

# Interview with Kent Young

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Interview # 1: Aug 24, 2011

Pogue: Philip Pogue

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Pogue: It's August 24, 2011. My name is Philip Pogue. We're here at Nauvoo Colusa Junior High, and we'll be talking to Mr. Kent Young about the de-activation project that his school district and the Warsaw school district did, as part of our Illinois School Reorganization Project. At this time, Kent, could you give us some family background, your education and work experience?

Young: Yes. My name is Kent Young. I'm the superintendent and principal at Nauvoo-Colusa School District number 325. I grew up in Iowa. I went to high school at Central East High School in Donnellson, Iowa. I had four brothers, and we lived in a really small town, about 900 people. From there, I graduated with my bachelor degree in biology from Western Illinois University in 1989. I was a teacher in southern Illinois, at Southwest Piasa. I was a junior high science teacher there for one year. And then I made a trek out to California, and I was the science teacher at Victor Valley High School in Victorville, California for a year. Decided I really didn't like teaching; it wasn't for me. So, I quit for a year and did some odd jobs and so on. Then, I decided to try it again. I met a girl and moved out to Salt Lake City, Utah. I was out there for four years. I taught high school biology and chemistry, and I coached track and cross country. In 1996, I had a brother that passed away in a tragic accident, so I moved back, and I started teaching in Keokuk, Iowa. I was there at the junior high for three years. I got my master's at that time at Western Illinois University in Macomb. My first administration job was in Round

Lake, Illinois, at Round Lake High School. I was division chair of math and science up there, and I taught one class. They were having some financial difficulties, like most school districts, so I left there, and I became assistant principal at Newton, Illinois at Jasper County. I was down there for two years. I got my specialist degree from Eastern Illinois University. Then, since I was from this area here, there was a position open at the Nauvoo-Colusa School District for a principal. I applied for that and got that job in 2002. During that time, the current superintendent, in 2002, he was going to retire. So, the Board offered me the superintendent position. So, in 2003, I became superintendent of Nauvoo-Colusa. Then, in 2006, our principal here at the junior high/high school she left, and the Board also gave me the position of junior high/high school principal, along with superintendent, partially for cutbacks, to reduce expenditures, and so on. So, I've been principal now and superintendent since 2006.

I have a wife, and I have three children. I have a son, Skylar, who's in seventh grade this year. I have a daughter, Whitney, who's in sixth grade. They go to Dallas City School District in Dallas City. And I have a son that was born August ninth, Dylan, from my previous wife. So, I have a young baby at home.

Pogue: What experiences have you had with school re-organization, prior to coming to Nauvoo?

Young: Prior to coming to Nauvoo, I really didn't have any experience with re-organization. But, since I've been here, my first year here is when Dallas City High School—they had de-activated their high school and they sent their students to Nauvoo-Colusa the year before I got here—and so, we had the Dallas City High School students that were along here with the Nauvoo-Colusa School District.

And then, since I've been here, we've talked about convergence. We were on the original convergence with the Dallas City, Southern Carthage and LaHarp in 2003. And Southern, I believe they backed out, so Dallas City, LaHarp, Carthage and Nauvoo-Colusa had a convergence vote in 2004. That failed. In 2005, the convergence vote between Dallas City, La Harp and Carthage passed and left Nauvoo out.

At the time, in 2005, we were in talks with Hamilton and Warsaw. In 2006, we did a feasibility study with Warsaw and Hamilton, and the recommendation from the study was to have the high school at Warsaw and the junior high school at Hamilton and close the Nauvoo-Colusa elementary school. In 2006, the talks with Hamilton and Warsaw broke down. I believe they each wanted their high school, so it kind of fell apart. In 2007, Nauvoo-Colusa tried to have a tax increase, which failed.

And then, in 2007, that's when we began the double de-activation talk with Warsaw.

Pogue: As far as the issue, why were you looking at this de-activation over the other re-organization types?

Young: Well, most schools, they have a hard time giving up their schools. They like to have local control. They like to have community involvement. And, when we looked at the convergence, I know that there was a possibility of keeping our elementary school here and then sending our high school students to Carthage. The community just didn't feel like that was the right fit for them. So, the convergence had already failed.

In 1961, Nauvoo and Colusa, they had consolidation. I don't think the communities—the Nauvoo community and the Warsaw community—weren't wanting to make a permanent commitment to each other. They wanted to kind of see how things worked, and they felt like they could keep local control and keep their own identity with the de-activation. That's kind of where the community went. And they passed that in 2008.

Pogue: As far as any other earlier types of re-organization for Nauvoo and Colusa, you indicated the 2005 work; you talked about the 2004 convergence studies. Were there earlier ones that—

Young: As far as I understand it, before I got here, Nauvoo-Colusa has been talking about consolidation with the communities for a long time. I know in the mid-'80s they talked about having one high school for the county. That would be closer to Carthage. That kind of failed. In the mid-'90s, Nauvoo-Colusa approached Hamilton, but those talks failed as well. So, we've been talking about re-organization around here for twenty to thirty years. I haven't been, obviously, but the communities have.

Pogue: And, as far as Warsaw, you indicated that they were part of the study with Hamilton, as well as Nauvoo-Colusa in 2005. Were they also looking at other options prior to that?

Young: Yes. As far as like Warsaw's concerned, I guess they weren't really being too aggressive about it. Again, we started out with the whole consolidation talk. But Hamilton wanted the high school in their community, and Warsaw wanted their high school to stay in that community. That's one of the reasons that those talks broke down.

Pogue: Now, this idea of a double de-activation is somewhat unique. You mentioned that that was favored because it allowed you to keep your own schools, but did allow some sort of sharing.

Young: Right.

Pogue: Was there an individual or a group that suddenly said, “Let’s take a serious look at this form of re-organization”?

Young: One of the problems that we had, just like any other district, is that we had some financial difficulties because of lack of revenue. If you look at it, if we would have de-activated our high school, then we would have had to send all our tuition money down to Warsaw, and, financially, probably, couldn’t have done that very well.

So, the superintendent at the time, Kim Schilson, and I, we talked about ways that we could have less of an impact on that. So, together, we came up with the idea that they would shut down, or de-activate their seventh and eighth grade and send those students up to Nauvoo-Colusa. Then, we would send our high school students down there, and that would relieve a lot of the concern...the difference in financial problems that we may have...by just deactivating our high school. And what they do is, they pay us tuition for their seventh and eighth grade students, and then we pay them a tuition for sending our ninth through twelfth grade down there.

But the main reason we wanted to do the double de-activation was to provide the junior high school students an opportunity to take a lot of classes that they normally couldn’t take at either school. And it’s the same way with the high school. It was about the curriculum. It wasn’t necessarily about the finances. I mean, having the junior high students sent to us actually helped us out quite a bit, but it was mostly about the opportunities that we’ve provided for the best education possible for the high school and junior high students.

Pogue: What were some of the expanded curriculum options that were open for both the junior high and the high school?

Young: As far as the junior high school, we offer a lot of classes that we normally wouldn’t offer. Some of those that we do offer: creative writing; algebra; we offer ag, so intro to crop and livestock. We offer art, and we offer art history. We have forensic science, ecology and conservation. We also offer home economics and Spanish. We offer a computer class that we normally wouldn’t have offered. And, this year, we actually offered a guitar class for students that are not in band or chorus. We have a character development class and a life skills class, in which we teach the *Seven Habits for Highly Effective Teens*. And then, you have your required courses, the language arts, the math and social studies.

Pogue: What about the high school? What was—

Young: The main deal with the high school is that we offer a lot of dual credits at Warsaw. I’ll get to those real fast here; they’re written down, but some of the things that we’re able to offer in addition, is intro to business; Spanish three and four, where before they offered just Spanish one and two. They had year-

book and jazz band, advanced foods, sports history, American literature. I know there was a photography class that we offered. MIG [metal inert gas] welding, TIG [tungsten inert gas] welding, CAD [computer aided design/drafting], calculus and physics were some of the classes we could offer because of the increase in curriculum.

Pogue: Going back to the double de-activation, was there any serious interest in any other options?

Young: They talked about doing a consolidation, but once that sort of broke down between Hamilton and Warsaw and Nauvoo-Colusa, we really didn't seriously look at any other options. Nauvoo-Colusa, since the community had turned down the convergence vote between Dallas City, La Harp and Carthage, it became Illini West High School. We knew that was an option for our community. It felt like a good fit at the time, and I think it's worked out really well.

Pogue: Had the two districts worked in the past on courses, teacher sharing, extra-curriculars, transportation or any other?

Young: We started out working together because Nauvoo-Colusa is a small school, and we didn't have football. This was prior to when I came here. We started out sharing sports teams. So, we went to Warsaw for football. And that's where it all started. That was in the late '90s. Then we started to have other sports together, and that led to the three communities, Hamilton, Warsaw and Nauvoo-Colusa. Now we have all high school sports together. We used to be the Nauvoo-Colusa Vikings, and Warsaw used to be the Wildcats, and Hamilton used to be the Cardinals, but now we're called the West Hancock Titans.

Pogue: So, high school, it's a tri-co-op?

Young: Correct.

Pogue: And junior high is just—

Young: Warsaw and Nauvoo-Colusa. We still have the Vikings here.

Pogue: So, you were not involved in any course or teacher sharing prior to the—

Young: Between Warsaw? No.

Pogue: And you had no other sharing programs?

Young: No, none other than sports.

Pogue: Once de-activation was selected, what steps had to be taken to meet the legal requirements?

Young: The school boards had to meet. We met and kind of came up with a two-year agreement, because the way de-activation works is that you start out with the two-year agreement, and then, after that, you can either make it two years or one year after the first signing. So we had to get together on that. We formed a committee made out of teachers, community members, students, and administration and school board members to talk about the class offerings.

Then we went around to each community, and we did PowerPoint presentations about the advantages of it. And then, with the aid of the regional superintendent, we got on the ballot for the February 2008 election. That's when it went to the community vote.

The way we made the agreement up was that it had to pass in both communities, or it failed. Technically, if Nauvoo-Colusa would have passed it, and in Warsaw it would have failed, we still would have had to send our students down there, and they didn't necessarily have to send their junior high students up here. But the boards, when they did their agreement, came up with the idea that it had to pass in both communities, or it failed. So, it passed in both communities in February 2008.

Pogue: As far as public hearings, were those required under a de-activation?

Young: We did have public hearings, and, I think, as far as like before, it went to referendum we did have to have those. I can't remember a hundred percent, at this point. (chuckles) I know we didn't have to have a committee of ten, like we had to have with consolidation or convergence, but we did have community meetings.

Pogue: Was there a feasibility study done to help you see how the junior high/high school de-activation could be profitable?

Young: No. We didn't do it. We did the feasibility study in 2006. Yeah, the Hamilton, Nauvoo-Colusa and Warsaw, but we didn't do another one when it came to de-activation. Actually, just Superintendent Schilson(?) and myself, we did the study ourselves.

Pogue: The referendum, what was the final vote?

Young: It passed by quite a bit. It was over sixty percent for both communities. When I was looking, I couldn't find exactly how much it was, but it was over sixty percent in both communities. So, the board felt like it was a really good thing.

Pogue: Was there a lot of interest in the public for doing this?

Young: There was. We had pretty good turnouts for our community meetings. I think that people have an understanding that a small school district, even though there's a lot of advantages and stuff like that, can't offer the curriculum. So, the school boards did a pretty good job about communicating with the

community. We had the community meetings in each town, and then it was in the newspaper quite a bit and the TV, channel 7 and channel 10. In Quincy, Illinois, they interviewed the superintendent from Warsaw, and they interviewed me, as well. So, it was out there in the public quite a bit. There were plenty of opportunities for people to come ask questions, and we had a pretty good turnout.

Pogue: How was it determined that Nauvoo-Colusa would host the junior high and Warsaw, the high school?

Young: Well, because Warsaw has better facilities. They have a new high school, an addition, I should say. They did that in the '90s. They have a nice gym, and plenty of classrooms. Nauvoo-Colusa's fairly small. It was only built for about 300 students, and we only have around 260 high school students. But they just have better equipment, better classrooms and...

Pogue: What is the current enrollment of both the high school and the junior high?

Young: The junior high is 115, and then the high school is 260 students. Without Warsaw, we'd have about 50 junior high students, so it over-doubles our population.

Pogue: What was the actual ballot question?

Young: When they went in to vote, it was just—I mean, I don't have the language right in front of me, but—"Do you approve the de-activation between the communities of Warsaw and Nauvoo-Colusa?"

Pogue: And did it spell out where the high school would be?

Young: No, huh-uh.

Pogue: And did it spell out that it had to pass in both, or was that an understanding?

Young: No, it was just an understanding.

Pogue: And did it say the term—that it was last two years?

Young: I don't believe it did on the ballot, but it was just when we provided the information to the community in newsletters and public meetings, on TV and radio.

Pogue: You talked about, generally, how the public overall viewed it, how about specific groups like teachers union, farm bureau, local business groups, the PTO? And you indicated the school boards were in favor.

Young: We really didn't have that much opposition. You know, some people opposed. I mean, anything you do in life, there's opposition. So, there were a few people opposed.

I know one of the greatest things I heard during this thing I was kind of proud of was, on our PowerPoint, I put that it would increase students' twenty-first century skills to give them opportunities to succeed in a global economy. And there was a college professor in the audience. He was actually against it—he was from Warsaw—he was against it; he didn't see any purpose in it. When we put that slide up there, he told the superintendent down in Warsaw that changed his mind. He was a person who was actually against it, and he had a voice in the community. You know how some people are a little bit noisy, and so, he was making noise against it. And then, when he came to that public meeting, it totally changed his mind, because we showed the classes that we had offered at Nauvoo-Colusa High School and then the classes we had offered at Warsaw, and then what we would do together, offering the curriculum at the junior high, and then offering the curriculum at the high school. So, I thought that was a pretty big turn-around. I think that was an important piece, to have people understand the importance in today's society.

Pogue: How far are the two communities, Warsaw and Nauvoo-Colusa?

Young: From the junior high, it's right at about twenty miles to the high school. And we do go through the Hamilton school district. If you go down the river from Nauvoo, it's between fifteen and twenty miles.

Pogue: And from the furthest point in the region, then, what would be the estimated transportation of a student who might be from Nauvoo going to Warsaw might have?

Young: The bus ride for some kids: about an hour and half, because we bring all the high school students to the junior high school here, then we take them down. So, it takes them about an hour to the junior high school, then it takes them about a half hour to get down to Warsaw. Junior high, they do it a little bit different. It's probably about an hour fifteen to an hour and twenty minutes, because they meet out in the country in a small community, and they transfer the students.

Pogue: Were there any geographic areas within the two districts that opposed the referendum, such as those that are kind of on the edges with other districts?

Young: Yeah, they did. I heard, out where we used to be, in Colusa, they talked about, they wanted to start their own school again, even though they don't have a school anymore; it's been torn down. But they're closer to Carthage. There were some people that would rather have gone to Carthage. There were some



people in the farther ends of Warsaw, they were closer to Southeastern. But since that time, we haven't heard any kind of problems whatsoever.

Pogue: Following the election, which you said passed in February of 2008, the target then was to be ready to go in 2009?

Young: No, July first was when we did the activation, or that's when the agreement was, July first, 2008. So, we had done enough homework and enough research that we were ready to go at the beginning of the school year in 2008.

Pogue: Following the election, was there anything else that had to be done to make the de-activation results ready to go for a two-year period?

Young: The boards each had to sign an agreement and approve the agreement, even though it was a community vote. They had to agree upon the agreement, which we kind of had that worked out prior, so that wasn't really a problem.

We have formed a committee of teachers, school board members, administrators and community members that we meet every quarter. And we continually do that. We actually have a De-activation Committee meeting on this next Monday.

Pogue: What topics are typical?

Young: Well, the main thing is always transportation. What we do is, we get together and try to solve problems. Then we take those to the board or the administration. The superintendents are there, and the principals are there. So, we have the community members, or people who have concerns, they take it to the committee members, and then they bring it to us and we talk about the issues. But, our main issues are always transportation.

Pogue: How many are on this advisory committee?

Young: We have fifteen.

Pogue: And does that include ex-officio members, like the administration?

Young: Yes, teachers. We have a couple community members, a couple board members from each community, and the administration, and, then, a couple teachers from each.

Pogue: What role did the regional office play, if any, during this period of considering de-activation?

Young: They provided us some information on it. Then, during the elections, they provided information about putting it on the ballot.

Pogue: How about the State Board of Education?

- Young: Yes. There was a lady that came down from the state board, and she talked about the legalities of de-activation with the school board, and exactly the process that we have to go through.
- Pogue: Anything from the State Superintendent of Schools?
- Young: Uh, no.
- Pogue: How about from local legislators?
- Young: Oh, I'm sorry. The state superintendent was the lady that came down. School boards: there was nothing from the Illinois School Board Association. So, it was from the State Board of Education that the lady came and talked about the legalities. Legislators? No, there wasn't much involvement from them.
- Pogue: Was there any other people that played a role in giving information about this double de-activation?
- Young: No.
- Pogue: What were the challenges in creating the merged high school and merged junior high, other than transportation?
- Young: Part of it was to stick with what we told the community we were going to do. With the financial problems, we've yet to cut curriculum, which is a possibility one of these days, if we don't generate more revenue. But the challenge was to meet the expectations of the community, as far as like offering the classes that we said we were going to offer at the community meetings, which we did. We gave those opportunities to the students. On some classes, you might just have one or two or three sign up, so we couldn't offer them, but we, at least, gave them the opportunity to take the curriculum that we said we were going to, to give the students and the skills. It was pretty big.
- Pogue: Did you have to add staff buses to do this?
- Young: We had to add a bus route from the junior high to the high school, and then they have two that come up here. We were doing a lot of sports down there, so we still offer that bus for extracurricular activities. So, that really didn't change. That's changed in the last ten years, because we do all our sports in either Hamilton or Warsaw, where before, they were here at the high school. So, we did have to offer that.
- But, teachers: we didn't add any staff. We kept all our current staff, which, of course, a couple of them have retired or left since the original deactivation. But, we kept all staff members.

Pogue: Now that you are merged for high school and junior high, how do you deal with school discipline, if there's Nauvoo students that are in discipline problems at Warsaw, or vice versa, here at the junior high?

Young: The way it's set up in the de-activation agreement is that, since we pay tuition to Warsaw High School, the school principal down there, he does all the discipline with the high school students. And, then, I do all the discipline up here with the junior high school students. So, what we did was, that way it made it easier, and I didn't have to drive down there every time there was a student in trouble, and he didn't have to drive up here. So, we just had the authority to discipline the students. I don't know if they're from Warsaw or Nauvoo, generally. I don't ask.

The main challenge was on the bus, because sometimes kids would be going home to Warsaw, and they would get in trouble. Or they were coming back to Nauvoo in the evening, the high school students would get in trouble. That was a challenge. What we generally did was, we had the bus driver write up the student and give it to the principal where the student goes to school. So, if a high school student got in trouble, unless it was an emergency, really something really bad, we'd just send the discipline down to Warsaw. And if they have problems, they just fax us the disciplinary referral up here, then I take care of it the next day. Unless there's a fight or some kind of a major threat, and then the administration from that school district takes care of it—an immediate threat.

Pogue: And if you have to deal with an expulsion on the bus, or expulsion from school?

Young: Then it's just the school board that those students attend. So, if we have a Warsaw student that would need expelled, then our board of education would do that, and the same way down at Nauvoo-Colusa.

Pogue: Were there any issues with course credits, merging the Nauvoo-Colusa students with the Warsaw for high school?

Young: No, there weren't any problems at all. After the first couple years, I should say. What we did was, we made a couple exceptions, so that there was a little bit of difference in the way the credits were here at the school. Warsaw just allowed the same credits to be transferred down there.

We did keep separate valedictorian and salutatorians for three years. So, we had the Nauvoo-Colusa valedictorian and salutatorian, and they had the Warsaw one. But now, after last year, there's just one or two, however many students would have that opportunity to be a valedictorian.

Pogue: Did any of the local media have a position on the de-activation?

Young: No, not that I was aware of.

- Pogue: Have there been any modification of your operations since you first de-activated in 2008?
- Young: We've modified the bus schedule a little bit, because it took buses to get to the junior high a little bit longer than we thought it may. So, we made us start school, maybe five minutes later than we originally thought—nothing huge. We do have homeroom in the morning. So, if the Warsaw bus is late, due to weather or something happens, then the kids aren't missing a class. They're just missing a homeroom period.
- Pogue: How did you handle who was going to the high school and who was going to the junior high from the two districts?
- Young: As far as teachers are concerned? They did it by seniority. We only had one teacher come up here, and he was the junior high social studies teacher. He came up here. And then, we lost four teachers; well, four teachers transferred down there. So, the social studies teacher up here transferred down, and then their social studies transferred up here. He was already a junior high teacher.
- Pogue: And then, as far as salary?
- Young: Whatever salary schedule was at the new district, that's what they got.
- Pogue: OK. So, if a person from Warsaw was re-assigned to Nauvoo, they went on the Nauvoo salary schedule?
- Young: Right. If it was less, they just got less.
- Pogue: And then their seniority would be, if they had three years, then that's where they would start?
- Young: Yes.
- Pogue: How about support staff?
- Young: No, we didn't have any change in support staff.
- Pogue: And then, the school name and colors were not an issue because you kept Vikings?
- Young: Yes, for the junior high. And then, the co-op down there, with the Titans.
- Pogue: And sports conference affiliation: any changes?
- Young: Well, Nauvoo-Colusa used to be independent, so we weren't in a sports conference. Actually, I should back up a little bit here. Our first year, we did have a couple sports teams that were still separate, as far as from Hamilton and Warsaw. Then, after the first year, they became all Titans. So, the first

year, they still kept the Warsaw Wildcats on basketball. But everything else was together. Now all sports are together. But we kept the Viking for the junior high.

Pogue: As far as disposition of Nauvoo High School pictures, trophies, old uniforms?

Young: We kept it all here. We kept the trophies here.. We had a little bit of problem with uniforms. I didn't think it was a problem, but some community members did. Like, if they had newer uniforms in junior high in baseball, we brought them up here, and they might have had a W on it.

And high school, that wasn't really a problem. Warsaw had a lot of newer stuff. And then, after we did the Titans, everything is Titan now, so they did have to buy all new uniforms, as far as the high school is concerned. The junior high, this last year, everything is Nauvoo-Colusa.

Pogue: As far as textbooks, were you all using the same junior high/high school textbooks or were...

Young: We weren't, but if we had a newer edition, we sent them down to Warsaw. We sent most of our high school books down there, and they sent their junior high books up here. We gave them our shop equipment and digital photography, because we offered that here at the junior/senior high school here, and, then, they offered it down there.

But, we have a list, and if the de-activation would not work out in a couple years, then they would send that equipment up. Textbooks are a little harder because you get rid of them after so many years, but we did transfer certain things down.

Pogue: And is that also true with library?

Young: We didn't do anything with the libraries, mostly textbooks and, then, some of the equipment.

Pogue: And were there any board policies that had to be amended because of—

Young: No, I don't believe we did.

Pogue: How about activity funds?

Young: We did transfer the high school activity funds down to Warsaw. So, say, if the class of 2009 had money in their funds up here, we gave it to Warsaw High School, so that they could continue on with that down there.

Pogue: Were there any problems that developed that had not been anticipated?

Young: Not really. I mean transportation, I think, has always been difficult, even when we had our own separate school districts. That's always been the most challenging. The discipline on the buses was a little bit of a problem, but kids are on there for an hour and a half or more. They kind of get antsy. I think we've always had discipline problems with buses.

I think most of the community members actually look at it as a positive. I mean I've had lots of people say they were against it when they first heard about it, and some people said they voted "no," and they actually like it.

Their students like it. There's always kids who don't necessarily like high school. I don't hear that as much anymore, because most of the kids who went to high school here, they've graduated. So, at first, some of the kids wanted to come back to Nauvoo-Colusa, but I think that's kind of natural.

Pogue: Did the state provide any kind of incentives with this kind of merger?

Young: Yeah, we got \$4,000 for the one teacher that we got.

Pogue: So, it was a total of one teacher? For \$4000 for—

Young: Yeah, I think it's four years.

Pogue: And Warsaw got the equivalent on the transfer?

Young: Yeah, they had four teachers, so they would have gotten \$16,000.

Pogue: What are the long-term challenges for the two districts?

Young: It's finance, because this doesn't really help Nauvoo out financially, because we give Warsaw about a hundred and some thousand more a year. However, we don't have as many teachers, so we sort of broke even. But finances, I mean, the state's not paying what they owe us on time, and that's a challenge.

The governor's also cut transportation out quite a bit, and that really hurts rural districts. And since we've made this change, that's really hurt us quite a bit. Before, ten, fifteen years ago, Nauvoo-Colusa had all their own sports teams here, so we didn't have extracurricular routes, just away games, and that was it. Now we have extracurricular routes every day that we have to send students down there. We have to run a bus all the way to Warsaw and back, twice a day. We also have an early bird course that we send a bus down there for that. So, transportation costs have increased greatly, and, with the State of Illinois cutting that, that really hurts the district.

Pogue: Well, then, how would you determine that the reorganization has been accepted three years after the fact?

- Young: Well, because the increase in curriculum, I know that a lot of students have opportunities for dual credit at the high school down there. And I know a lot of people are happy about that because, when we had Nauvoo-Colusa alone, we only offered three dual credits, and I think they offer close to fifteen different classes. That is pretty big for people. You know, they give their students some college credit before they go on to college, especially with the economic times that we have. It's a fairly cheap way to get your child some hours that transfer to universities.
- Pogue: We haven't talked about the elementary, since they didn't change. But, has there been more coordination between the two districts on the elementary side, since they're feeding a junior high/high school?
- Young: Mostly in the area of special education. When we have IEPs, [Individual Education Plans] and students who are in sixth grade come up here, we have to have IEP meetings. We have to go down there and make sure we have all the files. Then, when we offer classes up here, the sixth grade classes, we drive down there. And they do the same thing for our eighth grade classes at the high school. The counselor comes up here and signs kids up for freshman classes. We go down at Warsaw. We have tried to make our elementary schools similar—similar textbooks, similar teaching, similar offerings and stuff like that—so that, when they come into junior high, they're prepared.
- Pogue: Was that phased in over the three years?
- Young: Yeah, it was, because it's expensive. Well, we didn't all go out and buy new textbooks, but we talked to the principal of the elementary school some about that and talked to the superintendent down there about what we expect. I think they do a pretty good job. They do the same thing up here at the high school. If they have a problem, they tell us. Like, if they think we're weak in an area, we try to strengthen or can understand their concerns, where they're coming from, so that the junior high students might be better prepared at the high school.
- Pogue: As far as special education, are those teachers hired by the districts or from the cooperative?
- Young: Well, they're hired from the district, but, if we do have students that we can't service here, they do go to, maybe, Macomb or Carthage for the cooperative. That brings up a good point because special education costs can be pretty great. So, once a student—say we have a special education student that we have to send to Carthage—then that student goes back to the responsibility of Warsaw and vice-versa. So, if a Nauvoo-Colusa student has to go to Macomb or Carthage, we provide the transportation for them, and then we pay whatever tuition or fees that they normally would accrue. For instance, if we have a junior high student that's not successful here, and they have to go on

somewhere else, then Warsaw's responsible for paying to co-op or transporting the student to where they need to go.

Pogue: Have any other districts talked to you about this re-organization strategy?

Young: When I got my doctorate, there was a lady that was interested in it. They were de-activating, and I talked to her about how it worked. I've had maybe one or two other calls. I know, my past school board president had some people talk to him about it. So, there is interest out there.

And, then, when we did the de-activation with Dallas City, originally, actually we presented that at the School Board Association's annual conference in November—that's been a while back—and met quite a few people that talked to us about how that worked.

Pogue: Now they have talked about forming a commission, under House Bill 1216, if the governor signs it.

Young: He did today, I believe. I just got something from ISA.

Pogue: OK. Without any amendment or just—

Young: (chuckle) It just said there's a committee being formed.

Pogue: OK. Do you have any suggestions for the commission, based on your own involvement with reorganization?

Young: I sure do. I find it kind of interesting. I know, here at Nauvoo-Colusa, we're still meeting AYP, adequate yearly progress, and I think there are very few school districts in the nation that are still doing that. So, I think we provide a very good education. It's kind of funny that they're cutting out all this transportation funding, but then they want to make school districts larger. Some of their arguments, in my personal opinion, don't hold water because they say, if you get rid of superintendents, you're going to save millions of dollars and stuff like that. But, as far as Nauvoo-Colusa's concerned, we don't hardly get any general state aid because we have such high EAV (equalized assessed value), our property values are so high, we don't really get that much in general state aid. So, as far as the state saving a lot of money, it's not going to happen like they say it's going to happen because you're going to have more transportation costs. Yeah, you get rid of one superintendent, but they may need three assistants. I mean, I just don't understand the rationale. My entire salary is not paid by the State of Illinois. It's paid by local money, some state, I'm sure, and some federal money. That's how school budgets work, that we use the money from the local, the state and the federal government to make up our budget. So, say I make a hundred thousand and you get rid of me with consolidation, that's not going to save the State of Illinois \$100,000.



Pogue: How many square miles is Nauvoo-Colusa?

Young: We are at 92 square miles.

Pogue: Do you know what Warsaw would be?

Young: I was thinking it was over—I mean it's obviously over 100; I was thinking it's like 160.

Pogue: Have any of your newspapers or media or public reacted when the governor talked about reducing the number of school districts down to around 300?

Young: I know there were quite a few people that I know that called their senators. I know a lot of my school board members contacted senators. I did, or their representative—not only senators, house people. I know there were some articles in local papers. There were even some articles over across in Iowa about the school consolidation. I'm not necessarily against it, but they need to understand how we feel here.

There's a lot of pride in Nauvoo-Colusa, and there's a lot of pride in Warsaw, and a lot of pride in Hamilton, smaller school districts. Again, we're still meeting AYP as a district, and I know, just because you make it bigger doesn't make it better, doesn't necessarily always save money. I think that they really need to consider what—they need to look at all the facts, I guess—as far as like what kind of education is being provided. I mean, right now we're providing a pretty good education at the junior high.

I don't think there's too many junior highs in the state that offer forensic science and meteorology and ecology and art history and guitar. I can't find too many, and same way at the Warsaw High School. There's a class that, if you pass that class in high school, you get your card to be nationally certified as a construction worker, heavy equipment worker. So you can go anywhere in the United States and work on road construction. We've had a lot of kids take that opportunity. And they can drive scrapers and bulldozers and whatever. I just don't think there are too many larger schools that can offer what we can offer and still have small classes. I think we do a great job of providing an education that students can be successful.

Pogue: Do the two districts anticipate any reorganization needs in the next five years, or do you feel that you're going to continue doing these de-activation votes?

Young: I think there's always the thought of possibly doing a consolidation with Hamilton, Warsaw and Nauvoo-Colusa. Right now, the de-activation, in my personal opinion, is working really well. I haven't heard a lot of people in the community say they want to look at consolidation. There's a few people, but I think, as far as what we've done, we've provided a great opportunity for students. We provide a great education.

Financially, I think 90 percent of the schools across America need more money. I've been in education a long time, and it seems like that's always kind of been a problem. But, as far as that commission is concerned, to get back to that, it doesn't make sense to cut down on transportation so much and think they're going to save so much money by consolidating.

A lot of the communities, they don't want to give up their schools. The rural communities, especially, they like the small classes. You know, we don't have a lot of problems here. We don't have very many discipline problems. Teachers teach the best they can.

Pogue: A couple more questions, then, tied to this topic. We talked just a little bit about the high school, involving Hamilton with West Hancock. What sports are offered?

Young: We have cross-country, golf, volleyball, football, girls and boys' basketball, track and baseball. I think that's it.

Pogue: Are all the sports played in either Hamilton or Warsaw?

Young: Yes. Say, like, boys basketball is in Hamilton. Girls basketball—no, girls basketball now—they've switched this around a little bit. Girls' basketball's in Hamilton, then boys basketball is in Warsaw. Then volleyball is, I believe, in Warsaw. What they do is, they try to give one community one sport. So, say Hamilton has football, but they do have games at Warsaw. And they have homecoming one year at Warsaw; then they'll have homecoming one year at Hamilton. And the parade's at Hamilton and, the next year, at Warsaw. And the dances, one year at Warsaw, the next year at Hamilton, and so on. Track: Hamilton doesn't have a track, so Warsaw has the track. So, they try to split it up, where each community gets a sport.

Pogue: So, if you have a Nauvoo-Colusa High School student participating in the co-op team and there are issues with discipline, then the coach and the athletic director at the school where the sport is played—or is it under...?

Young: OK. The discipline would be wherever the coach is at. So, if the coach is at Hamilton, and there's a discipline with that player, that coach takes care of it. If it's a discipline that needs to be put in front of the school board, then wherever that student goes to high school, that would be where they would take it.

Pogue: And how have the cooperative done in participation?

Young: Done pretty well. I know, here at Nauvoo-Colusa, we were having a hard time getting students; just less kids participate than they used to. There's obvious reasons for that. We had three channels; now they have 300. Didn't have Xbox when I was in high school, didn't have any of those fun things, I guess, kids have now-a-days (laughs). So, you don't get kids to participate. A lot of

kids will choose to do a job now or have a job to buy a car, and so on. Where, when I grew up, in the '80s, we didn't have those many opportunities, so we participated more, I think. So, a lot of school districts now, across the nation, struggle with kids participating in athletics. But, with the three schools together, we've done pretty well. There was always a concern at first that, if they got to play here at Nauvoo, they might not play down there. There could be some truth to that because, if you only have ten kids here, you're probably going to play. If you go down there, and there's 25, 30 kids out for a team, you might not play. But, I haven't really heard a problem from anyone since we've started the cooperative.

Pogue: And the junior high sports that are offered?

Young: Junior high sports: we only have the Warsaw and Nauvoo-Colusa students together. Hamilton: they still have their separate junior high sports. We've talked to them in the past about making a co-op, but those fell through. We have baseball, and then, we have volleyball, girls and boys basketball, and then, we have girls and boys track. So, we have girls' volleyball, boys' baseball, and then, girls and boys basketball, girls and boys track.

Pogue: And tuition. You mentioned \$100,000 to Warsaw. How do you determine tuition costs?

Young: What we did was, we set 90 percent of the foundation level. The foundation level last year was about \$6,000, so it's \$5,000 something. And then, we do it on whenever the student enters. So, we take the \$5,000 something and divide it by how many school days there are. So, if there's 174 days, we'll take the \$5,400, \$5,700, divide it by 174 days, and that's how much we'd charge. So, if a student comes in November, then we start charging the day they come. Or if they leave in January, then we only charge how long the students are enrolled in school.

Pogue: And has that been a problem, determining what the tuition costs are for each school?

Young: No, it hasn't been a problem in determining it, because the foundation level is always set by the State in time. It's usually this time of year. Then we have our first tuition bill in January, and then we have another one that's in June.

Pogue: Now, do you balance them out, or, if you owe \$100,000 and they owe \$35,000—

Young: We switch checks. So, we give them \$550,000, and they give us a check back for \$350,000 or \$400,000.

Pogue: Are there any other cooperatives that you're both involved in, other than special education?

Young: Not really. I mean, we've always belonged to the Western Area Distributors, where we buy products together. There's a lot of schools in the area that kind of do that. There's a western cooperative there. But, other than that, that's it.

Pogue: The last question, then, deals with the fine arts. We've talked about the sports. Were you able to do anything—and you mentioned guitar—

Young: Yeah, we have a drama class here at the junior high too. So, we have chorus, band, drama and guitar. And down there, they have—I'll have to take a look at my notes real quickly—but, they offer quite a bit. And then, we have a play that our students participate down there. That's in the spring. I know they have band, chorus and some other courses like that. So, yeah, we've been able to increase in the fine arts. And then, we've kept art, and we did art history this year at the junior high; we offered that class. And we offer Art I and Art II. They offer quite a bit of art down there. They have a great art teacher down there at Warsaw. We also have clothing design and, again, home economics, where even here, we offer students opportunity for cooking and sewing and that kind of stuff.

Pogue: So, the band teacher and chorus teacher are employed by Nauvoo-Colusa for the junior high?

Young: Yes.

Pogue: And they just stay in this district?

Young: Right, they go to the elementary school and then here. Then, down there, they have a band teacher who does chorus and band.

Pogue: And how have the numbers been in band and chorus?

Young: Pretty good. This year, Warsaw had to cut some chorus out at the elementary school, so we don't have a lot of chorus students in seventh grade. But, in the past, it's been pretty good. And then, at football games, the Hamilton and the Warsaw high school bands get together and play.

Pogue: Well, we want to thank you for sharing with us the idea of de-activation of the junior high at Warsaw and the high school at Nauvoo-Colusa that took place in 2008. Are there any other pieces of information you would like to share with us?

Young: No, I think I've covered it, for the most part. It's been a great opportunity for our students. I know here, at the junior high, forensic science is a very popular class, since we have all those CSIs and all those shows on TV so, that's been a pretty good class. The guitar class has been really popular this year and art history. So, I think, as far as junior high, it's a great opportunity.

And then, again, in high school, I wish I'd had opportunities for dual credit. Not that I didn't like my years of college, but it would have been nice to have freshman English over, or a couple of those classes, and had those opportunities in high school.

I think kids, now-a-days, no matter what test scores say, they're really pretty smart kids. (Chuckle) It's just a different world, totally different. I listened to a speaker the other day. He goes into first grade, and they talked about topographic maps and all this stuff. And he said, when he was in school, they were trying to spell top or learn what a top is. So, I know there's a lot of criticism in American public education, but I still think that we provide great education in rural areas, a lot of good opportunities for kids to be successful.

Pogue: Well, thank you. This concludes our interview today with Kent regarding Nauvoo-Colusa and the de-activation with Warsaw.

Young: Alright. Thank you.

(end of interview)