

**Executive Summary  
of the  
Reorganization Feasibility Study  
for**

**Benjamin Elementary School District #25  
Winfield Elementary School District #34  
West Chicago Elementary School District #33  
West Chicago Community H. S. District #94**

**Presented: March 16, 2009**



**Consulting & Resource Group**

**Dr. William H. Phillips  
Dr. Scott L. Day  
Dr. Leonard R. Bogle**

## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary .....	2
Curriculum .....	4
Enrollment.....	11
Transportation .....	14
Building.....	16
Financial Issues:.....	17
Recommendation: .....	17

Executive Summary for Benjamin Elementary, Winfield Elementary, West Chicago Elementary and West Chicago High School Districts:

In the course of the extensive study completed for the districts in this study, a wealth of information is provided for the reader concerning this very important issue. With a study completing over 250 pages, it is necessary for the authors to provide a more concise synopsis of the study.

First, the incentives that are available to the districts will be described. The different incentive amounts have been included in the study and represent money available from the Illinois State Board of Education upon the successful reorganization.

Currently, the State of Illinois offers four financial incentives for school districts to merge in the eleven allowable reorganization options. The incentives and amounts are determined by the Illinois State Board of Education are as follows:

- **General State Aid Equalization.** Over a four year period the newly reorganized district would receive **\$11,875,300**. This means that the newly reorganized district would receive approximately **\$4,728,246.26** annually in General State Aid.
- **Teacher Salary Equalization.** Over a four year period the newly reorganized district would receive **\$ 9,979,300** (the actual number would be calculated on a teacher by teacher basis after a successful reorganization). Each school district has a different salary schedule and contract and these would be abolished and a new contract would most likely be negotiated by the certified staff.
- **Debt Difference Payment.** A single payment is made for districts experiencing operational deficits at the time of a merger. Since the districts do not qualify as having an operational debt, this incentive is not offered by the State of Illinois.
- **\$4,000 Payment for Certified Employees.** After a successful merger of districts and according to a ranking from the Illinois State Board of Education, the new district would be eligible for **\$1,896,000** for one year. Therefore at the end of the second year of a newly reorganized district, they would receive **\$1,896,000**.
- Total reorganization incentives offered as listed above is **\$11,875,300**.

Other significant factors dealing with school finance for the newly reorganized district include the following;

- Current property tax rates vary among the districts. Within the State of Illinois, it is common for high school districts to have a lower tax rate than their elementary feeder districts.
- All districts have a **positive balance** in their main operating funds.
- The equalized assessed valuation of all districts which determine local tax revenue is **increasing at a moderate** pace for all districts.
- A total tax rate of **\$4.92** would generate the same amount of revenue for the new district as compared to the current total tax rate for **Community HSD \$1.83, Benjamin \$ 3.48, West Chicago \$3.53 and Winfield \$2.77** . Please keep in mind that the author does in no way suggest that this rate should be utilized for planning for a reorganization referendum.

- Teacher tenure is guaranteed for certified staff that are maintained by the new district. The staffing factor would be determined by existing school districts prior to a reorganization referendum.

**While there are eleven current allowable procedures for the merger of school districts in the State of Illinois, the authors of this study recommend that the districts do not reorganize. See Recommendation Section – page 16 for further summary.**

## Elementary K-8 Building Organization

The curriculum of the three elementary districts are organized into K-8 at **West Chicago #33** (3,893 students), **Pre-K students** (377) attend the **Early Learning Center**, K-6 students attend sites at **Gary Elementary** (550 students), **Indian Knoll** (393 students), **Currier Elementary** (480 students), **Pioneer Elementary** (577 students), **Turner Elementary** (470 students), **Wegner Elementary** (572 students), and **West Chicago Middle School** houses grades 7 & 8 with 851 students enrolled. **Benjamin # 25** (836 students) offers a PK-4 program for 426 students at **Evergreen Elementary** and grades 5-8 are housed in **Benjamin Middle School** for 410 students. **Winfield # 34** (371 students) houses Pre-Kindergarten through Second grade students at **Winfield Primary School** (164 students) and grades 3-8 in Winfield Central School for 207 students.

### 1. Early Childhood/Kindergarten Programs

**West Chicago #33** utilizes half-day Kindergarten programs with 1 Early Learning Center (Pre-K) and 6 (K-6) facilities across the district. The Early Learning Center houses 377 students with 14 teachers at a separate facility. Gary Elementary houses 5 sections of Kindergarten with 3 teachers (114 students), Indian Knoll houses 2 sections of Kindergarten with 2 teachers (50 students), Currier Elementary houses both a general education and bilingual program with 2 sections and with 2 teachers (86 students), Pioneer Elementary also offers bilingual programs with 3 sections and 2 teachers (71 students). Turner Elementary offers 2 sections with 2 teachers (76 students) and Wegner Elementary offers 4 sections with 2 teachers (83 students). **Benjamin #25** offers Pre-K programs for 34 students with 2 teachers and 3 half-day sections of Kindergarten and one section of full-day Kindergarten for at-risk students. In total Benjamin #25 employs 3 Kindergarten teachers for 73 students. **Winfield #34** houses 5 sections of Pre-K with 2 teachers (52 students) and half-day Kindergarten for 38 students in 2 sections.

### 2. Number of Instructional Staff

West Chicago # 33 employs 179.5 elementary classroom teachers for grades PK- 8th grade; Benjamin #25 employs 37 classroom teachers, while Winfield #34 employs 20 classroom teachers for grades PK-8.

### 3. Special Education Services

#### West Chicago #33, PK Early Learning Center

- Blended Pre-K and Special Education Classrooms
- Extended Day Autism Program
- Transitional 3 year old Classroom
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech/Language Therapy
- Hearing Itinerant Services
- Special Education Facilitators

#### K-6 Gary, Indian Knoll, Pioneer, Turner, and Wegner Elementary

- K-6 schools utilize the inclusion model. All students with IEP's are served in general classrooms. This includes modifications and support, which come in a variety of forms depending on students IEP goals.
- Speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, gifted (GATE) program and ESL services. Individual assistants are assigned to students with specific needs.
- Social Worker and psychologist assist with providing support for the social and emotional learning needs of our students.
- Utilizes an RTI approach to meet the needs of all our students including our IEP students.

#### West Chicago Middle School

- The middle school provides 1 classroom for core subject instruction for two-thirds of the student day (11 students) with 1 teacher.
- Eight (8) special education teachers handle the case management and co-teach in the regular education classroom. This program addresses Tier 2 & 3 RtI interventions in Math and Reading. The middle school has been working with RtI interventions for 5 years.

#### PK-4 Benjamin ESD#25, Evergreen Elementary

- Reading Support
- Utilize an RTI approach to meet the needs of all our students including our IEP students.
- Social work, ELL, speech, a psychologist, and physical therapy through the special education coop.
- Evergreen utilizes the inclusion model. All students with IEP's are served in general classrooms.

### 5-8 Benjamin Middle School

- Utilizes the inclusion model. All students with IEP's are served in general classrooms.
- Special education facilitator at each grade level
- Social work, ELL, speech, a psychologist, and physical therapy through the special education coop.

### Winfield ESD #34 Primary and Central School

There are 53 students receiving special education services. Approximately half are Speech only students. Additionally, 12 students are in the problem-solving process.

- Utilize Response to Intervention model.
- Facilitators support the needs of all students. Interventions are delivered and students progressed monitored to determine effectiveness and next steps. Data Meetings are held monthly to discuss assessment and intervention information. Individual progress monitoring occurs to assist students, families, and staff with specific needs.
- School Psychology intern and practicum student are part of our Student Support Team. They work collaboratively with the remainder of the group to serve student needs.
- Social Worker and School Psychologist work with individual, small groups, and classrooms of students. They also support our MS PE program with bi-monthly lessons.
- Research based interventions and progress monitoring tools are sought out and implemented in addition to our Core curriculum. Assistants are trained in the implementation of interventions.
- Certified and non-Certified staff completes benchmark assessments in Pre-k through 8th triennially.

#### **4. Middle School Programming**

There is a difference in organization of grades 5 -8, 6-8, and 7-8 between the three school districts. West Chicago #33 Middle School students, grades 7- 8 (851 students) are taught in a middle school concept with 6 core subject teams. The facility houses elective programs in Art, Vocal Music, Technology (Synergistic lab), Home Economics, Band, Orchestra, and Drama (8<sup>th</sup> grade). Most teachers hold an ESL certificate. The teaching staff also includes 5 teachers in Bi-Lingual instruction.

Benjamin #25 Middle School, grades 5-8 (307 students) are taught with three core subject teams with 5 teachers in each. Electives are offered in Technology, Vocal Music, Spanish, Band, and PE/Health. Clubs are offered in Book Club, Game Club, Intramurals, Drama, Art, Student Council, and Chess.

Winfield #34 Middle School, grades 6-8 (106 students) are taught by 2 English teachers, 1 Social Studies, 1 Science, 2 Mathematics, 1 Spanish teacher to make up the core subject team. Electives are offered in Band (5-7), Art (6), Jazz Band (6-8), Technology (6-7), Spanish (6-8), and PE/Health. Clubs are offered in Art, newspaper, fitness, drama, digital media, student council, band, and safety patrol.

## 5. Community High School #94 Curricular Offerings and Requirements

Community High School #94 has an extensive curriculum for programs in grade 9 through 12 for 2,200 students.

Multiple level courses are offered in the following departments:

Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Languages, World Languages, Business Education, Family & Consumer Sciences, Technology Education, Visual Arts, Music, Physical Development & Health, and the Technology Center of Du Page County.

Graduation requirements: For the classes of 2010 and 2011

You must earn 20 ½ credits in order to graduate.

The following credits are required for all students, as part of the above total, which meet the minimum requirements of the State of Illinois.

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 3 credits   | Three years of English (English I, II, III) and department approved Senior selection option   |
| 3 credits   | Social Studies, including American History and Government   |
| 2 credits   | Two years of Mathematics (One year MUST be Algebra & one MUST include Geometry)   |
| 1 credit    | One year of Science   |
| *1/2 credit | One semester of Consumer Education  |
| 4 credits   | In Physical Education, for each semester of enrollment:<br>Six (6) semesters of Physical Education<br>One (1) semester of Health Education<br>One (1) semester of Physical Education/Safety Education |
| 1 credit    | Any combination of Music, Art, Foreign Language, Business, Family and Consumer Sciences or Industrial Arts.   |

CHS #94 Curricular Achievements:

- Responsive to the needs and interests of students. Our course offerings have been modified, deleted and added to in order to reflect those needs and interests.
- Represent more than just academics. The Social Studies department has placed a tremendous emphasis on civic education and the application of its concepts. Classes like “Community Leadership” demonstrate the depth of the civic education curriculum.
- There is a tremendous “can-do” spirit among administrators and teachers. Being a single high school district provides more flexibility and a quicker timeline for implementing new programs than typically seen in a multiple school district. Therefore our curriculum has a tremendous amount of flexibility when it comes to adding, modifying, or deleting.

**6. Professional Development for 2008-2009**

West Chicago ESD #33		Benjamin ESD #25
Building Focused PD	Literacy topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiated Instruction</li> <li>• Curriculum Mapping</li> <li>• Using MAPS data for differentiated instruction</li> <li>• Articulation with area Elementary, Middle, and High Schools</li> </ul>
Targeted Assessments	Response to Intervention	
Facilitated Play(ELC)	Character Education	
Dual Language Training	Framework: Understanding Poverty	
Articulation with area Elementary, Middle, and High Schools	Guided Reading	
Creating Reading Centers		
Winfield ESD #34		Community High School District #94
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment for Learning</li> <li>• University of Kansas Learning Strategies</li> <li>• CPR/AED training</li> <li>• Differentiation for Gifted Students</li> <li>• Articulation with area Elementary, Middle, and High Schools</li> <li>• Staff attend County-wide Institute: topics vary dependent on grade/content area</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with struggling learners</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Teaching Strategies in Content Areas</li> <li>• Articulation with area Elementary, Middle, and High Schools</li> </ul>

## 7. Technology Resources (Computer Technology)

K-6	West Chicago	Benjamin	Winfield
Classroom Hardware	1 in each room	1 in each room	1 in each room
TV/DVD	1 in each room	1 in each room	1 in each room
Technology Coordinator	1	1	.5
Network Admin	1	1	
Lead Tchr. Instructional Issues	1		
Technician	1	1	.5
Teacher Hardware	1 in each room	1 in each room	1 in each room
Labs	1 in each building (K-6) 2 labs (7&8)	3 labs (K-8)	3 labs (K-8)

### Community High School Technology:

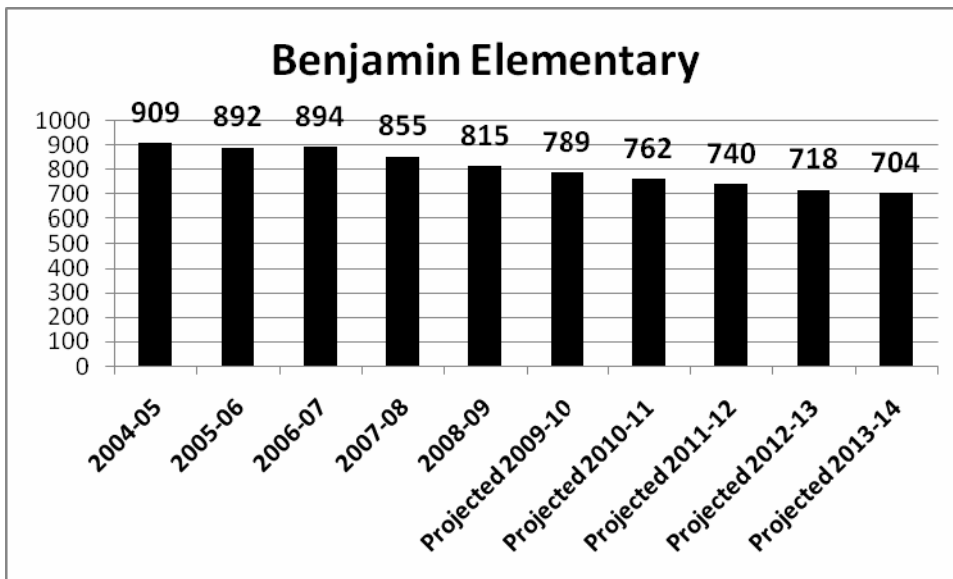
- Computers, internet, email, Smart boards, MIS department runs reports for teachers, departments have network folders for teachers to archive documents
- Students also have networked folders for storing their documents.
- 14 computer labs – 2 of which are in the LRC plus an additional 40 computers that are situated in the LRC but not in the lab itself.

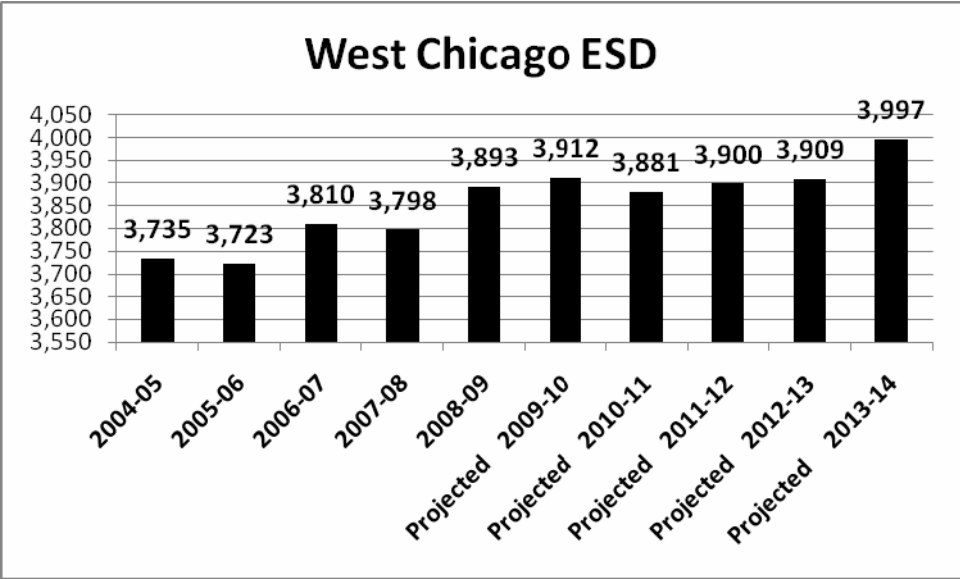
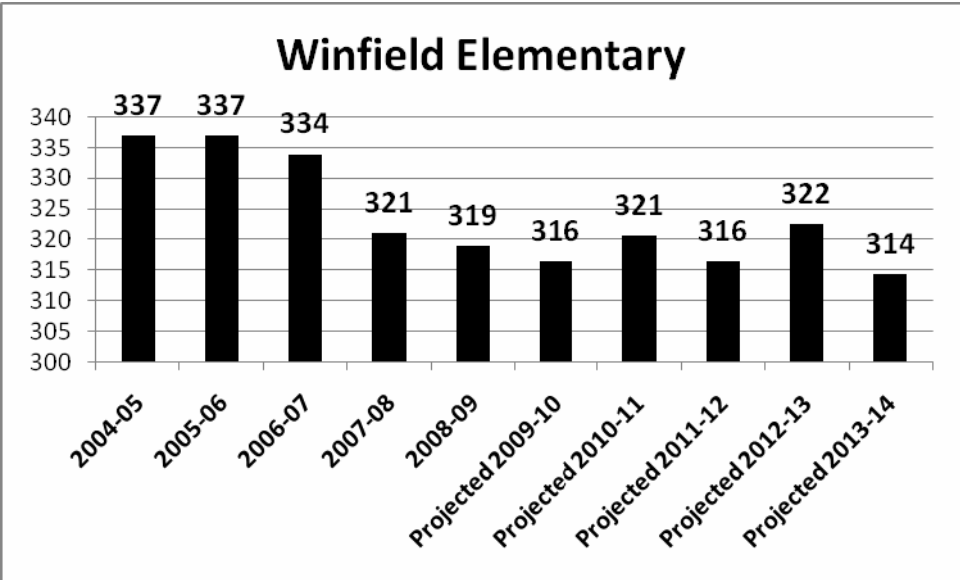
Departments: There are also 5 mini-labs in the Business, English, Science, Fine Arts departments.

## Enrollment

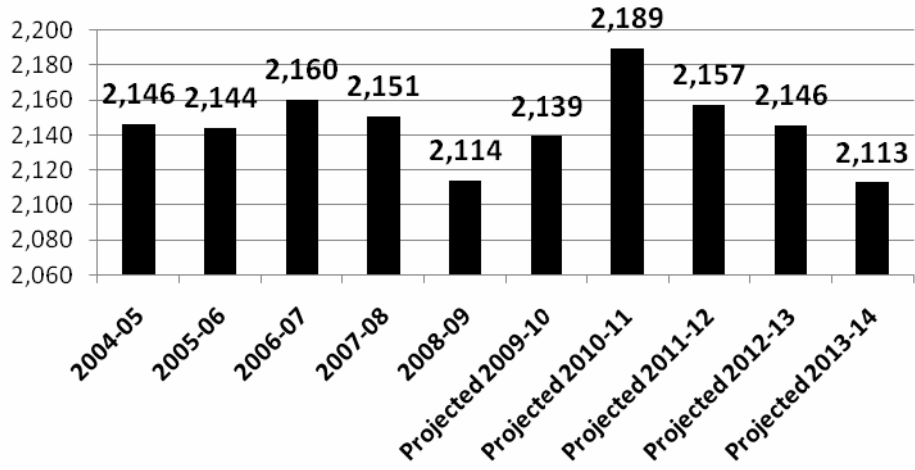
### *Enrollment*

- Student projections are made using existing class numbers to develop percentages
  - These percentages are applied to future classes using the Cohort Survival Method
  - Live births provided by the Census Bureau are used to project Kindergarten enrollments
- A review of attendance data indicates that for the past five years:
  - Benjamin Elementary District has lost 94 students
  - Winfield Elementary has lost 18 students
  - West Chicago Elementary gained 158 students
  - West Chicago High School lost 32 students
- Projections indicate that for the next five years:
  - Benjamin Elementary will lose an additional 111 students
  - Winfield Elementary will lose an additional 5 students
  - West Chicago Elementary will gain 104 students
  - West Chicago High School will lose 1 student





## W. Chicago H.S District



## Transportation

- **Benjamin Elementary, West Chicago Elementary and West Chicago High School** contract their services with First Student.
- **Winfield Elementary District** has no regular bus service due to the small geographic area of their district. Winfield does provide bus service for special education needs.
- Regular transportation cost per student and per mile are:

School	Per mile cost	Per student cost
Benjamin Elementary	\$5.63	\$979
West Chicago Elementary	\$2.39	\$574
West Chicago High School	\$3.99	\$363

- Special Education rates are:

School	Per mile cost	Per student cost
Benjamin Elementary	\$4.36	\$12,452
Winfield Elementary	\$8.09	\$21,726
West Chicago Elementary	\$2.72	\$3,807
West Chicago High School	\$3.27	\$2,485

- **West Chicago Elementary and West Chicago High School** share 16 buses to enhance route efficiency and reduce cost.
- There is limited control for the cost of special education services as transportation must be provided and low numbers of students combined with low incidence identification can result in a high per pupil cost.
- **No recommendation for consolidation is made for this study.**

However, a hypothetical consolidation would indicate:

- the average cost for these districts would be \$3.00/mile
- **Benjamin** (\$5.63) and **West Chicago High School** (\$3.99) would have lower per pupil cost
- **West Chicago Elementary** (\$2.72) would pay slightly more, and;
- **Winfield** (no cost now) would see a major per pupil increase since they currently have no expenses in this area.
- These changes would result in corresponding increases or decreases in the existing tax rates currently being levied by each district.

## TRANSPORTATION SUMMARY

	Benjamin Elementary District #25	Winfield Elementary District #34	West Chicago Elementary District #33	West Chicago H.S. District #94	Average
<b># Buses</b>	(13) 9 MS; 4 Elem	None	29	21	
<b># Vans</b>	0	None	10	(6) 3 leased and 3 owned	
<b>Type of Program</b>	Contracted First Student	None	Contracted First Student	Contracted First Student	
<b>Regular Route Information</b>					
<b># Routes</b>	13	None	(29) Share 16 w/ W. Chicago H.S.	(21) 16 shared with District #33	
<b>Cost</b>	\$357,508	None	\$758,272	\$406,697	\$380,619
<b># Students Transported</b>	365	None	1,322	1,119	\$702
<b>Cost/student</b>	\$979		\$574	\$363	\$479
<b>Regular Route Miles</b>	63,457		316,768	101,904	\$120,532
<b>Cost/mile</b>	\$5.63		\$2.39	\$3.99	\$3.00
<b>Special Education Information</b>					
<b># Students Transported Special Education Total Cost</b>	7	2	112	186	
<b>Cost</b>	\$87,166	\$43,452	\$426,373	\$462,199	\$254,797.50
<b>Total miles</b>	19,972	5,372	156,956	141,223	\$80,880.75
<b>Cost/student</b>	\$12,452	\$21,726	\$3,807	\$2,485	\$10,117.53
<b>Cost/mile</b>	\$4.36	\$8.09	\$2.72	\$3.27	\$4.61
<b>Vocational Transportation Information</b>					
<b>Vocational transportation costs</b>	None	None	None	\$91,976	
<b>Vocational transportation miles</b>	None	None	None	23,046	
<b># Students</b>				72	
<b>Cost/mile</b>				\$3.99	
<b>Non-reimbursable Transportation Information</b>					
<b>Transportation costs</b>	\$24,148	None	\$369,077	\$56,361	
<b>Transportation miles</b>	7,456	None	12,768	14,122	
<b>Cost/mile</b>	\$3.24		\$28.91	\$0.00	
<b>TOTAL COST - ALL AREAS</b>	\$468,822		\$1,553,722	\$925,257	\$736,950

## Building

- The buildings in each district in this study are well maintained, clean and attractive
- Housing is not an issue for any of these districts
  - West Chicago ESD currently leases five classrooms from rooms from Winfield to house West Chicago's Pre-K program.
  - Winfield's student population is in decline and no need for these rooms is currently seen
  - This would be a situation that could result in a need for housing should a need arise in which Winfield would require use of these rooms.
- Asbestos is not an issue in any of the districts
- Category A health, life safety requirements have been fully addressed for
  - **West Chicago Elementary**
  - **Benjamin Elementary**
- Category A health, life safety requirements have recently been identified for **Winfield Elementary** with a projected cost of \$312,992. The majority of this expense is for ventilation improvements at the primary school (\$274,992).
- Category A health, life safety requirements for **West Chicago High School** are being addressed
  - \$536,700 spent since 2001
  - \$405,100 projected to complete Category A items
  - \$260,00 projected to complete parking lots
  - Pool/field house ventilation improvements needed – no projections available
- Electrical, plumbing and heating needs have been addressed by all districts
- **Winfield Primary** will need roof work in the near future (\$300,00)
- The remaining districts have no roof needs
- There is no recommendation for change at this time. If there was to be a consolidation, the current buildings could house the student population without additional construction.

**Financial Issues:**

- The districts Equalized Valuation is very high and supports their student population for each of the districts.
- While dealing with the issue of tax restrictions brought about by PTELL, the districts have historically retained significant balances in their funds.
- Student enrollment, which is a factor critical to state and federal funds seem to be increasing at a moderate level for these districts.

**Recommendation:**

The recommendation of the Consulting and Resource Group is that no changes be made to the existing school district systems at this time. The achievement of these districts is high, the fund balances strong, the buildings are well maintained and the student population projections do not present a scenario in which consolidation is warranted. These districts exhibit an ongoing cooperative nature among themselves and regularly meet to assure that student standards are monitored and maintained as equally as possible.

The authors of this study are cognizant of the importance of this issue for all of the school districts, their constituents, staff and students. It has been our job to bring the issue into focus for consideration by all of the aforementioned groups. We have attempted to gather information, to make comments and suggestions relative to this very important issue. This study is dedicated to that end and the authors sincerely appreciate all of the valuable assistance received by the districts Boards of Education, administration and staff in the preparation of this report.