



# WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

*Fostering effective school board  
practices for student success.*

---

## Organizational Services Report

prepared for

*SCHOOL DISTRICT of TOMAHAWK*

*July 2018*

**Organizational Consulting Services**

*Provided by:*



# Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Protocol of Study</i>	4
<i>Research / Analysis</i>	5
<i>Summary</i>	7
<i>Legal Factors/Opinion</i>	8

## Introduction

The School District of Tomahawk engaged the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) to assist the district with an analysis of the school district's current Apportionment Plan. This study is designed to research and summarize current municipal populations and their impact on representation areas of school board members. Rural school districts with apportioned representation, at times, find it difficult to recruit citizens willing to serve as board members. This reality then makes it necessary for school boards to examine their current representation practices and to research municipal populations to determine the feasibility of maintaining apportioned voting districts. It is the goal of this project to research current municipal populations, recent trends in school board elections and candidate interest or availability. The findings of this research are to be used to guide school board discussion(s) and the decision if the current Apportionment Plan needs to be changed or updated.

Every school district has a plan or has taken action to divide or share representation of the population to the number and membership of the school board. This allocation of representation can come in a number of forms. Generally, school board members are elected from specific municipalities or regions within the school district or they can be at-large. At-large board members continue representation of the district, but eliminate the requirement for the representative to reside in a specific municipality. This report will focus on three central questions:

- 1.) Does the school district have balanced representation from the municipalities?
- 2.) Is there a need to continue the current apportionment plan and what factors are contributing to this potential change?
- 3.) How does the district change the current apportionment plan?

These questions are intended to help guide the local discussion(s) to determine if a change in the current representation is needed.

## Protocol of Study

In order to conduct this study, city and township clerks were contacted by the WASB consultant and/or district staff. The intent of this contact was to collect the population numbers of each municipality. This information would then serve to determine if the apportioned representation was accurate. The District Office had also reported voting results to provide another view of the number of votes used in each municipality to elect school board members.

The information reported in this study was not as easy to access as originally assumed. Municipal officials did not have population figures in easily accessible formats and there may have been confusion between terms population and registered voters. The information provided by the municipal clerks was verified with 2017 census estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Administration. ([https://doa.wi.gov/DIR/Final\\_Ests\\_Muni\\_2017.pdf](https://doa.wi.gov/DIR/Final_Ests_Muni_2017.pdf)). It should also be noted the townships of Birch, Harrison, and Rock Falls are shared with contiguous school districts. The population figures in those townships that are shared with other school district have been estimated by using the voter registration numbers. While this is only an estimate, it will provide a general sense of the population of the township located within the School District of Tomahawk.

The school district also provided election counts for the previous five years. This information is used to provide an additional data point when examining the population of the school district municipalities.

The total population of the school district is then divided into the population of the municipality to determine the percentage of municipality compared to the district population. This percentage can then be used to determine the equity of the apportionment of school board representation. This would be useful in determining if there has been a population shift or imbalance within the municipalities.

## Research / Analysis

The estimated population of the municipalities was provided by the town and city clerks. The population estimates (first column) can then be compared to the DOA estimates (second column) in Figure 1.

Estimated Population			School District Election Counts				
Municipality	Population Residing within the School District	2017 Estimate Population DOA	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Town of Birch	2*	596	86	43	372	63	280
Town of Bradly	2449	2449	362	473	586	349	152
Town of Harrison	329*	840	163	126	674	230	58
Town of King	880	880	185	267	440	265	125
Town of Little Rice	316	316	56	78	138	74	76
Town of Rock Falls	68*	639	148	79	512	152	142
Town of Skanawan	397	395	78	97	332	105	73
Town of Tomahawk	427	427	71	95	363	68	22
Town of Nokomis	1445	1445	198	228	599	147	175
Town of Wilson	312	312	61	65	255	255	28
City of Tomahawk	3332	3319	426	559	1238	473	397
Total Population	9558						

Figure 1 \*only a portion of the township is within the School District of Tomahawk

The percentage of each municipality compared to the total population provides a data set to compare the individual municipalities (Figure 2)

School District Municipality Comparison to Total Population	
Town of Birch	0.02%
Town of Bradly	24.60%
Town of Harrison	3.30%
Town of King	8.84%
Town of Little Rice	3.17%
Town of Rock Falls	0.68%
Town of Skanawan	3.99%
Town of Tomahawk	4.29%
Town of Nokomis	14.51%
Town of Wilson	3.13%
City of Tomahawk	33.46%
	100.00%

Figure 2

## WASB Organizational Service Report

The current school board seats can be compared to the number and percentage of municipal populations with the number of representatives for each of the apportioned municipalities.

Apportionment				
Municipality(s)	Population		Percentage	Numver of Representatives
City of Tomahawk	3332		33.5%	4
Towns of Tomahawk, Bradley, Birch, Skanawan, Rock Falls	3343		33.6%	3
Towns of King and Harrison	1209		12.1%	1
Towns of Wilson, Lt. Rice and Nokomis	2073		20.8%	1
Totals			100.0%	9

Figure 3

Each of the previous charts represents the current populations and number of school board seats that are allocated for the municipalities within the school district. This information is to be used as a basis for future school board discussions. Factors that are not analyzed in this data were the historical reasons for district representations, population shifts and projections, and current social and local trends for public service. These are topics and issues that have influence on the potential decisions of the school board but can best be brought to light through local discussion.

## Summary

The summary will focus on highlighting the three central questions. These questions will hopefully provide discussion topics for the School District of Tomahawk school board members in their deliberations of the current Apportionment Plan.

### **Guiding Question #1 - Does the school district have balanced representation from the municipalities?**

The chart in Figure 3 would indicate the population of the City of Tomahawk is approximately the same as the Townships of Tomahawk, Bradley, Birch, Skanawan, and Rock Falls. The other apportioned townships respectively amounted to approximately twenty percent or less of the total population.

### **Guiding Question #2 – Does the current apportionment of board seats need to be changed?**

The answers to this question lay in determining why the school board would want to change the represented areas of the school district. Guiding Question#1 would indicate there is not a huge gap in the populations and board seats. This would cause the discussion to focus on other local or social reasons for changing the representation of townships and city within the school district.

The current apportionment was based on a specific set of reasons or thinking. Are these reasons or concerns still valid today? The historical reasons for the current plan would have a bearing on the decision process. While giving representation to a specific geographical area or neighborhood is a good thing, does it hold true for the current situation?

A number of local conditions may also cause the school board to examine the current apportionment plan. If it has been problematic finding board members to serve and/or a number of appointments for vacant seats, this situation could lead to high board member turnover. These factors could lead the discussion in two directions. The first being is there a need to change the number of board seats? In other words, moving from the current nine member board to a seven member board. The second potential change would be to make all board

members at-large. This would allow for a larger population pool for future potential board members.

There may be other local factors or conditions that could have a bearing on the current apportionment plan. These social factors or issues could be related to the family dynamics of working parents, time limitations of busy families or individuals, a lack of desire or willingness to serve in a dynamic public position, and an avoidance of controversy or public opinion. These local conditions could have a bearing on the school board discussion and could warrant brief consideration while considering changes to board representation.

### **Guiding Question #3 – What are the legal and procedural process for changing the current Apportionment Plan?**

The process for changing the allocation for school board seats is defined in state statute and requires a number of procedural and legal processes for action at an Annual Meeting. This is the next section of the report and is written by Barry Forbes, Attorney for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards.

### **Apportionment Options**

The purpose of this study was to study the current apportionment plan and to outline possible options or modification to the current apportionment plan. The following options are possible actions that can be taken by the School District of Tomahawk:

1. Keep the current apportionment plan;
2. Reduce the number of board seats from nine to seven by combining/re-aligning areas of apportionment;
3. Keep the same number of board seats (nine) and make them all at-large;
4. Reduce the number of board seats from nine to seven and these seats would be at-large;
5. Create a new apportionment plan which may convert one or more of the currently apportioned seats to at-large seats while keeping other seats apportioned and may or may not include a change in the number of board members. Note that all territory of the school district must be included in at least one of the areas of apportionment.

The final decision rests with the annual meeting as to the best method to represent the citizens of the School District of Tomahawk.

## Legal Factors/Opinion

Wisconsin law allows for changes in the number and/or apportionment of school board member seats. See [s. 120.02 Wis. Stat.](#) S. 120.02(2)(a) describes the process for changing a plan of apportionment:

*If, at least 30 days prior to the day of the annual meeting, in a common or union high school district, or at least 70 days prior to the day of the election of school board members in a unified school district, a petition conforming to the requirements of s. 8.40 requesting the establishment of a plan of apportionment of school board members is filed with the school district clerk the clerk shall incorporate notice of receipt of such petition in the notice of the annual meeting or election. The petition shall specify the proposed plan of apportionment of school board members among the cities, towns and villages or parts thereof within the school district and set the total number of school board members at not more than 11. The petition shall be signed by not less than 100 electors residing in the school district, except that in school districts which contain, in whole or in part, a city of the 2nd or 3rd class in which one or more electors of the school district reside, the petition shall be signed by not less than 500 electors residing in the school district. If a majority vote of the annual meeting or election approves the plan set forth in the petition, the plan shall remain in operation until revised by the same procedure. School board members elected under this subsection shall be elected by a vote of the electors of the entire school district in accordance with the plan prepared under sub. (3).*

The Tomahawk School District is a common school district and the process to change the apportionment of board seats on the Tomahawk School Board would involve the following steps:

- A petition conforming with the requirements of s. 8.40 requesting the establishment of a new plan of apportionment of school board members is filed with the school board clerk at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting.
  - The petition must be signed by not less than 100 electors residing within the school district.
  - The petition shall specify the proposed plan of apportionment of board members among the cities, towns and villages or parts thereof within the school district and set the total number of school board members at not more than 11. Note that some of the seats may be at large and others may be from areas of apportionment, or all the seats may be converted to at large seats.

## WASB Organizational Service Report

---

- If the school board clerk receives such a petition and determines that the petition has a sufficient number of valid signatures, the clerk shall incorporate into the notice of the annual meeting the receipt of the petition. The change in the plan of apportionment is added to the agenda of the annual meeting. If the electors approve the change in the plan of apportionment, then it becomes the new plan of apportionment. Current board members serve out their terms and as the seats of board members elected from areas of apportionment under the old plan come up for election, the new plan of apportionment is implemented.
- It is possible to combine the petition to change the plan of apportionment with a petition to increase or decrease the number of board members. If that happens the change in the number of board members will be made according to the requirements of s. 120.02(3).