

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF EDUCATION

BULLETIN, 1923, No 48

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSOLIDATING
THE RURAL SCHOOLS OF BEAUFORT
COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

(A DIGEST OF THE REPORT)

By

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WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1923

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SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING THE SCHOOLS OF BEAUFORT COUNTY, N. C.

The following is a digest of the report made orally to the board of education and the superintendent of schools of Beaufort County, N. C. The report is the result of an investigation of the schools of the county made by Mrs. Katherine M. Cook, specialist in rural education, and Mr. E. E. Windes, assistant in rural education, under the direction of the Commissioner of Education, Department of the Interior, at the request of the county board of education, for the purpose of studying the possibilities for centralizing the schools of the county and of recommending a definite plan of procedure for school consolidation. No complete investigation of the quality of instruction given, course of study used, or other factors entering into a complete survey of the system was requested or made. The study contemplates only the desirability and feasibility of consolidating the schools.

The committee had in mind in making the study three major questions: (1) Are present school conditions satisfactory or are school facilities, attendance, quality of instruction, and the like such that improvement of the kind usually brought about by centralization is desirable? (2) What are the possibilities for consolidation and can a sane county-wide plan be recommended for adoption? (3) Can the county be reasonably expected to finance a program such as agreed upon by the committee without undue financial strain or overburdensome taxation?

SOME FINDINGS OF THE PRELIMINARY STUDY OF GENERAL AND SCHOOL CONDITIONS.

The answer to the first question necessitates a brief survey of general and school conditions in the county.

General conditions.—Beaufort County is situated near the Atlantic coast about midway between the north and south boundaries of the State. It extends approximately 40 miles along both sides of the Pamlico River, running from northwest to southeast; and measures approximately 20 miles from the northern to the southern boundary. The river divides the county into two separate sections approximately equal in size. It varies from 1 to more than 5 miles in width, and is spanned by one bridge only, located at Washington City, the county seat, at the extreme western border.

Besides this natural barrier the county is broken up into sections because of swamps, some large, some small, but found in all sections of the county. Probably not less than one-quarter of the total area of the county is in swamp land. Separating the swamps are ridges, savannas, uncultivated timber tracts, and "cut-over" land. These tracts vary from a few feet to 67 feet above sea level. Much of the county is only a few feet above the water table. On the ridges and in the clearings between swamps and uncultivated timber tracts, the people live and the children to be educated are found. It follows from the contour of the county and because of poor roads which have prevailed until very recently, that the people live in small isolated communities and the children attend school in relatively small school groups. At present, however, good roads are being extended throughout the county.

Since agriculture is and will doubtless continue to be the most important occupation, and the one which the majority of the people follow, the future of the farm population and the education of farm children are of special importance. Lumbering and fishing are minor occupations, and because of the fine harbors afforded by the river commercial pursuits are followed by a limited number. Better development of water transportation for farm products seems probable. Cotton, tobacco, and corn are the principal crops; truck gardening and dairying are also important.

School attendance.—The school population¹ of the county, not including independent districts, is 5,459; the enrollment, 4,445; and the average daily attendance, 3,291. There are 67 school buildings, of which 23 are one-teacher; 20, two-teacher; 8, three-teacher; and 4, four-teacher schools. The remaining 12 have more than four teachers. Of the 23 one-teacher schools, 11 are in Chocowinity Township.² Besides the county school system there are three independent districts—Washington City, with a population of 6,314; Belle Haven, with a population of 1,816; and Aurora, with a population of 524.

Of the 67 schools in the county, all but 10 have six months' terms; 3 have eight months and 1 nine months school during the year. About 90 per cent of the children have access to a school term of six months only. The standard term throughout the country, as also in the independent districts in Beaufort County, is nine months.

The inefficiency of small schools and the educational handicap of short terms are aggravated by poor attendance. Apparently the schools have so slight a hold on the children and their parents that the meager school facilities now furnished are wasted in large part. This conclusion is the result of an examination of the attendance

¹ This report concerns white children only.

² See Plate III.

record of approximately 700 children for a full school year. The results, summarized in Table 1, show the number of days school was attended by 174 children in one-teacher and 498 children in other rural schools. These data indicate that the median² child enrolled in two or more teacher buildings attends school from 90 to 100 days, or about four and one-half to five months during the year. The lower 25 per cent of the children enrolled attend about three months, the upper 25 per cent a little over five months. In the one-teacher schools the median child attends from four to four and one-half months, the children in the lower 25 per cent group two and one-half months, and those in the upper 25 per cent group five months.

TABLE 1.—Actual number of days attended by 672 children in Beaufort County schools.

Days attended.	Number attending—		Days attended.	Number attending—	
	One-teacher schools.	Two or more teacher schools.		One-teacher schools.	Two or more teacher schools.
Less than 20.....	13	21	80-90.....	16	63
20-30.....	13	21	90-100.....	22	63
30-40.....	14	24	100-110.....	21	84
40-50.....	8	22	110-120.....	27	104
50-60.....	11	24			
60-70.....	11	24	Total.....	174	498
70-80.....	18	48			

In considering attendance as a factor in school efficiency our concern is not only with the amount of schooling secured by the upper 25 per cent of the children, or even that received by the median child. The lower 25 per cent, as well as the upper 25 per cent, must be developed into intelligent citizens and safe neighbors. Children who attend school two or two and one-half months per year will require, estimating on the basis of the standard nine months' term, four years to do one year's work. At the end of the usual 12-year school period, or at the age of 18, they will finish the third grade.

Relation of age to grade in which enrolled.—Another consideration supplementing the facts presented in Table 1 of significance as a measure of school efficiency concerns the age of children in connection with the grade in which they are enrolled. Beaufort County children enter school at 6 years of age. If they make satisfactory progress, at 7 they should be enrolled in the second grade, at 8 in the third grade, at 9 in the fourth grade, and so on. The percentage of children who are enrolled in the proper or normal grade for their age becomes therefore one measure of the effectiveness of

² This means that as many children fall above as below this child in days attended.

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the schools. Table 2 shows the number and ages of children enrolled in each of the elementary grades for 745 children of the county. [While full data were not obtainable, they would probably vary very little, if any, from those given.] Table 3, summarizing Table 2, shows that 79 per cent of the children in the schools are retarded, that is too old for their grade, one or more years; that only 15 per cent of the total number of children in the county are apparently doing satisfactory work and progressing at the normal rate of one grade a year; that retardation increases from the first to the sixth grade, where it reaches the peak at 93 per cent.

TABLE 2.—Relation of age to grade of 745 school children—Number of children of each age in the different grades.

Grades.	Years of age.																	Total.
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
1.....	5	68	89	60	28	10	4	2	4									270
2.....	1	13	17	17	23	11	4	3	2	0	1	1						93
3.....			2	13	21	25	11	10	9	5	4	0						100
4.....		1	1	4	8	24	18	17	14	18	2	3	3					113
5.....					9	1	9	18	12	10	1	7	4					71
6.....						3	9	11	11	5	7	7	9					63
7.....							1	3	3	7	5	9	3	2			2	35
Total.....	6	82	109	94	89	71	50	62	55	51	18	27	17	11			3	745

TABLE 3.—Showing per cent of retardation or acceleration of 745 school children.

Years of retardation.	Number retarded.	Per cent retarded.	Grade.	Per cent retarded.	Years of acceleration.	Number accelerated.	Per cent accelerated.
1.....	172	22+	1	72+	1.....	30	4+
2.....	162	21+	2	84+	2.....	2	2+
3.....	95	12+	3	85	3.....	1	1+
4.....	62	8+	4	87+			
5.....	45	5+	5	85+			
6.....	27	3+	6	93+			
7.....	24	3+	7	88+			
8.....	5	6+					
Total.....	592						

Number of normal age, 113+; per cent of normal age, 5+; per cent retarded one or more years, 79+.

Median child retarded two years according to grade enrollment; actually completes seventh grade at age of 15, with fourth or fifth grade ability, according to tests in an adjoining county where conditions are similar.

The appeal to finish the school course.—Another measure of the efficiency of the schools is found in their ability to hold children in school until they complete the full course of 11 years. Table 4, giving the total enrollment by grades, shows that for every 100 children who are enrolled in the first grade in the rural schools of Beaufort County

only a fraction of 1 per cent are enrolled in the eleventh. The small high-school enrollment may be accounted for in part by the short term and inefficient instruction in the grades; in part by the general indifference to education that apparently prevails; but it must be accounted for largely by the quality of instruction and the kind of course of study which the schools now furnish.

The teaching staff.—The quality of instruction given is admittedly the best measure of the effectiveness of a school system. Since this survey is confined to the provisions made by the administrative board, we can judge *the expectancy* only by the provisions made for securing good instruction. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the necessity of securing teachers of ability, qualified for their work by general education, professional training, and experience. Such a staff can be secured and retained only by payment of a reasonable compensation. The salary scale in Beaufort County must compare favorably with that paid in the independent districts and by neighboring counties with high-class school systems.

TABLE 4.—Showing number of children in each grade for every 100 in the first grade.

Grade.	Enrollment.	Number enrolled in each grade for every 100 enrolled in first grade.	Grade.	Enrollment.	Number enrolled in each grade for every 100 enrolled in first grade.
1.....	1,106	100	7.....	312	28
2.....	545	49	8.....	146	13
3.....	468	42	9.....	63	5.5
4.....	577	52	10.....	21	1.8
5.....	472	42	11.....	7	.6
6.....	433	39			

The salary scale in Beaufort County is the minimum prescribed by the State, and the majority of the teachers have the lowest qualifications permitted under State certification regulations, and consequently the lowest or among the lower grades of certificates. More than half the elementary teachers have not completed a four-year high-school course; about one-fourth of them have one year or less of high-school education, or none. The salaries, paid by the month and based on a six-months' term, are correspondingly low. The median salary is \$70 per month, or \$420 per year; that is, half the group receive less and half more than that figure. Some teachers receive less than \$270 per year. (See Table 5.)

It might easily be untrue to say that the present staff as a whole is underpaid. Probably as many are overpaid as underpaid, considering the quality of the service rendered. Usually when schools are conducted on the plan indicated by the six-months' term and \$270 annual salary for teachers; much of the meager amount spent

is wasted because there are no real educational results. It is not open to question, however, that salaries must be increased and higher qualifications demanded of teachers employed before good instruction can be expected.

TABLE 5.—Salaries and preparation of 139 teachers.

Salary per month.	Number receiving	Preparation.	Salary per month.	Number receiving.	Preparation.
\$45	12	No high school.	\$55	14	2 or 3 years of college or 2 years of normal.
\$50	12	1 year high school.	\$60	5	
\$55	23	2 years high school.	\$65	8	
\$60	11	Do.	\$104.50	1	
\$65	3	4 years high school.	\$100	7	
\$70	17	Do.	\$105	3	
\$75	10	1 year college and professional work.	\$110	4	
\$80	7	Do.	\$133.33	1	
			\$175 (Bath).	1	
			\$222.22 (Kaufman).	1	

The average monthly salary of teachers in graded schools of Washington City, N. C., is \$143, approximately \$1,270 per school year of nine months.

There is apparent also in the examination of the salary scale a common and natural but mistaken tendency to concentrate the lower-paid and underqualified teachers in the one-teacher schools and in the lower elementary grades. It seems necessary to call the attention of the board of education to the necessity of having skilled teachers in the elementary grades, not alone because skill is most needed, but also because satisfactory progress is impossible in the upper grades when early training in the fundamentals has been neglected. Children from rural elementary schools enrolled in the upper elementary and high-school grades often read with third-grade ability. This has been proved in many instances by standard tests. Such children can not satisfactorily do the work of the grades to which they may be promoted, and for which they have the necessary intelligence and ability, because of the deficiencies of their early training; and they fail or leave school in large numbers. In making the salary scale for the county, therefore, the importance of securing qualified and professionally trained teachers for the primary and elementary grades, as well as for the upper grades, should not be overlooked.

School supervision.—The only supervision which the teachers of the county receive is that given by the county superintendent. He must divide his time as well as possible among the administrative, supervisory, and clerical duties. Experience proves that when a superintendent is forced to make such a choice, supervision is almost sure to suffer. Administrative and clerical duties are immediate and present, and even if of less importance in the final effi-

ciency of the schools, can not be neglected. Supervisory duties, therefore, are apt to be postponed until other demands are satisfied. Moreover, it is a physical impossibility, considering the number of teachers, the size of the county, the condition of the roads, and the large number of small schools, for one person to get about often enough to do any justice to supervising the schoolroom instruction. Such supervision necessitates far more frequent visits than one person unassisted can possibly make.

Satisfactory school work in organization, management, and instruction in any system is conditioned in large part by the adequacy and quality of the supervision given. It is particularly essential to securing results in a county in which so large a percentage of the staff of teachers are untrained and relatively inexperienced. To place 130 teachers of the kind referred to in 67 schools, scattered over a wide territory, with no professional direction, is tempting fate from the standpoint of school efficiency. Centralization will make close supervision of instruction possible and enable a small administrative and supervisory force to insure a far higher quality of instruction than is otherwise possible.*

High-school facilities.—Outside of the three independent districts, there is but one four-year high school in the county, located at Pantego. It has an enrollment of 82 pupils and four teachers. At Bath three years of high-school work are offered, and at nearly all the schools having two or more teachers some high-school subjects are taught. In several of the larger centers two or more years of high-school work are offered, but without equipment even of the most meager sort, and by teachers who have neither time nor facilities for any but book work. The building at Pantego is not fit for school use, considered either from a hygienic or an educational standpoint. At Bath and Pantego laboratory and library facilities are so meager as to be almost worthless. No prevocational nor vocational subjects nor work in the "newer" subjects, as music, art, and recreational athletics, are offered anywhere in the county, either in the elementary or high-school grades. The curriculum offered is of the old-time, narrow, academic type, completion of which admits to college, but has little practical value to boys and girls entering other than the professional vocations or planning to make business, farming, or home-making their life work. Except for a small group of young people preparing to enter college, who can be accommodated at Pantego, the county does not furnish secondary educational advantages worthy of the name.

It can not be too strongly emphasized that the practice of permitting small schools with poorly trained teachers and inadequate

* Experiments recently conducted, to show the value of supervision of rural schools prove that the quality of instruction of supervised schools is 50 per cent superior to that of unsupervised.

material equipment to do high-school work is vicious in the outcome. Inevitably such work is maintained at the expense of elementary work. A disproportionate amount of the teacher's time is given to a few pupils in the high-school grades at the expense of large numbers of pupils in the elementary grades. The result is general inefficiency. The high-school instruction offered is worthless or nearly so, as has been demonstrated many times in different States through standard tests, and the elementary instruction suffers materially. The final result is that the people discount the value of education. They are led to condemn education in general, whereas they should condemn the education that is offered them. An enlarged building and an enlarged teaching staff afford possibilities for improved instruction, but do not guarantee improvement unless the teaching is of higher quality, and unless more time for recitation and supervised study is given, and a program enriched by new courses, such as home economics, music, and health studies, and improved material equipment is provided.

Buildings and equipment.—Careful planning by competent men is an essential in initiating a school building and equipment program. Properly planned buildings from the standpoint of the right allotment of floor space per child, window space and placement, provision for ventilation and for heating, are essential for health, comfort, and conditions that make good work possible. Children can not work at a high level under physical distractions and may easily suffer permanent impairment of health in improperly constructed school-rooms.

Good planning and construction are essential also from a financial standpoint to insure adequacy of materials to stand the strains to which they are subjected; and correctness of design and workmanship to insure strength and permanency. The country has wasted too much money in recent years on poorly planned and constructed school buildings. Flimsy structures, which are all too common and must be replaced in a few years are fire hazards and tax the children, and through them their parents, enormous sums through impaired ability to do work, through respiratory diseases and eye defects. The public should, and is coming more and more to do so, condemn shortsighted building programs inspired by false economy.

The present school plant and equipment.—Of the 67 school buildings in the county, 5 of those completed and 2 in the course of erection may be fairly considered reasonably good buildings, appropriate for their purpose, and planned with some regard to sanitary and hygienic conditions. The others are quite unadapted to school purposes, and some are even a menace to the health of the children. Four walls and a roof do not make a schoolhouse. Proper lighting, ventilating, and heating facilities, water supply, sanitary provision for

drinking and washing, sanitary toilets, cloakrooms, and the like are as necessary to the work of a school as a kitchen stove is to that of a home. Work and rest rooms, an auditorium, playgrounds with some equipment for small children, and athletic games for the older ones are as essential to the modern school as a kitchen sink with running water to a modern home.

Nor are buildings the only necessary part of the physical plant essential for good schools. Suitable equipment is equally necessary; in this the schools of Beaufort County are entirely lacking. Many lack even the most meager necessities. Blackboards in good condition, reference and supplementary books, maps, and teaching materials—tools with which to work—desks which are adjusted to the children's size and suitable for school work, are among the necessities almost or entirely lacking throughout the rural schools in the county. Good teachers and good buildings are largely wasted when no material equipment in the way of libraries, laboratory devices, wisely selected maps, charts, etc., good blackboards providing sufficient surface and properly placed, and housekeeping devices are not provided. As well put a good plasterer or brick mason to work with a wooden trowel, or a skilled surgeon with a pocket knife. Failure to equip is an inexcusable false economy.

Adequate equipment is not expensive when wisely selected by a person who knows sources of supplies and relative values of items of equipment for instruction purposes. The State should be called upon freely to advise in these matters both in available literature and personal advice from members of the State department whose duty it is to know and advise in such matters.⁵

Substantial school buildings which are artistic and well located and built to meet modern hygienic standards are not necessarily more expensive than poor ones. It is a matter of planning and the exercise of good taste rather than of money. The grounds can be made beautiful, especially in so favored an environment as Beaufort County furnishes, by planting grass, native trees, and shrubs, with no additional cost—merely healthful educational work on the part of the teachers and children. Some progressive rural counties are planning to "feature" at each school a different native variety of tree or shrub. In attractiveness and upkeep the school building and grounds should compare favorably with the best homes in the community; it should furnish standards and ideals of good taste, cleanliness, and care in general school housekeeping for the children from less favored ones. Otherwise poor home conditions tend to perpetuate themselves.

Conclusions based on a study of the school system.—The examination of school facilities offered to the children of the county outside

⁵ Much helpful material is also available from several State departments where specialists in school buildings and grounds are employed.

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Buildings and equipment.—Careful planning by competent men is an essential in initiating a school building and equipment program. Properly planned buildings from the standpoint of the right allotment of floor space per child, window space and placement, provision for ventilation and for heating, are essential for health, comfort, and conditions that make good work possible. Children can not work at a high level under physical distractions and may easily suffer permanent impairment of health in improperly constructed school-rooms.

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the independent districts leaves no doubt in the minds of the observers as to the desirability of a change in the system such as will offer *all* the children (not a mere handful as at present) modern educational advantages. The child born or reared in rural Beaufort County, who must receive there all the education he will ever have an opportunity to get, is indeed unfortunate. His chances for becoming a creditable and useful citizen, able to participate with intelligence in the activities of life around him, to build up the resources of the county and State, and to understand farm and business management well enough to make a good living are slight. If he has average ability and attends school the average time attended by children in the county and enters school at 6 years of age, he will require 14 years to pass through the grades and will complete the seventh grade at about the age of 20 years. His chances of entering and completing high school are almost negligible, probably about 1 in 200. Not only does the average child attend school only a few months in the year, but during that time he is taught by a teacher practically entirely unprepared for her work, in a building with no equipment and so insanitary as to menace his physical welfare. In all probability he will leave school with no education beyond that usually given in the third or fourth grade. Can the substantial citizen interested in the welfare and development of the county expect intelligent, enterprising people rearing families to move into or remain in a county which offers such meager advantages to its children?

North Carolina, like several other States of the Union, is now making an unusual effort to eradicate illiteracy among its adult population; yet Beaufort County is rearing to-day because of its ineffective school system a large number of children who will be illiterate or almost illiterate adults in the future. Mere ability to read sentences or write one's name does not constitute an education that prepares for life. Farmers having no further education than that equal to the education given in the third grade can not read newspapers, magazines, and farm bulletins intelligently. They can not, therefore, improve in methods of farming or of hygienic living except as they learn these things by word of mouth. They can not carry out health standards well enough to be safe members of the community. Experience with our Army during the war proved that such persons can not even follow directions intelligently. A school system, then, such as exists in Beaufort County not only fails to assist in eradicating illiteracy but perpetuates a condition of near illiteracy which is perhaps equally dangerous. Children now growing up with no preparation beyond that given in the third grade may be as helpless to themselves and a worse menace to the world

in which they live 10 years from now as are adult illiterates in the world of to-day.

Some essentials of an improved school system.—Little progress can be made toward improved schools without an effective and centralized system which will enable the board of education to provide professional administration and supervision, a staff of prepared teachers, a school term of at least nine months, and school buildings and equipment which make it possible to satisfy the demands of modern school practice. The present demand is that the schools train for life in a broad sense, including training in the essential tools of knowledge and in the duties of citizenship, for the successful practice of a vocation and for the development of habits and attitudes which contribute to good living. These demands have produced the present program of studies in modern elementary and high schools. Courses of study must be broad enough to meet the needs of all, not a few, of the children in school, as well as of those who have dropped out of school with insufficient training.

The most economical and effective way to provide such advantages in rural communities is through the pooling of resources and grouping of children to be educated which a reasonable degree of centralization alone makes possible.

THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A COUNTY-WIDE CENTRALIZATION PROGRAM.

While Beaufort County offers difficulties in the way of centralization, they are by no means insurmountable. Unusual progress is being made in road improvement, both in hard surfacing the main roads and in building and improving dirt roads. These good roads when completed will make it possible to transport children far more quickly, comfortably, and economically than is possible now or has been possible in the past. Where auto trucks can be used, they are usually more efficient and economical. Where roads are not adapted to auto transportation, wagons may be used, especially over short routes leading to the main truck lines. This particular kind of arrangement is now successfully practiced in some southern counties.

In many instances it will be cheaper and far more efficient to build short board walks to the road or to repair roads so that wagons can travel through the swampy places than to support a one-teacher school for a small group of children isolated from the main road. In such instances a transportation wagon or bus may take the place of a teacher. This will be true in regard to several of the small one-teacher schools in Chocowinity Township, for example. In other cases no saving of teachers will be possible by cen-

tralization. The tentative estimate outlined below indicates that the number of teachers necessary to carry out the program will be less than are now employed if the average daily attendance remains the same. It contemplates not more than 35 children to each teacher in the elementary grades, not less than 3 teachers devoting full time to high-school grades wherever a junior high school is maintained, and not less than 5 teachers when a senior high school is maintained. However, the better schools, more attractive surroundings, and more practical school programs which consolidation will make possible should result in improved school attendance. This has been the effect of consolidation very generally throughout the country. The object to be attained in Beaufort County is not to decrease the amount now spent on schools but to increase and improve school facilities, to get better value for the money expended, and to provide educational advantages for all the children of the county.

TABLE 6.—A tentative estimate of the number of buildings and teachers required under the present and suggested new plans of organization.

Townships.	Number of buildings.			Number of teachers.			Average daily attendance	
	Old plan.	New plan.		Old plan.	New plan.		High school.	Elementary.
		Temporary.	Permanent.		Temporary.	Permanent.		
Richland.....	10	6	5	22	20	18	39	517
Chocowinity.....	16	4	4	25	18	18	421
Washington.....	10	4	3	22	16	12	507
Long Acre.....	12	2	2	25	18	18	19	546
Bath.....	11	7	3	19	21	18	93	515
Pantego.....	9	5	5	19	18	18	59	414
Total.....	68	28	22	132	108	102	210	2,920

NOTE.—For the permanent plan indicated in Plate II, 22 buildings will accommodate the children now housed in 67 buildings; for the plan indicated in Plate I 28 buildings will be necessary, of which 6 are to remain temporarily only.

The accomplishment of the consolidation plan recommended presupposes the adoption of a building program in harmony with it. A 10-year program financed by a bond issue is recommended. It is important that the educational program and the building program be in harmony; therefore the advice and counsel of specialists in buildings and specialists in school curricula, methods, and practice should be secured by the board before plans are matured. The State department of education furnishes this kind of expert advice.

In recommending this plan the possibilities and plans for roads; the present condition of school buildings and equipment; the location of the children's homes, with possible transportation routes;

economy of expenditure, estimated on the per capita basis; and in particular the general question of school efficiency and the necessity of making high-school instruction accessible to all the children, have all been carefully considered. While grouping children in large numbers is desirable, there is a point beyond which centralization can not go without involving long hauls that keep children too long on the road to and from school. Young children in the elementary grades can not go as far as older ones in the high-school grades. Efficient elementary schools can be conducted if there are children enough to make possible the employment of three teachers, provided they are confined to the first six grades. Several such schools are therefore recommended, usually on or near the present site of a school and located in a developed community.

High-school instruction can well be concentrated at fewer centers. An effective rural junior and senior high school requires a minimum of six teachers, special laboratory rooms for the sciences, agriculture, and home economics, a good library with reference books, magazines, and periodicals, in addition to the usual equipment for academic work. The board of education of Beaufort County should base their program of development on the State outline of requirements for the best type of high school. Such schools are expensive. Where many are maintained the cost is exorbitant or the schools are inefficient. The plan recommended, therefore, contemplates centering high-school instruction at a few centers only. The teaching of high-school subjects in the small schools should be discontinued at once.

The plan offered contemplates also a centralized administrative and supervisory force. Without this the whole scheme may easily fail to accomplish the desired end. No scheme of organization, however well planned from the point of view of the physical plant and material equipment, will give satisfactory educational results unless administered efficiently and on a professional basis. Beaufort County schools need a better quality of instruction as much as they need better buildings, longer term, and a centralized system. There should be less book memorization, and a course of study should be worked out based on the life of the people and their peculiar and special needs. Unless these essentials are provided, the people will not have full confidence in their schools nor renew their belief in the value of education. For these reasons a staff of prepared teachers, adequately supervised, and a system administered on a professional basis, are as necessary as are buildings and equipment.

The complete plan for centralization recommended is shown graphically in two steps; the first shown on Plate I for temporary adoption leads to the complete plan as indicated on the map of the county, Plate II. Full explanation of the plan suggested is also

submitted. Plate III shows the school buildings as they are now located, with the number of teachers indicated, as well as the location of the principal swamps, the location and condition of the roads and railroad routes within the county.

It is not believed possible or advisable that the complete plan be put into operation at once. It should, however, be initiated at once and gradual advance made toward its accomplishment. In this way the county will be building toward a centralized organization which

PLATE I. SUGGESTED PLAN FOR CONSOLIDATING THE SCHOOLS OF BEAUFORT COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA.

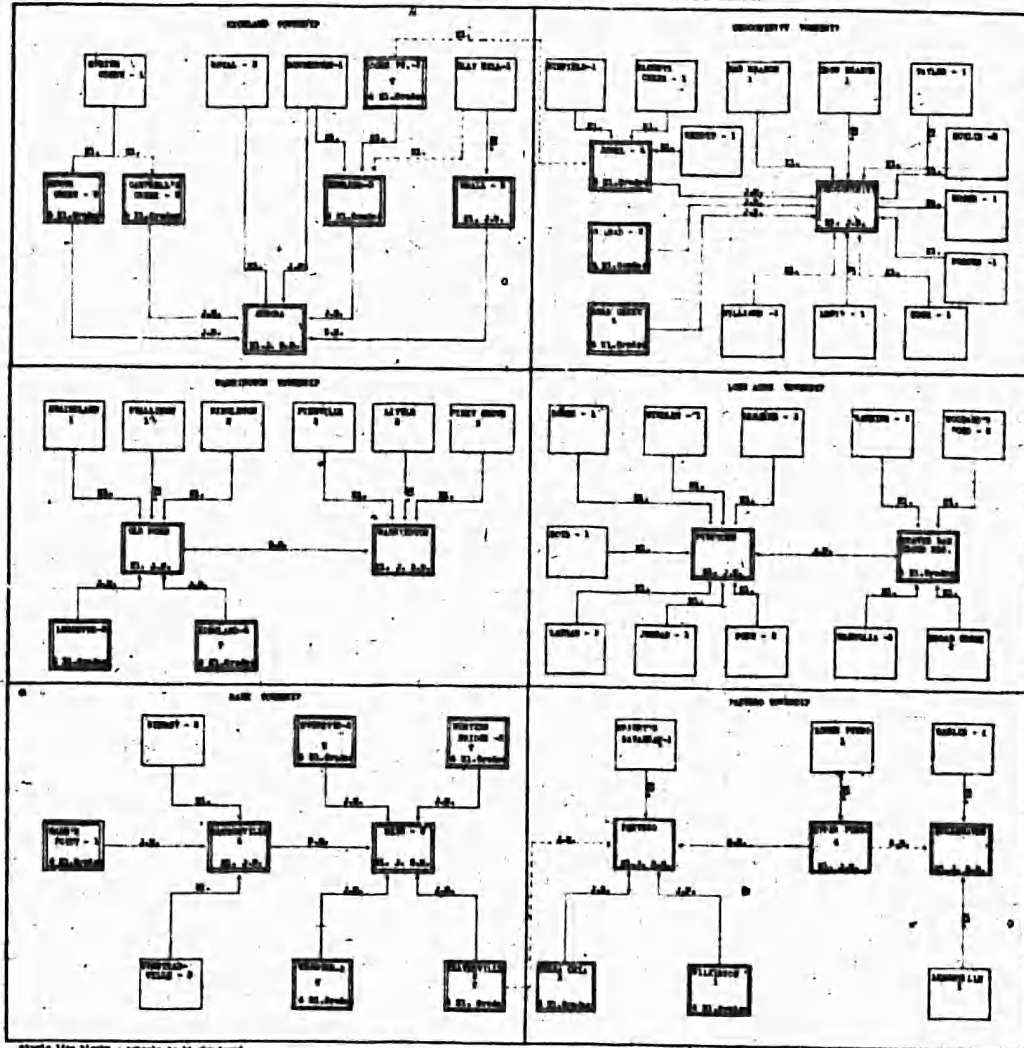


PLATE I.—Suggested plan for temporary consolidation of schools of Beaufort County.

can be administered on a professional and business basis and which will offer adequate educational facilities to all the children of the county. The board will have the satisfaction of perfecting a definite plan and of knowing that expenditures made in conformity with it are in the nature of a permanent investment. When the plan is fully accomplished there will be 11 elementary, 6 junior high, and 5 senior high school centers, with the possible reduction of the senior centers to 4 by some cooperative arrangement between Pantego and

Belle Haven. The number of buildings will be reduced from 68 to 22; the estimated number of teachers by about 30.

Explanation of Plate I:

Schools to be abandoned represented by blocks surrounded by one line.

Established centers represented by blocks surrounded by two lines.

Arrows indicate centers to which pupils are to be transported.

Broken lines indicate a possible choice between two centers.

T. indicates temporary centers only.

J. H. indicate junior high school; i. e., grades 7 and 8.

S. H. indicate senior high school; i. e., grades 9, 10, and 11.

E. indicates 6 elementary grades.

Following is an explanation of Plate I by townships:

Richland Township.—In Richland Township Aurora is obviously the natural center for school purposes. All junior and senior high school children should be transported here as soon as arrangements for transportation can be made. Later the elementary children should be taken here also, as suggested below. The district should surrender its charter and become part of the county system. It would thereby be enabled to build up a stronger school and participate in other advantages, such as professional supervision under county administration. The school at Spring Creek can be abandoned at once, and the children taken either to South Creek or Campbells Creek. These two schools should remain as elementary schools. They should not teach more than the first six grades. There are children enough to make a good three-teacher elementary school in each of the two centers.

The school at Royal should be abandoned, and the children sent to Aurora. There is no justification for maintaining two schools so close together as these now are. Every consideration of economy and efficiency favors their consolidation. The Core Point school should be abandoned, and the children hauled to Edwards or Jewel as soon as the roads will justify this action. Until then it should be limited to the first six grades. The school at Bonnerton should be abandoned—the elementary children taken to Edward and the high-school children to Aurora. The Clay Hill school should be abandoned, and the children taken either to Small or Edward. At Edward a three-teacher school of six grades should continue; at Small a junior high school of not more than eight grades. Senior high school pupils—that is, pupils in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades—should go to Aurora.

Chocowinity Township.—Winfield, Blounts Creek, Redditt, and Jewel should be consolidated at Jewel. The combined attendance at these schools is approximately 100. An efficient four-teacher school confined to the first six grades can be maintained probably at a decreased cost compared to the present one. Because of its location, Gilead will have to remain as it is, a two-teacher school. It should be confined to as few grades as possible. The older children

can be transported as soon as roads are in condition to Jewe' and Chocowinity. The school at Bear Creek should be continued for the present as an elementary school confined to the first six grades. Eventually it should be abandoned.

A new school center should be developed in the vicinity of Chocowinity. A first-class elementary and junior high school can be built up here by abandoning the following schools and transporting the children to this center: Williams, Lewis, Buck, and Hodges, on the Vanceboro Road; Haw Branch, Crow Branch, and Taylor, on the Gray Road; and Ecklin and Moore, on the Moore Road. The present average daily attendance of 180 pupils can be taken care of at this center with at least 3 fewer teachers. Eventually a senior high school may be developed here. At present the junior high school grades will provide for all or nearly all the children eligible. Senior high-school pupils should go to Washington. The small schools mentioned above are nearly all poor buildings in bad condition, insanitary, and unfit for schools. It is recommended that a new building be arranged for at Chocowinity, and this plan be put into operation at the earliest possible time. A home for the principal at this center, large enough to house a few high-school pupils, would be an economical investment. Natural barriers are such that there will in all probability always be a few high-school pupils living too far from the high-school center for daily transportation.

Washington Township.—In Washington Township there are two natural and obvious centers—Washington City and Old Ford. Washington City will in all probability remain an independent district so far as administration is concerned. It is recommended that the county board arrange with the Washington City school board for the education of all the senior high school pupils in the township and all the children in the elementary grades living in the immediate vicinity, as suggested in Plate I. The school at Pineville in this township, and Piney Grove and Little schools in Long Acre Township, should be abandoned and the children transported to Washington, whether in elementary or high-school grades. The high-school pupils above the second year living on or near the Williamston Road should go to the high school at Washington.

An elementary and junior high school should be developed at Old Ford. Stallings, Swainsland, and Singleton may be abandoned and the children transported to Old Ford. This will provide an average daily attendance of at least 200, and will, with the junior high school pupils from Leggetts and the upper section of the Highland school district, furnish enough pupils to maintain a standard junior high school. The school at Leggetts should be continued but confined to the first six grades. The building at Highland is quite unfit for school purposes and should be abandoned as soon as possible.

While it remains the work should be confined to the first six grades. Eventually the children should be transported to Washington or Old Ford.

Long Acre Township.—Under existing conditions it is unnecessary and impracticable to establish a senior high school center in this township. Children can attend at Washington, Pantego, or Bath. At Pinetown a junior high school center should be developed. Bowen, Windley, Osborne, Latham, Jordan, Fork, and Boyd may be abandoned and the children transported to Pinetown. The average daily attendance at these schools last year was 319, a group large enough to make possible a strong junior high school.

A new elementary school center should be developed at Beaver Dam Cross Roads, in the vicinity of the Douglas residence. The following schools may be abandoned and the children transported to Beaver Dam Cross Roads: Hawkins, Woodards Pond, Magnolia, and Broad Creek. The average daily attendance of the schools named was 227 last year, a large enough number to assure a good elementary school of six grades.

Bath Township.—The natural center in this township for junior and senior high school work is at Bath. The high-school pupils from Woodards Pond, Everetts Cross Roads, Hunters Bridge, Webster, and from the homes along the swamp road leading from Huntsville to Bath should be sent to Bath as soon as possible, preferably next school year. These high-school pupils number about 30 and could be cared for by the purchase of one auto transportation bus. As soon as the building can be enlarged to accommodate the elementary children now attending the schools named, they also should be transported to Bath, and these schools permanently abandoned. Some children from Woodards Pond district in the elementary grades who live nearer Bath than to Beaver Dam Cross Roads school should be sent here also. Yeatesville should also be abandoned, and the children transported either to Bath or Pantego.

A junior high school center should be developed at Ransomville. A new building is now in the course of erection which will provide at least six classrooms. Later the children now attending at Winsteadville and Sidney should be transported here, and these two schools abandoned.

At Wades Point a new building is already provided to care for the children of the Pamlico and Upshore schools. This school should be confined to the first six grades. Junior high school children should attend at Ransomville. Senior high school children from both these communities should attend at Bath.

Pantego Township.—Two junior and senior high school centers are now located in this township, one at Belle Haven, an independent district, and one at Pantego. Senior high school pupils from Upper

Pungo, junior and senior high school pupils from Terra Ceia and Wilkinson, and children from all grades at Wrights Savannah should be transported to Pantego. The last-named schools should be abandoned, probably, on completion of the new building at Pantego.

Lynchville and Haslin may be abandoned and the children transported to Belle Haven.

At Upper Pungo a junior high school center should be developed, with children from Upper and Lower Pungo. Terra Ceia and Wilkinson are so located that no combination seems practicable. Not more than six grades should be taught at either school.

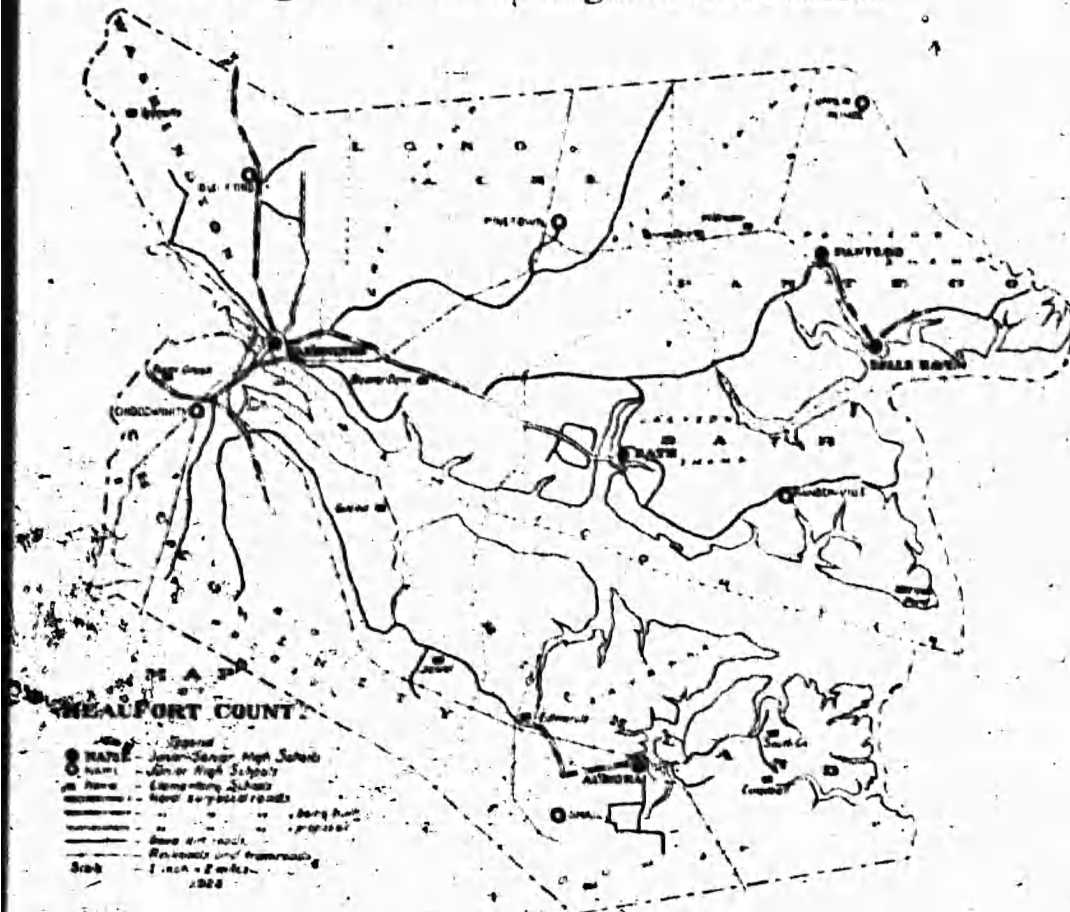


PLATE II.—Suggested location of final centers of consolidation.

It is unfortunate that two high-school centers are located so close together as are Belle Haven and Pantego. Eventually considerations of economy and efficiency will probably force some sort of cooperative arrangement between these centers. As an initial step in such an arrangement, it is suggested that vocational work in home economics and agriculture be built up at Pantego and the academic work preparatory to college at Belle Haven. The county and local boards of education can arrange for an exchange of students in the senior high school grades, cooperate on equipment

needed, and secure greater efficiency and more specialization at less expense than would be possible if work is duplicated at both centers.

THE COST OF CENTRALIZATION IS NOT PROHIBITIVE.

Two things are necessary for the development of a school system in Beaufort County: First, a system of administration and support which will equalize educational opportunities and tax burdens; and,

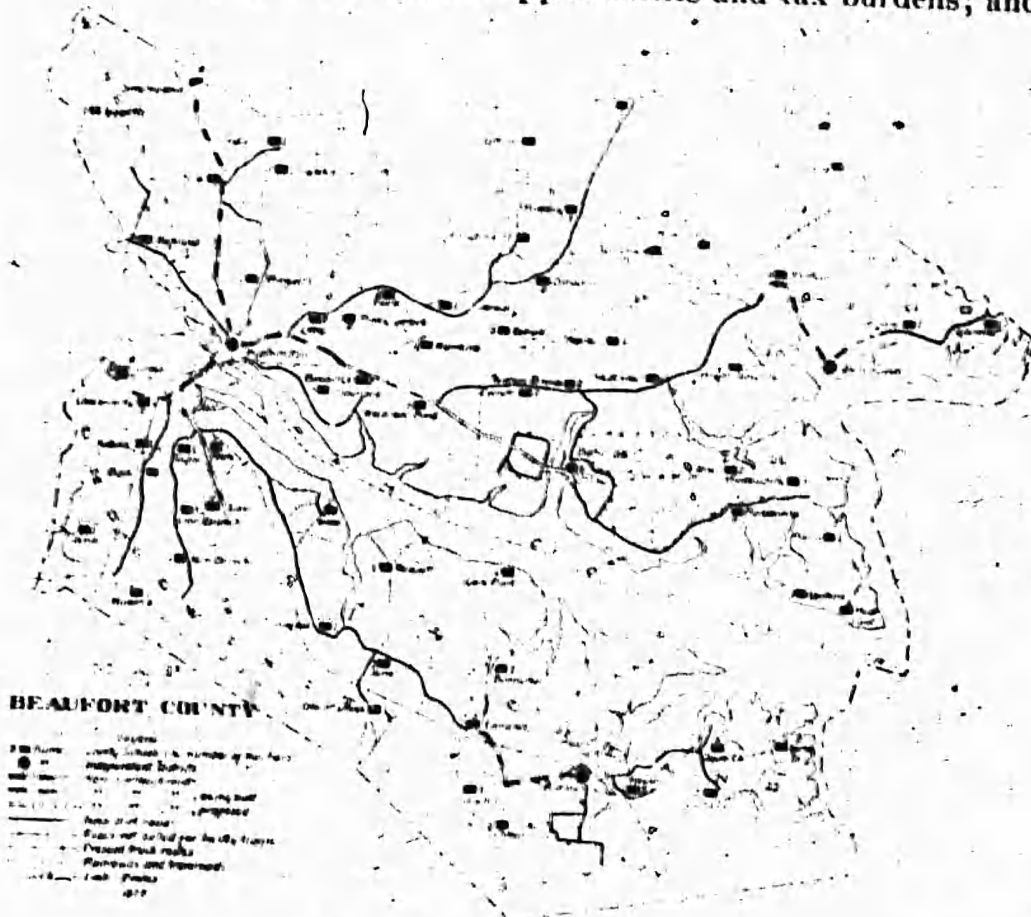


PLATE III.—Present school centers.

second, provision for more generous support of the schools in the future than in the past.

Under the present system of school support there is a county-wide tax of 39 cents, which provides for six months of school in each of the 62 districts; salaries and qualifications of teachers differ; only in the length of the term supplied by the county-wide tax are schools alike. Fifteen districts have special tax levies varying from 6 to 30 cents on the hundred dollars, through which, in a few of them, the term is lengthened and one or more teachers employed to teach high-school subjects. In others, all of the special-tax income is used for buildings or repairs. Only one rural district provides a nine months' term, as *all* independent districts do. The result is the inequality of educational opportunities explained elsewhere in

this report in terms of high-school facilities, school periods, preparation and salary of teachers, school attendance, and similar factors. Costs of education based on per capita expenditure vary also. Full data by districts were not available when this study was made. However, in some of the small schools the cost of elementary education falls as low as \$10 per capita; in others it is as high as \$40. For at least one group of high-school pupils in the county the per capita cost last year was approximately \$150.

These inequalities in educational opportunity, in per capita expenditure, and in tax burdens assumed are inevitable as long as schools depend for support (beyond the minimum) on local taxation. Wealth and income are concentrated in the trade centers; children to be educated are distributed throughout the county. The result is that there are a few good schools and many poor ones.

Good administration is almost as impossible as is adequate support under the local system. Each small school is practically a law unto itself, managed in large part by an inexperienced and untrained teacher, with very little direction or guidance. School trustees of the small districts are sometimes more interested in retaining a low tax rate, or none, than in providing efficient schools for the children.

The local tax system is also unjust. The trade centers depend upon the outlying districts for the raw materials of trade and for a local consumers' market for manufactured goods. They are dependent upon the outlying districts for their financial prosperity as well as for replenishment of their population. The interests of the two groups are common; they must live as neighbors; all that affects the welfare of the one affects equally that of the other. Financial support of education should also be common, as is the support of the county government, the building of roads, and similar necessities and improvements by which both groups profit, or in the benefits of which they participate equally.

Whether or not the centralization plan recommended is adopted, the people of Beaufort County must spend more money for schools if they expect to give their children educational advantages comparable with those furnished in the cities and in other progressive counties. At present the county is levying the minimum maintenance tax required by the State and is providing the minimum school facilities. In other words, it is as parsimonious with the education of its children as the State laws will permit it to be. It is among those counties which, from the State point of view, are well able to take care of themselves educationally since it is not eligible to participate in the State equalization fund. The present per capita expenditure in one-teacher schools is lower than the

average for the State and only about one-third that for the United States. The salaries of teachers are the minimum prescribed by law; the people have invested in school buildings much less money than they have in automobiles; the money spent for school maintenance is far less than that now spent on the upkeep of automobiles.*

The cost of education, like that of all things else, has advanced materially in the past few years. Progressive communities are finding it necessary to increase their tax rates, and, whenever possible, to find new sources of revenue for the support of schools. The State of North Carolina, appreciating the situation, has made available from State funds a rotating building fund and certain equalizing funds in which Beaufort County can share if the necessary effort is made and a county system of taxation, as advocated by the State department, is adopted. The county is fortunate in having practically no bonded indebtedness for school buildings. The old ones, in most instances, are so poor that any loss incurred, in their abandonment will be negligible. The county, considered as a unit, is amply able to bond itself for suitable school buildings and tax itself sufficiently to provide a reasonable maintenance fund. Increase in school costs is inevitable, because the county has been remiss in its duty to the children, both as regards buildings supplied and as regards school facilities furnished. True economy is not measured by the meagerness of the money investment but by the returns paid on the investment. No business man would be satisfied with a return of 5 per cent if it were possible by any means in his power to make that return 10 per cent. The county should not be satisfied with the present small return on its school investment merely because the investment is a small one. The money now spent on schools is in large part wasted. If the maintenance expenditure were doubled, the schools should, under good management, increase in efficiency in far greater proportion.

The scope of this investigation, made especially to advise the board concerning the feasibility of a county-wide plan of school centralization, did not contemplate a study of school support, nor a comparison of the cost of the present system and that recommended. Such an investigation requires more time and a more intensive survey than was provided for by the board of education. That the cost is not beyond the possibilities of the county is evident from an examination of the laws of North Carolina and the present resources and income of the county.

The law permits, and the State department advises, that the county unit of support be adopted; that is, that the county as a whole

* Compare cost and upkeep of 2,178 auto vehicles licensed in Beaufort County with value of school buildings and maintenance of approximately \$142,000 for all schools, 1922-23.

become a special tax district. If this is done, a tax up to 50 cents on the hundred dollars of property valuation can be levied for the purpose of lengthening the school term. If the county board should employ teachers who have one year of normal or college training in addition to high-school graduation, the qualifications of the teaching staff can be raised materially with relatively little expense to the county, since the State will pay the amount necessary in addition to that raised by the present 39-cent levy. Such an improvement in the teaching staff and the addition of two months of school which a special county tax would make possible, together with the employment of a supervisor of instruction, would at once put the schools on a far more efficient basis than they now are, at a total expense equal to approximately the cost of two months of school over and above the present cost. This would mean an approximate expenditure of one and one-third times that for the last school year and involve a total tax rate of about 52 cents.

The law makes ample provision for levying such a tax as may be necessary for refunding bonded indebtedness incurred in building the schoolhouses recommended, and the State loan fund can doubtless be drawn upon for some of the money needed.

Considering the tax valuation, the fact that the county is now relatively free from bonded indebtedness for schools, the possibilities for centralizing in such a way as to promote economy in school administration, and the favorable laws under which rural schools in North Carolina can be administered, it is believed that Beaufort County is exceptionally well able to furnish adequate school facilities on the plan recommended. Judged by practice throughout the country, a tax rate of \$1 must be considered below the average for rural schools. With a tax rate of from one-half to three-fourths of this the county can build up a substantial school system adequate to meet the needs of all the children.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

The following recommendations are offered:

1. The people of the county should adopt the county as the unit of taxation and administration, empowering the county board of education to provide elementary and high schools for all the children of the county. The board can then proceed to establish a county system with reasonably uniform school facilities throughout, supported in the main by a county-wide tax.
2. The county board of education should adopt a county-wide plan for centralization, beginning gradually and working toward the ultimate realization of the plan outlined in this report.

3. The board should initiate a complete building program for the county extending over a period of years, financed by bond issue which will enable the county to participate also in the State bond loan. The program should be worked out with a view to accessibility of buildings, organization of children in as large groups as possible, economy in transportation, convenience in supervision, and like economic and educational factors. No teacher should have responsibility for teaching more than two grades. High-school work should be designated only at centers having at least 75 pupils of high-school grade in attendance. The building and centralizing programs will in the future parallel each other.

An adequate staff should be provided for the county superintendent. In a county as large as Beaufort the superintendent should devote most of his time to administrative duties. He should have adequate clerical assistance and at least one supervisor working under his direction. The expenditure of large sums of money on buildings, and maintenance, as well as the responsibility for the educational welfare of several thousand children, are involved in the management of the school system. A high quality of professional skill, successful school experience, as well as ability and good judgment, are essential, or else satisfactory results need not be expected. The salaries should be large enough to secure and retain the services of qualified, professionally prepared officers.

5. The board should establish a nine months' term as soon as possible. If necessary, the present term may be extended one month each year. No time should be lost unnecessarily, however, in giving the children the advantages of a nine months' school term. This is necessary not only to accomplish the work prescribed by the State course of study, but because good teachers think in terms of an annual salary and prefer to work on that basis.

The above are immediate necessities. The establishment of an efficient school system is the work of years, not months. By providing the basis for a system in administrative organization, material equipment, and teaching staff as indicated, the board lays the foundation. Building up the system then becomes the work of the professional staff carrying out the general policies of the board of education.

