

# Baker School District 5-J

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*"Each child learns each day to thrive in an ever changing world."*

**Education -- Exceeding the Challenge**

**01-27-11**

Title: Support for Senate Bill 250

School Districts **do not** need ESDs but they do need services. Outlined below is a brief history of how rural schools in Eastern Oregon have partnered together to provide necessary services without ESD support.

The Baker School District has functioned as a subcontractor for UBESD (opted out of all ESD services) for 12 years. Our current model provides indirect fiscal support (10%) to the ESD and allows payment to Baker 5J for sub-contract services. The yearly savings for Baker School District is in excess of \$200,000 per year. The savings is due in large part to Baker School Districts efficient model of service delivery. The simple fact of the model is **more time serving students for less money**. Baker School District test scores over the past ten years is a testament to our effective and efficient model of service delivery.

In 2008 three small districts in Baker County joined Baker School District in opting out of local ESD services. Pine Eagle School District, Burnt River School District, North Powder School District and Baker School District partnered together to form the South Consortia. Baker County has set up an efficient and comprehensive administrative, curriculum and special education program without assistance from our local ESD. By partnering with Pine Eagle, Burnt River and North Powder we have developed a student centered approach that saved these small districts over \$150,000. Besides the benefit of the financial savings each district receives substantially more contact time for students from specialists in the area of Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech Language Pathology, Special Education Direction and clerical support. Plus, districts secured contracts for technology and curriculum development. The explanation is simple. **The South Consortia members are free to search the open market for service and to provide service for our local area neighbors in a competitive market place.** Both fiscally efficient and effective, this is an excellent methodology for school district to follow. This truly provides the best solution to all members of the South Consortia while simultaneously providing the best service and support model for our students.

Senate Bill 250 will allow the South Consortia to continue to provide special education, administrative, technology and instructional expertise as needed. Our data supports the effectiveness of our methods. Intrusion into an already successful and effective system will be disruptive. Plus, the provision of the services we already offer will be more costly, reducing the effective support for the rest of the ESD members to our north, while reducing service to students in our consortia.

Last, our local ESD, Union Baker ESD (UBESD) will be insolvent at the end of the fiscal year due to corruption and mismanagement. As you know, by law each school district must be part of an ESD. Therefore, the UBESD board approved a voluntary merger with Umatilla Morrow ESD without a single yes vote from Baker County Schools. The new ESD will be named the Intermountain ESD. Unfortunately, after 12 years of opting out of ESD services Intermountain ESD will not allow Baker School District or the South Consortia to opt-out of the local service plan. Instead Intermountain ESD will require Baker County Schools and the South Consortia to receive services from them through a standardized local service plan. Current law allows ESDs to do this. This will no doubt negatively impact our students. What is best for kids is the bottom line. Requiring

School Districts to purchase services they do not want or need is an inefficient use of taxpayer money and, more importantly, not an effective approach for students.

Although this is being called a voluntary merger it is not. Baker does not want to merge with an ESD that does not allow opting out or subcontracting. We believe that this is an inequitable use of tax payer dollars and may cause undue harm to our students.

The South Consortia has the capacity and personnel to provide all the necessary components to opt out of an ESD local service plan. We support Senate Bill 250. We have been opting out of ESD services for 12 years and have proven to be effective, efficient and best for students. Lastly, the South Consortium has put together a team of professionals that will travel to any school district in Oregon to introduce how our partnerships work and how other districts can do the same. We strongly believe that the South Consortia is a effective and efficient opt out model for the state of Oregon.

Barry Nemec  
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Baker County Schools