new board would determine if there would be a need for more. Also, individual contracts will need to be honored.

9. Please elaborate on the number and the approximate costs of the Health, Life, Safety repairs that are currently being addressed, as well as, those repairs that are being delayed.

\$500,000 of Health, Life/Safety bonds were sold last year. The repairs included football bleachers (finished), water main repair (finished), asbestos abatement (will be completed summer 2009), and high school roof. We had 2 air condition units (replaced December 2008) go bad so we got that approved by the ISBE. The roof repairs will be done within the next 3 years. These repairs will be paid with the remainder of the current Health, Life/Safety funds and Health, Life/Safety tax levy funds that will be received in the future.