

# South Jefferson Central School District Shared Recreation Program Case Study

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South Jefferson Central School District Shared Summer Recreation Program

**1. Municipal Characteristics**

Indicators	S. Jefferson CSD	Jefferson County	Town of Adams	Town of Ellisburg	Town of Lorraine	Town of Rodman	Town of Rutland	Town of Watertown	Village of Adams	Village of Mannsville
2000 Population	10,885	111,738	4,782	3,541	930	1,147	2,959	4,482	1,624	400
Land Area (sq. mi.)	210.0	1272.2	42.4	85.3	39.0	42.2	45.2	36.0	1.5	.9
Assessed Value Fully Taxable	\$266,372,981	\$3,174,940,216	\$120,063,461	\$117,653,567	\$21,374,418	\$30,677,945	\$67,875,795	\$235,783,867	\$33,931,962	\$7,310,281
Full Valuation Taxable Real Property	\$283,286,486	\$3,364,608,648	\$123,662,025	\$117,735,982	\$25,585,848	\$30,008,749	\$72,718,871	\$245,505,900	\$31,957,018	\$7,379,649
Total Tax Levy	\$3,518,058	\$29,509,931	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$321,234	\$28,144
Total Debt Outstanding	\$3,954,000	\$23,360,000	\$362,700	0	\$523,640	\$535,708	0	\$4,862,364	\$3,190,312	\$94,900
Total State Aid Revenue	\$11,870,951	\$19,777,837	\$125,429	\$168,300	\$56,396	\$69,076	\$97,334	\$193,436	\$53,025	\$6,014
Total Revenue w/ State Aid	\$17,166,954	\$108,708,065	\$1,510,291	\$1,191,704	\$785,495	\$909,245	\$798,449	\$2,306,492	\$1,295,744	\$86,988
Debt Service	\$141,118	\$2,234,458	\$94,484	n/a	\$69,341	\$31,781	0	\$398,213	\$167,568	\$9,880
Total Expenditures w/ Debt Service	\$17,226,313	\$108,534,444	\$1,442,137	\$1,306,748	\$640,475	\$942,987	\$765,842	\$2,081,482	\$1,970,266	\$83,826
Expenditures										
Culture-Recreation	0	\$507,281	\$25,516	\$11,442	\$8,214	\$16,995	\$7,795	\$4,450	\$16,081	\$5,238

## **2. Project Description & Impetus**

As early as July, 1993 the Adams Town Board was investigating the organization of a joint summer recreation program. According to a *Watertown Daily Times* newspaper article, that Town's Parks and Recreation Commission was directed to contact the towns of Ellisburg, Lorraine, Rodman, and Worth to determine interest in a shared program. Those exploratory efforts led in another direction with the inclusion of the South Jefferson Central School District. In January 1995 the Town of Adams and Village of Adams partnered with the South Jefferson Central School District to explore options for providing both a recreational and an enrichment summer program for children. The Town and Village of Adams had existing summer recreation programs, although the Town's program had been struggling for a couple of years after the retirement of the program's two very successful directors, according to the Town of Adams Supervisor, David W. Kellogg. The Town of Rodman had not been able to offer a summer program for children. They were interested in doing so if the program had developmental benefits for the children. The South Jefferson Central School District had an existing academic summer school program and a limited enrichment summer reading program in place. The school district's business manager was aware that a summer school breakfast and lunch program would be available at the school.

There are many connections between municipal officials within this community, both personal and professional, and these specific conversations began in the context of keeping costs down for each municipality and competing for the same students at the various programs. The original program was paid for by \$15,000 from the Towns of Adams, Lorraine, and Rodman and the Village of Adams using facilities and expertise provided by the South Jefferson Central School District. The program has grown from an average daily attendance of 180 children from the 4 municipalities to one proficiently serving an average of 365 children each day from 8 local municipalities.

## **3. Proposal(s) and Proposed Funding**

The specific proposal developed in 1995 was to have a six-week summer recreation program operated by the South Jefferson Central School District at no cost to the school district taxpayers and funded by the Town and Village of Adams. After several meetings, the final plan added the Towns of Lorraine and Rodman. The budget developed was for almost \$19,000 with \$15,000 coming from the supporting municipalities. The rest of the money was expected to come from student fees and miscellaneous donations and contributions. All students living in the area were welcome to attend the summer program. It was not to be restricted to only students attending the South Jefferson Central School District. If a child lived in a township which was not participating, there was to be a four dollar per day fee. Theme-centered arts, crafts, and local sports activities were to be offered from 8 am to 2 pm on a daily basis at the Wilson Elementary School as well as a recreational program at Westcott's Beach. Each Friday would highlight a field trip (at additional cost to participants) with an end of the year picnic for all families. Transportation was to be provided for all children with several pick-up sites for the convenience of the Towns. Free breakfast and lunch were to be made available to all of the children participating in the summer program through the federal summer food service program, which provides meals in areas where 50% of the children qualify for subsidized meals. There was no attendance requirement and children were welcome to attend as many days as they wished. The academic summer school program was designed to finish in the morning allowing students the opportunity to attend summer recreation activities in the afternoon, as well as participate in the Friday field trips.

#### **4. Legal Foundation and Legal Checklist**

The arrangements for beginning the summer recreation program cooperative venture seem to be mostly handshake agreements. A thorough search of the Town/Village Board minutes from 1995 shows that motions were carried to commit to participation but only simplified shared services agreements exist. Currently the school distributes each fall a request to each municipality suggesting a proposed contribution for the following year. That amount is entered as a line item in the proposed budget for the municipality. When the budget is approved, they return a copy of the proposal to the school confirming the budgeted amount. There are no reports of municipalities disputing the proposed amounts. (One municipality withdrew from the program because the board felt there were too few students making use of the program.)

There have been no lawsuits or legal actions regarding this issue.

#### **5. Views on the Issue**

##### Arguments pro:

According to the Town of Adam's Supervisor, their summer recreation program was not what it had been in the previous years. Two long-time co-directors had retired and the program had had two different directors for the following two summers without maintaining the excellence previously remembered. The Superintendent of Schools at South Jefferson Central School District, David Paciencia, remembered that the conversation centered on keeping costs down for the municipalities as well as how to stop competing for the same children. The school district offered an academic summer school program and the towns offered summer recreational programs. From Mr. Paciencia's point of view, the goal was to "capture the essence of both programs."

Related to school costs was the issue of paying teachers union contract wages for summer work. This issue was re-visited several years later when the summer recreation program implemented their "ology" camps.

Joe Eberle, the school district business manager knew that there was an opportunity to develop a summer breakfast/lunch program at little or no cost to the communities. Schreene Babcock, an original and continuing director of the summer program, was a new teacher in the school district who wanted to offer summer reading to her elementary students. The school district had a fleet of buses which could transport the children but needed funds to implement transportation.

##### Arguments Con:

At issue for the towns within the school district was how transportation would be handled to and from the school district, as well as concern about the number of children who might be participating from within each township.

##### Local News Media Positions

This area is served by the *Watertown Daily Times*.

No editorials could be located or recalled by any of the officials.

An article appears in the July 9, 1993 *Watertown Daily Times* reporting that the town board would look into a cooperative summer recreation program with other municipalities. Another article from May 16, 1995 announced that a program spearheaded by the South Jefferson Central School District and paid for by four municipalities would serve students that summer. On July 14, 1995 the paper reports turnout for the program had exceeded their expectations. On August 8, 1998, a human interest piece highlighted the summer program with many positive quotes from students, staff, and parents.

## **6. Results**

The South Jefferson Summer Recreation Program opened its doors on Monday, July 10, 1995 expecting 75 to 100 children from four municipalities, with a budget of just under \$19,000 and 8 staff members. They planned to combine swimming, athletics, field trips, and other activities with the federal summer breakfast and lunch program. In an article from the *Watertown Daily Times*, Co-director, Schreene Babcock, reports 208 and 220 children participating on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> days of the program—more than double the numbers expected.

The original staff consisted of 2 co-directors (one of whom moved away early in the project) and 6 college student counselors as well as bus drivers and food service staff. Attendance exceeded the staff's expectations during the first year but additional staff was not needed until further growth in subsequent years.

## **7. Implementation & 8. Expectations vs. Results**

Few written documents survive from the conception of the program making it difficult to identify in concrete terms the expectations of the municipalities. Several public officials interviewed employed phrases such as “common sense,” “appropriate activities,” “not just babysitting,” and “well-supervised.” In a May 16, 1995 *Watertown Daily Times* article, South Jefferson Superintendent David A. Paciencia explains, “The expertise of the school can be best utilized by allowing school personnel to do what they do best—operate programs for kids and provide busing.” In essence the results have been measured by parent and student satisfaction. Satisfaction has been measured by end of the season surveys and attendance. Only one of the interviewed village or town officials was aware of any complaints from constituents.

## **9. Factors contributing to success/failure**

From the 2006 Annual Report; “It is our belief that several factors contribute to the success of our project. Early and continued planning is critical. Consensus among planners, district administrators and town representatives help ensure that the product expected matches the services delivered. Appropriate counselor/student ratio helps keep discipline problems to a minimum and ensure the safety of participants. And, a close and careful eye on the budget will ensure not only program success, but financial success as well.”

Schreene Babcock, Program Director, lists several elements that have contributed to the success and longevity of the program: convenient transportation, choices for children about activities, collaboration and community support, staff who are willing to try new things and really connect with children. Most importantly she cites flexibility by all parties and believing in the end product.

Town officials reported their major expectation was that children have something beneficial to do during the summer. They were not interested in simply subsidizing a childcare service. They were willing to fund the program because it provides opportunities to children that contribute to child development and well being. Rather than stipulate a list of program expectations they rely on the schools to use their professional expertise to design the program. The town officials take as their measure of success the number of children participating, reports by the recreation program staff of the opportunities provided to children, and the absence of complaints. In this case, results could be measured immediately. While it was anticipated that 100 students would attend the summer programming, over the first two days, more than 200 students came. As of 2006, the average daily participation was 360 students. The student population of this school district is about 1000 students in this Kindergarten to 9th grade age group.

## **10. The Ten Step Program**

### **11. Technical Assistance**

The most specific form of technical assistance provided was for the budget developed for the program. School business manager, Joe Eberle, worked with the towns, villages, and co-directors to develop the budget and get the federal summer food service program in place. One specific source of technical assistance for the summer food service program is the website, located at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/about/index.html> Procedures were developed with the Jefferson County Youth Bureau to take advantage of matching funds available through that office.

### **12. List of Documents**

1. South Jefferson School District Map
2. South Jefferson Summer Youth Program Flyer
3. Town of Adams Board Minutes – November 9, 2006
4. Town of Adams – 2007 Budget
5. Town of Ellisburg – 2007 Budget
6. Town of Rodman – 2007 Budget
7. Town of Watertown Minutes – May 1997
8. Town of Watertown – 2007 Budget
9. Village of Adams – 1995-1996 Budget
10. Village of Adams Board Minutes – April 16, 2007
11. Village of Adams – 2007-2008 Budget
12. South Jefferson CSD – 2006-2007 Summer Recreation Resolution
13. South Jefferson CSD – 2007 Appointments to Summer Recreation Program
14. 2006 Memo to Supervisors
15. 2007 Sample Contracts
16. Summer Recreation Program -1995 Annual Report
17. Summer Recreation Program -2006 Annual Report

### **13. Additional comments/suggestions/helpful hints**

There is much expertise in every community about youth programming, County youth bureaus, municipal recreation commissions, and school officials all have knowledge of programs and opportunities for youth in summer programs. Combining this expertise may result in the development of an outstanding youth program designed specifically for that community.

Staff hired to direct summer programming need to have leadership qualities and an ability to be flexible to meet needs and concerns as quickly as possible. The director of this program believes that it is helpful to be a parent herself. Alternatively, involving community parents in the planning and operation of the recreation program will be beneficial. As was seen in the Towns of Watertown and Ellisburg, parents spontaneously requested and secured funding from their town boards allowing all students from those towns the opportunity to participate in the program at no cost to the family. Employing young adults as counselors, especially future teachers, raises the quality of care for the children. The director found that assigning students to particular counselors worked best for the program. In addition, she found that when staff were assigned to one particular site (beach or school), the

counselors were more invested in the activities at that site.

Careful record keeping and reports are key to continued funding of this summer recreation program. Annual reports are provided to municipalities funding the program with detailed accounts of revenues, expenditures, and participation. This has given municipalities the tools they have needed to justify continued support. In addition, the school district has had the documentation needed to support requests for additional funding.

#### **14. Contacts**

##### Municipal Contact:

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##### Academic Institution Contact:

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##### Other Contacts:

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