Written by Jim Ecker Sunday, 09 June 2013 22:13 -

lowa is the only state in the country that has separate high school sports organizations for boys and girls.

Mark Schneider, the superintendent of the Mid-Prairie school district in Wellman, thinks it may be time to merge the two bodies together.

The Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union (IGHSAU) and Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) have their own buildings, their own staffs, their own executive director and sometimes their own ways of doing business.

Schneider thinks there could be ways to coordinate the efforts to save money, work more efficiently and be more consistent in how things are done.

"Yes, that is true," he said. "I've been a little vocal about it recently.

"I believe in makes sense to merge the two associations, but I also believe I'm just one person. Maybe I don't know all the pros and cons in doing that."

Schneider has met with Rick Wulkow, the executive director of the IHSAA, and with Mike Dick, the executive director of the IGHSAU, to discuss the proposal and get their perspective.

The next step could be a survey of all the school superintendents in lowa to gauge their feelings, and that could lead to an independent study by an outside organization.

Schneider indicated the survey could be conducted this fall.

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"I would certainly think there is interest at least to do a study," he said. "It's my personal opinion that a lot of good could come out of a merger.

"I think it makes sense to study the issue. An independent study. A non-biased study."

Dick said he's not opposed to a survey, but clearly does not think a merger is a good idea.

"It's something that we always talk about and take a look at from time to time," said Dick. "It's been 10 years since it's really reared its head.

"It's obviously not something that we are in favor of doing right now," he said. "But we're willing to at least talk and take a look."

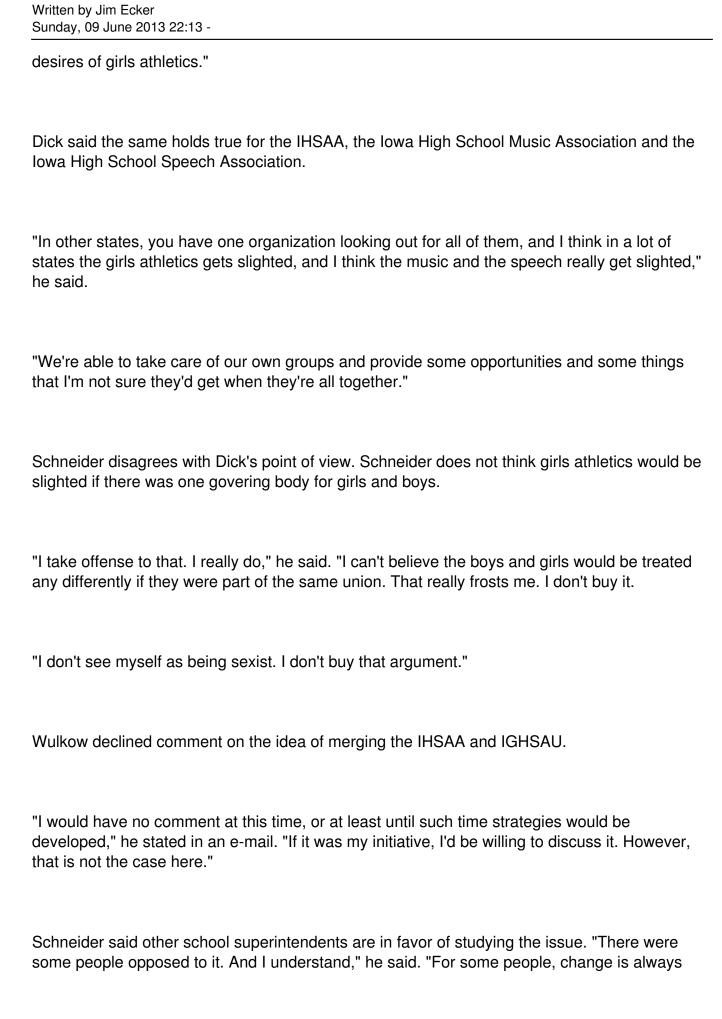
Dick said he plans to discuss the topic with the IGHSAU Representative Council of school officials this week. Schneider is a member of the IHSAA Representative Council and has already broached the idea with his group.

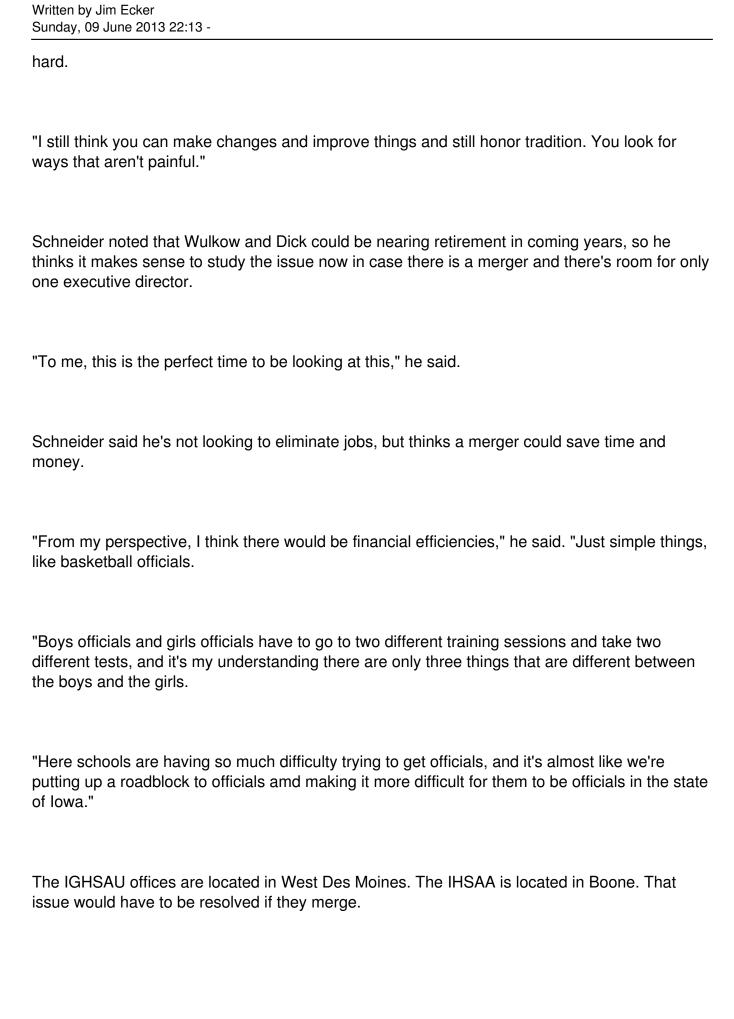
"We don't want to over-react, but we also don't want to under-react," said Dick. "We want to be open and visit with the right groups and the right people and see what direction we need to head on this."

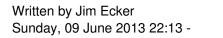
Dick noted there are actually four governing bodies in Iowa when you count the separate organizations for music and speech.

Dick thinks the IGHSAU has played an important role in the development of girls athletics in lowa.

"Our kids get special treatment," he said. "We're able to specifically address the needs and







Dick does not think a merger would necessarily lead to more consistency, efficiency and savings.

"It's a perspective that a lot of people on the outside of the organizations always have," he said. "Anytime you put two together, they think they're going to eliminate one. And that's not true.

"You're still going to need most of the same staff. Could there be a slight reduction somewhere? Yeah, you might need one person instead of two to answer the telephone or something like that."

Schneider believes it's time for a serious discussion of the issue.

"We're the only state in the United States that has separate organizations," he said. "And to me looking at it from the outside, it just doesn't seem to make sense."