

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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OFFICE OF EDUCATION
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REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL UNITS

A Report of the Proceedings of a Conference
Called by the Commissioner of Education, Washington, D. C.
June 17, 18, and 19, 1935

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REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL UNITS

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This bulletin reports the findings of a conference of school officials called by the U. S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. J. W. Studebaker, in the Office of Education, June 17, 18, and 19, 1935. During the year there have been insistent demands on the Office of Education for information, advisory service, and other types of assistance from school officials seeking solutions to problems in school finance and administration, especially in areas of low density, aggravated as they have been during the past 5 years by depression conditions. As is well known not only have schools suffered serious curtailments in length of school terms, instructional programs, supervision, and the like, but in many areas their very existence has been threatened.

It is becoming generally recognized that while the depression aggravated conditions, the fundamental causes lie deeper. They are inherent in our systems of administering and financing schools through a multiplicity of small school districts inadequate in human and material resources to maintain efficient school facilities for the children within their borders. The way to permanent improvement is believed to be through large-scale, generally State-wide, reorganization of school units.

Varying situations among States and within States in civil as well as in school organization, in population distribution, in prevailing occupations, and in general social and economic conditions necessitate intensive surveys of existing conditions and facilities and of present and future possibilities before fundamental changes in administrative organization can be intelligently planned.

Comprehensive educational surveys and research studies involving financing of public services and the like, essential to furnishing a basis for the intelligent planning of desirable school programs; of types of units best adapted to the

situations involved and to the achievement of the objectives set up; and of financing educational facilities adequate to the needs and consonant with the resources of the areas affected—offer problems for which there are no ready-made and universally applicable solutions. The conference offered an opportunity to a group of school officials who have been or are now confronted with these and allied questions concerned with administrative reorganization to discuss their practical aspects and formulate accepted principles and guides to successful practices.

The letter of invitation to participants in the conference sent out by the Commissioner of Education included the following statement of his reasons for calling the conference and some of the purposes he hoped to achieve through its findings:

I am writing to invite you to attend and participate in a conference I am calling concerned with reorganization of school units, especially in areas of low density. There are two immediate incentives for such a conference; first, the fact that the present economic situation is leading to legislative and administrative action directed toward such reorganization; second, the probability that Federal funds may be made available for school buildings and distributed to States and communities in which there is reasonable assurance that their use will contribute to efficient school administration. It seems to me this is an opportune time for leaders in school administration to consider techniques of long-term planning in order that any legislative action taken may be adequate to the needs and in order that States and communities may be in a position to go before Federal agencies charged with the distribution of such funds as may be allotted for school building purposes with plans looking toward a long-time educational program.

The conference sessions opened on the morning of June 17 with the following persons in attendance: J. A. Guitteau, State Board for Vocational Education, Olympia, Wash.; J. Cayce Morrison, Assistant Commissioner for Elementary Education, State Department of Education, New York; H. F. Alves, Director of Research, State Department of Education, Texas; Edgar L. Morphet, Director of Research, State Department of Education, Alabama; David Sutton, Supervisor, Division of School Finance in Child Accounting,

State Department of Education, Ohio; Eugene S. Lawler, Professor of Education, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.; R. C. Williams, Director of Research, State Department of Education, Iowa; Haskell Pruett, Director of School-house Planning, State Department of Public Instruction, Oklahoma; Francis L. Bailey, State Commissioner of Education, Vermont; James N. Rule, formerly State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Pennsylvania; J. Y. Shambach, Chief, Child Accounting and Statistics, State Department of Public Instruction, Pennsylvania; John Guy Fowlkes, Professor of Education, University of Wisconsin; Charles H. Elliott, State Commissioner of Education, New Jersey; and from the Office of Education, Bess Goodykoontz, Assistant Commissioner of Education, Katherine M. Cook, Walter S. Deffenbaugh, Howard A. Dawson, W. H. Gaumnitz, and Timon Covert.

The program as outlined to direct proceedings of the conference was as follows:

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

MONDAY, JUNE 17, A. M.

- I. Statement of purposes of conference and presentation of agenda.
- II. Discussion topic: Satisfactory Local School Units—Attendance and Administrative:
 - A. Presentation and Interpretation—HOWARD A. DAWSON.
 - B. Panel discussions:
 - (1) Attendance Units. Panel: J. C. MORRISON,¹ HASKELL PRUETT, H. F. ALVES, J. G. FOWLKES, J. N. RULE.
 - P. M.
 - (2) Administrative Units. Panel: E. L. MORPHET, J. H. GUITTEAU, HASKELL PRUETT, C. H. ELLIOTT, J. G. FOWLKES.
 - C. Selection of Committee to Formulate Principles and Conclusions.
- III. Discussion topic: Relation Between Satisfactory School Units and School Finance.
 - A. Presentation and Interpretation of the Chief Problems Involved—DAVID H. SUTTON.
 - B. Findings of Studies Bearing on the Subject—TIMON COVERT.
 - C. Panel Discussion: E. S. LAWLER, R. C. WILLIAMS, D. H. SUTTON.
 - D. Selection of Committee to Formulate Principles and Conclusions.

¹ In general, the person named first acted as panel leader.

TUESDAY, JUNE 18, A. M.

IV. Discussion topic: Procedures in Reorganization.

- A. Presentation of Principles and Objectives—E. L. MORPHET.
- B. Presentation of Procedures and Techniques—H. F. ALVES.
- C. Panel Discussion: E. L. MORPHET, H. F. ALVES, R. C. WILLIAMS, F. L. BAILEY, J. Y. SHAMBACH, HASKELL FRUITT.
- D. Selection of Committee to Formulate Principles and Conclusions.

P. M.

V. Discussion topic: Legislation to Facilitate Reorganization.

- A. Presentation of Topic, Reviewing Present Situation, and Presenting Principles Underlying Desirable Types of Legislation—J. Y. SHAMBACH.
 - B. Panel Discussion: R. C. WILLIAMS, C. H. ELLIOTT, F. BAILEY, J. Y. SHAMBACH, J. C. MORRISON.
 - C. Selection and Instruction of Committee.
- VI. Some Results of Reorganization as Presented in Recent Studies—
W. H. GAUMNITZ.
- A. General Discussion.

EVENING

Reports of committees and further discussion.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, A. M.

Final discussion of reports.

Four major topics with added consideration of allied questions formed the basis of the program. These topics are as follows: (1) Satisfactory Local School Units—Principles Involved and Procedures Desirable in Securing Such Units; (2) The Relationship Between Satisfactory Local Administrative Units and School Financing; (3) Procedures and Techniques Involved in Reorganization Studies; and (4) Legislation Designed to Achieve Best Results in Reorganization of School Administrative Units.

In general, the conference plan provided that each of the four major topics be presented first to the conference in its general aspects by one or more members of the conference selected because of extended practical experience in meeting problems of the specific type under discussion. This presentation was followed by one or more panel discussions under the leadership of a member of the conference, and later participated in by the group. The panel discussions served to familiarize the group as a whole with special aspects of

the questions involved and difficulties in the application of accepted principles under the varying conditions which exist among States in administrative organization, financial ability, and the like. Following discussion of each major topic a committee was appointed to draw up conclusions and recommendations embodying the consensus of the discussion group. Each report was later presented to the conference for further suggestions and discussion. When in final form it was adopted as embodying the principles accepted and conclusions reached by the conference.

The presentations of the leading topics and the reports of the committees as finally adopted make up this report.

SATISFACTORY LOCAL SCHOOL UNITS

PRESENTATION OF PRINCIPLES

HOWARD A. DAWSON¹

Assistant Director, Research Division, National Education Association

The school unit and educational progress.—Theoretically and constitutionally, the control and obligation of financial support of public education in this country rest with the States. Actually, the major portion of both support and control rests with the local school units or districts, of which there are more than 127,000 in the entire country. [The kind and quality of educational opportunity offered to the children of America is probably more largely determined by the size and financial resources of these districts than by any other single factor in our whole scheme of public education. Furthermore, the performance of educational functions through local units of control is a thoroughly established part of the American scheme of government and for many well-accepted reasons is likely to be continued for many years to come. [It follows, therefore, that the establishment of criteria of the essential characteristics of local school units that can perform the functions and services required of them, and the setting up of procedures for the organization of local units that conform to those accepted criteria, is today one of the major problems, if not *the* major problem, of American education.] Furthermore it is only upon the acceptance of satisfactory criteria that many lines of future progress can be followed.

Two kinds of local units.—In the organization of local school units and in discussions of problems pertaining to their organization, there is much confusion of two distinct kinds of school units: Attendance units and administrative units. An *attendance unit* comprises the geographical and

¹At the time this article was written the author was consultant in administration and finance, unofficially attached to the U. S. Office of Education.

population area served by a single school and does not necessarily constitute a local taxing unit nor have an independent system of administration. An *administrative unit* comprises all the area under a single system of local administration and may be composed of more than one attendance unit. The assumption that these two kinds of school units are the same and the failure to recognize that their functions and problems of organization are different have resulted in the organization of many inadequate administrative units and in greatly misguided effort in the consolidation of schools and school districts.

The functions of school units.—Any adequate criteria of the characteristics of a satisfactory school unit of either kind will depend upon the functions the unit has to perform. A statement of those respective functions clearly indicates the distinction between the two kinds of units.

1. The function of the *attendance unit* is to provide a school that has the qualities and characteristics necessary to make available to all persons of educable age residing in that unit, educational opportunities commensurate with their varying needs, aptitudes, capacities, and interests, and with the needs of society for the services and cooperation of such persons.
2. The functions of the *administrative unit* are:
 - (a) To provide one or more satisfactory attendance units which can offer in an efficient manner at least 12 years of instruction to all pupils residing within the limits of the administrative unit.
 - (b) To furnish either at local expense or State expense, or both, at a cost that bears a reasonable relationship to the total current cost of the educational program, administrative and supervisory services necessary to facilitate the operation of the whole educational program.

- (c) To provide, where the State does not guarantee the funds to pay the entire cost of the whole educational program, sufficient financial resources to support a satisfactory educational program.

It stands to reason that the extent to which these functions are performed, and the degree of proficiency of performance will depend upon the characteristics of the units that perform them. The major question, therefore, is: What are the minimum essential characteristics of satisfactory school units?

Characteristics of satisfactory attendance units.—Since the function of the attendance unit is to provide a school, the characteristics of a satisfactory attendance unit will depend upon the characteristics of a satisfactory school.

A comprehensive analysis of existing conditions, research findings, and expert opinion leads to the conclusion that there has been a steady trend during the past 15 years toward organization on the basis of 6 years in the elementary school, 3 years in the junior high school, 3 years in the senior high school, or 6 years in the high school as one organization. Whatever the type of organization, each attendance unit should have a school that can offer a curriculum sufficiently broad to meet the needs of the pupils it serves. Where the community sentiment and population distribution are favorable to a 6-3-3 organization, such a curriculum can be offered in an effective and economical manner. In an organization of this type a desirable size for an elementary school is approximately 240 to 280 pupils, with 6 or 7 teachers; for a 6-year secondary school, 210 to 300 pupils and 7 to 10 teachers. A desirable pupil-teacher ratio is 30 to 35 on both elementary and secondary levels.

Whatever the type of organization, a desirable attendance area is one adequate in number of pupils and financial resources to maintain standards approaching those implied above as nearly as circumstances permit. The number of pupils enrolled in the different types of schools, elementary and secondary, whether 8-4, 6-3-3, 6-6, or other organiza-

tion is followed, will vary according to conditions, organization, and other factors.

The application of such standards in rural areas will, under average conditions, require the transportation of about 50 percent of the pupils. In some instances, because of topographical conditions or social and economic factors, the practical application of these standards will require a downward revision. Such downward revision should, however, be made only on the basis of sound sociological and economic facts and not on the basis of mere superficial group differences.

Characteristics of satisfactory administrative units.—The characteristics of satisfactory administrative units likewise depend upon the specific function such unit has to perform. Those functions, in terms of the administrative and supervisory services required of an administrative unit, are those of (a) business and educational administration, (b) supervision of instruction, (c) health supervision, and (d) census and attendance supervision. The educational and business administration is, of course, performed by the school board and a superintendent of schools, the board to formulate and enact policies and the superintendent to execute them. In addition, a program of supervision which will not require the performance of services in more than one specialized field by each supervisor will require at least 10 supervisors, or 1 supervisor for each 40 to 50 teaching positions, a trained librarian, a health nurse for every 2,000 children, and an attendance supervisor for every 6,000 children. These persons, together with the necessary clerical staff, total 31 employees. Such an organization would accommodate approximately 10,000 to 12,000 pupils. A school system of such size would be supported by a population of around 50,000.

Since it is seldom possible in rural areas to organize local administrative units of 10,000 or more pupils, it becomes necessary to consider possible modifications of the number of persons required to perform the necessary administrative and supervisory services when each employee is required to work in two or more specialized but related fields. The maximum modification is reached in an arrangement through which the functions of business and educa-

tional administration and instructional supervision will be performed by the superintendent, and the attendance and health work will be done by one supervisor. The superintendent will be assisted by a bookkeeper-clerk; and the health-attendance supervisor, by a clerk. Under this scheme it is assumed that the supervision of instruction will be carried on largely through the assistance of principals and specially trained and qualified teachers in the various fields. Such an organization can provide for a maximum of 1,750 pupils, who ordinarily will be drawn from a total population of approximately 8,750 persons.

Another check on the minimum size of a satisfactory administrative unit is the size of the unit required to furnish acceptable administrative and supervisory services at a cost that bears a reasonable relationship to the total current cost of the educational program in the unit affected. An analysis of all the factors involved leads to the conclusion that the minimum size of an administrative unit is one that has approximately 1,600 pupils and 46 teaching positions, and that if an administrative and supervisory staff sufficient in number to provide a trained person in each specialized field of work is provided, the administrative unit will have approximately 9,800 pupils and 280 teaching positions. As to whether there are gains in efficiency or advantages in cost to be gained from larger units, there are no indicative data.

From these data it can be concluded that only those governmental units such as townships, counties, and cities having 7,500 or more population are sufficiently large to be considered as administrative units for school purposes.²

Present status of school units.—Any study of the present attendance units and administrative units, as found in most of the States, fails to reveal any consistent conception of the functions required of such units or of the necessary size and organization for the effective and economical performance of desirable educational services. When it is known that out of the 207,039 rural elementary schools in the United States in 1930 there were 148,712 one-teacher schools,

² Based on the fact that the school enrollment is usually about one-fifth of the total population.

that not more than 10 percent had as many as 6 teachers or 240 pupils, that more than half of all public high schools have fewer than 100 pupils or 6 teachers, and not more than one-fourth have as many as 200 pupils, it can be seen that the problem of organization of satisfactory attendance units has barely been touched in most of the States. Even where consolidated schools have been established, the facts indicate that not more than half of such schools will meet the minimum requirements as to size. That such conditions are not necessary has been too often demonstrated, in many studies and several States, to require further argument on the question.

The present status of administrative units is, if anything, even more unsatisfactory than the status of attendance or school units and is primarily responsible for the unsatisfactory status of attendance units. In the 26 States that are organized on the basis of common-school districts or independent local districts, the average administrative unit has only 5 teaching positions and only 18 square miles of territory. In the 10 States that are organized on the basis of the town or township as the administrative school unit, the average unit has only 27 teaching positions and 28 square miles of territory. In the 11 States in which the county ordinarily is the administrative school unit, there is found an average of 93 teaching positions and 377 square miles of territory. But even in these county-unit States, the exemption of towns, cities, and favored communities has in many instances practically nullified the possible benefits of the large unit of administration.

DEVICES FOR OVERCOMING THE LIMITATIONS OF SMALL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

The methods ordinarily adopted for overcoming the limitations of small school units have been the consolidation of small units, the superimposing of high-school districts over the small elementary school districts, establishment of county high schools, and provision for tuition, transportation, and dormitories. These devices are usually defective in one or more respects. For the most part, the consolidation of schools has been poorly planned, has not taken into consideration the educational welfare of the children of a whole

area, and has resulted in gerrymandering of territory and taxable wealth and in the establishment of schools that are too small. All the other devices totally neglect the organization of the elementary schools, result in poor administrative organization, inequalities of financial burdens, and inefficient use of educational funds.

The chief device for overcoming the limitations of small administrative units in the furnishing of administrative and supervisory services is to superimpose such services from some higher unit. Examples of this device are the provision of the county superintendents in States organized on the basis of common-school districts and the system of district superintendency such as is found in New York. Such devices result in divided administrative authority and responsibility and make difficult, and usually impossible, the planning of a satisfactory school system.

It is obvious that all these procedures are attempts to get the benefits of a satisfactory school system without doing the only thing that will really produce such a system; that is, without the organization of satisfactory school units.

Satisfactory school units solve many problems.—The proper planning and organization of local school units will solve, or facilitate the solving of, a number of vexing educational problems now facing most of the States. Among these problems are the simplification of the apportionment of State school funds, the equalization of financial burdens and of educational opportunity, at least up to some acceptable minimum, the planning and construction of school buildings, and the provision of expert leadership, administration, and supervision. In fact, so far as the great majority of rural children in this country is concerned, the provision of acceptable educational opportunities awaits the organization of satisfactory local-school units.

JOINT REPORT OF THE COMMITTEES ON ATTENDANCE AREAS AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE ORGANIZATION OR REORGANIZATION OF LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE AND ATTENDANCE UNITS

1. It is the function of the public school to provide an adequate educational opportunity for every child from the

time he enters the school until he is ready to take his place in adult society.

2. An adequate educational opportunity includes:

- (a) Guidance in social living culminating in a social studies program that fits youth to take an effective part in adult society.
- (b) A health and physical-education program that provides periodical examination for all children, corrective treatment for those who need it, recreation and play facilities, and guidance in healthful living during the 24-hour day.
- (c) Mastery of the common integrating knowledges and skills needed by all persons who will live their normal lives outside institutional care.
- (d) An adaptation of the program to the needs of children who may be in any way socially, physically, or mentally handicapped.
- (e) A corresponding adaptation of the program to the needs of those children who are specially talented, including emphasis upon scholarship commensurate with capacity for achievement.
- (f) Development of appreciations, abilities, and expressions through the creative arts.
- (g) Opportunity for growth through manual activity; practical arts for the younger children and industrial and household arts for the older children.
- (h) For older children, prevocational studies leading to later specialization in the skilled trades; and vocational preparation at the lower levels for those who must seek employment at the close of secondary school period.
- (i) Organization of curriculum materials around the idea of child growth or development rather than through a group of more or less unrelated subjects.

3. To guarantee the development and continuance of an adequate educational program in any administrative unit there are needed:

- (a) A board of control to determine policies.
 - (b) An administrative professional leadership vested in one person to coordinate all the services of the school in the interests of the child.
 - (c) Direction and supervision of instruction, including special schools, classes, and services.
 - (d) An efficient business management, including the operation and maintenance of the school plant and transportation.
 - (e) Direction and supervision of attendance, including relationships with social-welfare departments and agencies.
4. The adequate educational program should be conceived as a continuous development for the child from the day he enters until the day he leaves the public school. For convenience of organization the school may be divided into elementary, for preadolescent children; and secondary, for adolescent children. A single school is usually confined to a single building but may utilize more than one building.
5. An elementary school may be defined as that section of the public school which receives a child at the date of entrance and guides his educational growth to the age of 12 or thereabouts; i. e., until entrance on the period of adolescence.
- Actually there is no hard and fast definition of the elementary school. In some States it is defined as grades 1 to 8; in others, as 1 to 7. The more recent practice is to consider it as including kindergarten and grades 1 to 6, inclusive, though more than half of seventh- and eighth-grade children are still in elementary schools. The kindergarten and nursery school should be considered as an extension of the elementary school downward.
6. The secondary school is generally conceived as the upper half of the public-school program, as that period devoted to the education of adolescents. Formerly, it consisted of 4 years' education superimposed on the 7- or 8-grade elementary school. Now it is generally conceived as consisting of grades 7 to 12, inclusive.

For convenience of organization, the secondary school may be developed as a 6-year school or as a 3-year junior school and a 3-year senior school. The secondary school should provide educational opportunity adapted to the needs of every adolescent boy and girl who is not assigned to institutional care.

The junior college and the specialized vocational schools of equivalent grade should be considered as extensions or variations of the secondary-school program.

7. The following general principles are suggested as pertinent to the organization or reorganization of attendance areas and administrative units:

(a) Attendance areas and administrative units should be organized or reorganized insofar as possible on the basis of objective studies, rather than in terms of traditional boundaries. Such studies should take into consideration all relevant factors, such as soil conditions, topography, climate, transportation facilities, and social and economic interests and relationships of the people.

(b) Constitutional and statutory limitations should be sufficiently elastic to facilitate the reorganization of local units as conditions change or as the need for such reorganization can be shown.

(c) The prime objective in determining the size and arrangement of the local school unit should be the unhampered development of a range of educational offerings adequate to meet the needs of all children through at least the twelfth grade. An economical and efficient unit should be judged in terms of whether this objective is realized rather than in terms of economy or cost alone.

(d) The State should provide whatever assistance or guidance is necessary and desirable in reorganizing attendance areas and administrative units in accordance with defensible policies and procedures.

8. The following principles are suggested as pertinent to the organization or reorganization of attendance areas:

(a) The attendance area includes all the children attending or eligible to attend a single school. In general, it should be considered an elastic subdivision of an administrative unit. The area of the attendance unit will probably vary from State to State and from locality to locality, depending on roads and climatic conditions, population density, age of the children involved, educational leadership, and other related factors.

(b) The elementary attendance area should, insofar as possible, be large enough to meet the following minimum criteria:

(1) Make possible a school with at least one grade per teacher, with a desirable ratio of 30 pupils per teacher.

The pupils, however, should not have to walk more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 miles to or from school, or ride on a school bus more than 1 hour (preferably including time of walking to the bus) each morning or evening, or be transported over roads that present extreme hazards.

(c) The high-school attendance area may be subdivided as occasion demands into junior and senior high school attendance areas, which may, in turn, comprise several elementary school attendance areas. The optimum size of the unit will depend largely on density of population and facilities for transportation; but it should, except under unusual circumstances, be large enough to meet the following minimum criteria:

(1) Make possible a junior high school with at least 300 pupils and 10 teachers, a senior high school of 300 pupils and 10 teachers, or a junior-senior high school of 300 pupils and 10 teachers.

The pupils, however, should not have to walk more than 2 or 2½ miles to or from school, or ride on a school bus more than 1½ hours (preferably including time of walking to the bus) each morning or evening. It is recognized that wherever density of population permits or transportation is feasible, high-school attendance units large enough to make possible the development of considerably larger schools are desirable.

9. The following principles are suggested as pertinent to the organization or reorganization of administrative units:

- (a) An administrative unit should comprise 1 or more attendance areas (ordinarily 2 or more) offering educational facilities at least through the twelfth grade. (Only under exceptional circumstances, due to such factors as extremely sparse population or rugged topography should an administrative unit comprise only an elementary or an elementary-junior high-school attendance area.) Administrative units comprising elementary-junior-senior high-school and junior-college attendance units may be recognized for the larger centers of population.
- (b) An administrative unit should be sufficiently large to warrant the provision of all essential and desirable administrative and supervisory services except those provided directly by the State. Ordinarily, several elementary-junior-senior high-school attendance units will be involved.
- (c) The boundaries of the school administrative unit need not be coterminous with the boundaries of any political subdivision of the State. An administrative unit may include part of a county, a county, or two or more counties or cities, or city and part of a county.

- (d) If the principle of State support of a minimum educational program is recognized and applied there will be little occasion for organizing administrative units in terms of their ability to be self-sustaining. Emphasis can then be placed increasingly on the optimum unit for the efficient and economical provision of the desirable educational offerings.
- (e) The State should make provision for any administrative unit to contract or arrange with any larger administrative unit for the education of children who need more highly specialized types of educational opportunity than are provided in their own unit.

Respectfully submitted.

COMMITTEE ON ATTENDANCE UNITS,

J. CAYCE MORRISON, *Chairman*.

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS,

EDGAR L. MORPHET, *Chairman*.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SATISFACTORY SCHOOL UNITS AND SCHOOL FINANCE

PRESENTATION OF PRINCIPLES

D. H. SUTTON

Ohio State Department of Education

All problems related to the support of education center in public finance. School finance and its allied problems occupy only one segment of the larger field of providing revenues for the maintenance of governmental functions. Consequently, the problem of supporting the schools cannot be segregated and studied separately and apart from the larger problem of operating all services of government. Any problem of school finance which inhibits the operation of the other essential functions of government cannot be justified. Moreover, the financing of a State school system is directly related to and dependent upon the organization of the separate units comprising the system for which revenues are provided. In view of this fact, careful consideration must be given two fundamental points: First, what school program level should the State demand of the several units; and, second, from what taxing units shall the support of this program be secured. The answer to these essential issues may be determined for each State only after a careful study.

No definite answer may be given or fixed formula prescribed for all States in answer to these two important questions. Varying conditions, different types of school organization, various plans of apportioning school funds, variation in statutory requirements, and similar conditions governing the support of educational advantages center into the organization and financing of school programs.

The very fact that local school districts have existed for so many years appears to lead certain groups to believe that

there is some vital reason for their continued existence. Education is now and always has been regarded as the proper function of the State. In early times, prior to the adoption of swifter modes of travel and more ready access to adjacent communities, each locality was about equally well circumstanced financially. There were few cities, few railroads, few interstate utility companies and no large trusts or corporations. The original course pursued in the organization of school districts was a natural one and quite in keeping with the conveniences of the times. But with the growth of large corporations, the centralization of wealth into small areas, and the concentration of population into urban districts, great inequalities arose.

These difficulties can be remedied only through a reorganization of school-district units. The question has been raised frequently concerning the statutory authority for reorganizing school districts. It seems unnecessary to observe that all of the statutory powers possessed by any school district have resulted directly from legislative action. Consequently, if it becomes advisable for the State to limit the powers of local school districts, it may do so without fear of extending its powers beyond constitutional limitations. It cannot be argued that school districts possess any inherent rights or prerogatives. In law they possess only quasi municipal rights, and school officials may exercise only the powers which are delegated to them by legislative act.

The State as an entity has every legislative and moral right to reorganize school-district units, even though the locality is paying for the maintenance of a school program. If this be true, how much more should the rights of the State be extended when the school program is supported with State funds.

Of course, in the reorganization of school districts, the control exercised by the State is limited by reason of the type and kind of coercion it is able to apply in developing a school finance program. It seems safe to assume that the coercion exercised by the State over the reorganization of local units is justifiable from the view of providing adequate school advantages only when:

1. The organization desired is a profitable one for all the pupils and districts concerned.
2. The procedure employed attains the desired end with the least possible inconvenience to all concerned.
3. The reorganization is not so expensive that it would cost more to operate the new unit than the ones consolidated.
4. The general educational welfare of the State as a whole is advanced.
5. The educational privileges guaranteed to the child by the constitution are not disturbed.

The growth of large supervisory units has led, more or less, to the creation of larger school districts. Even with these conditions prevailing, the most recent reports indicate that 126,849 local districts existed in the United States for the administration of public education, each of which on the average contained 23 square miles and employed seven teachers. To manage the educational affairs of these districts there were selected for the corresponding year 422,870 school-board members, whose major duty was to manage the financial affairs of the several districts and to employ 839,879 teachers to fill the several teaching positions. From these statistics it seems quite evident that education is still largely a local affair. For administrative purposes, a school unit may properly be regarded as the smallest school subdivision which is vested with the power to impose a tax for the maintenance of educational facilities. As the administrative school unit increases in size, the corresponding cost per pupil and variations in the ability to support schools decreases. At the present time the county, township, town, and district predominate as units of school organization.

From a financial point of view, the need of a reorganization of the local units in almost every State is evident. When the terms "economy" and "efficiency" are applied in the operation of public schools, data cannot be produced to show that the small units of organization are other than inefficient and uneconomical parts of a public-school system. There are certain advisable types of reorganization which must take place in the several States if the public-school system is to be maintained on an economic basis. These in-

clude: First, the consolidation into a single unit of two or more slightly smaller adjacent school districts; second, the inclusion of small incorporated areas into larger surrounding units; third, the attachment of adjoining rural territory to city school districts.

These different types of reorganization are merely variations in the procedure whereby educational advantages may be provided more efficiently and more economically. In the development of State programs of public-school finances, many of the types of school organization have been copied by one State from another without paying careful attention to ascertain whether or not the borrowed plan would apply. This is based on the theory that what is effective in one State will be of equal value in another. Where situations such as this prevail, one cannot help but wonder if his neighbor is not better nourished by having eaten his own dinner than by having had it eaten for him. The recommendation of any one type of school unit without careful study of the prevailing conditions in a State is not only unwise but financially unsound. For example, in many of the Eastern States, where the town unit prevails and where it exists as an efficient tax-collecting agency, it would appear extremely unwise to adopt and supply the county unit system as operated in the South or in some sections of the Middle West.

Along this line, however, it is well to bear in mind that overlapping school units still exist. In some of the Midwestern States, within the same civil subdivision, 3 types of school districts are maintained and 3 kinds of school taxes are imposed upon the same property valuations.

In regarding school organization from a financial point of view, certain pertinent issues must be carefully studied. It is possible to reorganize school districts to the place where they may become uneconomical. Consequently, the first measure which must be applied to reorganization is that of economy. School people would do well to bear in mind that public money should be as carefully safeguarded and as conscientiously expended as a private fortune.

The second primary function of a school district is to provide adequate educational advantages. For many years

public-school people interested in the field of finance have had as their watchword the equalization of educational opportunity. This condition, it must be admitted, exists only as a most radical form of educational equity. In no instance should the public-school people attempt to secure equalization of opportunity through the reorganization of school districts or through any other administrative or financial means. The trend during the past 5-year period has been away from the equality of opportunity objective and toward the attempt to secure adequate school advantages for every child. In thinking of equality of opportunity, it would seem as possible to secure this as it would for two individuals having the same-sized market baskets and the same number of dollars, visiting the same store, to bring home the same purchases. No two teachers teach with equal effectiveness, and public-school money spent in one district does not buy the same service as a similar expenditure does in another district.

In the third place, in reorganizing local school districts it must be borne in mind that the local district should be large enough to provide adequate administrative and supervisory services. This function can be secured only when a sufficient number of pupils are brought together in one administrative unit to make it a justifiable expenditure of public money to provide a variation in the courses offered sufficient to meet the needs of the individual pupils.

In the fourth place, the reorganized district should be sufficiently small that the transportation costs do not exceed the teaching costs. Consolidation is not an innovation. It has been practiced in many areas throughout the country. In some States there are many districts where it now costs more to bring the child to school than is actually spent in teaching the pupil subsequent to his arrival. This hardly seems fair. If education is to be continued as a profession, then more public money should not be spent on the bus drivers than on the teaching corps.

In the fifth place, a good form of reorganization, quite generally acceptable, is one made up of a high-school center, and subsidiary elementary attendance areas. This type of school district commonly provides a sufficient number of

pupils and a sufficiently productive tax duplicate that an adequate public-school program may be maintained.

A sixth item to which careful consideration must be given is the local administrative unit to which State funds are allocated for the support of schools. Recent years have found the several States making great strides in the enactment of statutes which would provide a greater contribution by the State for the equalization of cost and the maintenance of adequate school advantages. Past experience in the several States maintaining large subsidies for the support of schools indicates that the small local school unit is reflected in expensive administrative costs in the apportionment of State school funds. The type of management of school money and the type of fiscal officer usually secured in the small unit is far from desirable. Such positions are usually occupied by individuals whose past training and experience could in no way be regarded as qualifications for the spending of public money. The reports and accounts of the administration of school funds by such unqualified fiscal officers are, themselves, sufficient to condemn the maintenance of such small units in a program of State school support. Moreover, the added cost of such a system cannot be justified as an honest expense of State government.

Another problem in the distribution of State money for the support of schools relates directly to the management of school money. The mere allocation of sufficient State funds does not guarantee that school advantages will be provided. Experience has proved this. As in business, so in local school systems, unwise financial management occurs. Of course, it is never so noticeable in education as in business. Public schools are not operated for a material profit; they render no balance sheet; they neither manufacture nor sell a tangible product; and their discontented stockholders cannot meet and demand an accounting. One of the functions of a State school-support program becomes then, the establishment of such local units that wise management of school funds will ensue or that such checks and balances are provided that the taxpaying public may be assured of the prudential spending of their school money.

Almost inevitably reorganization is directly connected with the financing of a school program. It must be admitted that there are many people throughout the country who are willing to overburden themselves with taxation in order to maintain a school in their own district. Local pride and personal prejudice are often the determining factors. In those States, however, where State programs of financing public education have been developed, such school units come under the supervision of the State department of education. Such provision should be included in all State-wide programs of school finance. Whenever the patrons of a school district deny educational opportunities to the children merely because of presumed pride in having a school building, drastic action should be taken by the State.

The most recent trend in providing public-school revenues consists of larger contributions from the State to local school districts. This is based upon the valid theory that the larger the unit of support, the smaller the inequality in maintaining school advantages. This has resulted in the establishment of large State school funds which are allocated to the several school districts of the State upon some fixed and equitable basis. This action is the most hopeful step yet taken in an attempt to secure an adequate unit of school support. It must be admitted that certain control passes from the hands of the local school district to the State administrative authorities under such a plan. Such action is necessary. He who pays the piper is justified in calling the tune. This, however, is morally and legally right since the school districts are merely creations of legislatures for the purpose of securing school advantages for the children. The major difficulty prevailing in this centralization of authority exists in the fact that an incapable or unwise administrator may exercise it too drastically.

There are three major methods whereby the reorganization of school districts may be effected. In the first place, school districts may be combined with the larger units through an educative process. Better school programs resulting from larger school units tend to educate local taxpayers in the economy and effectiveness of the larger unit of school support. In the second place, the reorganization

may be brought about by delegated authority. This is accomplished in systems in which State school funds are allocated only to those districts which are regarded as efficient and economical parts of the public-school system. Such procedure requires considerable work on the part of the State department of education and other State administrative authorities and much ill feeling in many areas where schools are closed. The administrator must possess power of arbitration *par excellence* in order to minimize State and local administrative difficulties.

In the third place, reorganization may be secured by direct legal action, a larger school unit being required by statute. One of the most recent examples of this is the State of West Virginia where the House of Delegates, by statutory act, provided for a county school unit through the abolition of all magisterial districts which existed before the county-unit law became effective.

With these variations in school organization and their possible effects upon the financing of a public-school program, it must be borne in mind that the type of reorganization which most peacefully secures a larger unit is the one best adapted to the situation in question. In any event, a reasonable proportion of the total support of schools, the exact proportion depending upon the State and local situation, must be secured from the taxpayers within the unit. A satisfied taxpaying group and one interested in the maintenance of public schools is one which provides liberally according to its means for the State-school program.

There is no assurance that the excellent reorganization features of different State systems of school support can be combined into one plan. Such optimism, while pleasant to contemplate, cannot be justified by the prevailing facts. To adopt any State plan of school support different from the existing one is a sizable task. Thus far the difficulties to be encountered in the development of flexible procedures for reorganizing school districts are so formidable as to discourage attack. Nevertheless the problem should be attacked from a Nation-wide angle. What has been done is not nearly so important as what should be done. One may reasonably observe that programs of school finance which

have been in existence for two decades are probably outworn, even though they may have been good when adopted. One might also venture on the paradox that often by the time a school finance program is adopted it has ceased to be applicable to the conditions for which it was established. Conditions change about as rapidly as they are realized.

Practically all of the State systems of school support are in need of reorganization. The economic and social changes which have occurred since the economic collapse of 1929 make such action desirable. The major problem faced by most State administrators of school finance today is, How may adequate educational advantages be provided for an increasing number of children with drastically reduced sources of school revenue? Consequently "economy" and "efficiency" become the measuring criteria in the spending of public money for the support of schools. In no area do these criteria apply with such force as in the relationship between school organization and school finance.

In view of these prevailing conditions, it seems evident that the time is propitious for a careful study of these important issues leading toward the development of flexible procedures which may be applied in the reorganization of State systems of school support.

LOCAL INITIATIVE AND FREEDOM IN LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL UNITS

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The question of local autonomy is considered one of vital importance by a majority of authorities in the field of school administration. A careful reading of the literature on the subject leads to the conclusion that our public schools have developed in truly American democratic fashion because they enjoyed local initiative. In exercising self-expression in matters pertaining to problems which are chiefly of local interest, school communities appear to safeguard and nourish American ideals of government. A leading writer on school administration and finance declares that the various school communities throughout the Nation are bound together by a common heritage of American ideals, but that

each community selects for adoption those best adapted to its conditions, needs, and resources.

Writers and school officials frequently express the opinion that school administration should be such as to promote a maximum degree of local interest in public schools. Any plan for school administration, they contend, should foster rather than suppress local initiative and interest. Professor Judd states this idea in the following words:¹

The school is so essentially a matter of community interest and support that it ought not to be forced to adopt for its government any artificial boundaries. The school district of the United States has been throughout its history the clearest expression of the community type of organization.

Professor Bobbitt, writing in the same report on the school system of New York State,² calls attention to the danger of bureaucratic management of local affairs by a central office:

A central office, distant from the local situations with all their peculiarities of conditions and needs, not continuously in touch with them, tends toward mechanical uniform bureaucratic management of local affairs. And this nullifies local autonomy. The method of local initiative and central approval easily degenerates into the method of bureaucratic dictation. This tendency is specially strong where the local units are numerous and each relatively weak.

In reporting on the fiscal policies in Pennsylvania at about the time the New York State schools were surveyed, Professors Updegraff and King write:³

State aid should be distributed also in such a way as to promote the efficient participation of citizens in the exercise of citizenship. The converse of this proposition is that it should not be so administered as to promote bureaucratic control of either State, county, or local education offices. This can be accomplished, if on the one hand, the withholding of funds by State officers is exercised only in proportion to the seriousness of the shortcoming; and if, on the other hand, right action on the part of local districts unflinchingly meets with its reward.

The facts are that, in a fairly large number of communities of every State, we need a change in attitude on the part of the citizens

¹ Judd, Charles H. Recommendations. *In Rural School Survey of New York State*. Vol. II, p. 601. Ithaca, N. Y., Survey Committee, 1923.

² *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³ Updegraff, Harlan, and King, LeRoy A. Self-determination of Action. *In A Survey of the Fiscal Policies of the State of Pennsylvania in the Field of Education*. (Harrisburg, Pa.) 1922. p. 35.

toward the schools. These communities can frequently be led to change their ideas and to substitute right action over a sufficiently long period of years to bring about a fundamental change in their attitude towards the benefits of education. That which a citizen learns through the operation of his own action becomes established, while that which is forced upon him against his will he opposes. It is, therefore, fundamental in State aid that we leave final decisions, provided the minimum and maximum standards fixed by State laws are observed, to the local communities and allow them to choose what they think is best. Such standards should ordinarily, however, permit of considerable range for freedom of action. If this is done we have stronger agencies in the making of a better government and a better society.

Wrightstone suggests the following principles concerning local autonomy in school administration:⁴

The effort of local communities to secure educational advantages beyond the minimum required by the State should be vouchsafed to each community by a low rate of local contribution to the State's equalized minimum program. Such effort will depend, then, largely upon the educational standards, values and ideals built up in a local community by local and State educational leadership. * * * Local initiative demands a creative leadership, both local and State, to plan the educational program in accordance with the needs of the community and to make adaptations of the local school program to the modern social order.

Early writings on local school administration as well as recent treatments, emphasize the importance of local participation in school matters. Invariably the conviction on the part of the writer is that leadership is of greater value in school improvement than is bureaucratic authority exercised from a central office.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RELATION BETWEEN SATISFACTORY SCHOOL UNITS AND SCHOOL FINANCE

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It is the duty of the State to maintain an adequate educational opportunity for all of its children. This is a principle which is enunciated in the constitutions of the various

⁴ Wrightstone, J. Wayne. *Summary of Principles. In Stimulation of Educational Undertakings.* New York, N. Y., Teachers College, Columbia University, Bureau of Publications, 1933. p. 11.

States and is universally accepted as a fundamental requirement for a democracy. No matter whether the obligation of the State is regarded in the light of the ideal of an equal opportunity for all, or of the necessity of having its citizens educated no matter where they happen to reside, the conclusion is inevitable that the State must maintain an adequate system of education for all of its children.

1. It is not only necessary that the State supply a sufficient amount of funds to guarantee the support of adequate educational opportunity but that it also create the conditions under which an adequate school program can become operative. The State can do this only if adequate school units are provided. It is therefore the function of the State to facilitate the formation of such units.
2. If the Federal and State governments are to support education in local units it is to their interest to see that the units are adequate in size and resources to perform the functions demanded:

NOTE.—By collecting taxes and acting as a distributing fiscal agent for the States the Federal Government can eliminate much needless confusion, duplication of effort, and multiple taxation existing when the several States and the Federal Government use the same taxes.

3. The State furnishes support to and is the creator of the local administrative units. It follows, therefore, that as the State contributes a greater amount of support it is apt to assume a greater amount of control in endeavor to secure an efficient and economical expenditure of tax funds. This increased State control can be made unnecessary by the development of larger units which in all probability will develop a higher type of professional local leadership. In this way the larger unit does not deny local control of public education but rather promotes the perfection of it.
4. The method of allocation of support to local administrative units should be such as to encourage the most efficient organization and operation of schools. It should be such as to make it impossible for an administrative unit to increase the amount of sup-

port it receives by unnecessarily increasing the number of teachers employed, or by maintaining unnecessarily small schools.

5. When administrative units become large enough to be satisfactory the matter of apportioning State support to them is simplified. Many of the complexities and refinements required when small districts are to be dealt with are unnecessary when the administrative units are large.
6. The State can greatly facilitate the reorganization of local units by guaranteeing sufficient funds to care for all the elements of a complete educational program. Insofar as the reorganization of rural areas is concerned two important elements are transportation and the provision of adequate school plants.
7. Generally the larger the unit the less the necessity for State participation in the financing of school-building programs:

NOTE--In a large district it is more nearly possible to put building on a pay-as-you-go basis. There is less probability in such a district that it will be unable to finance its needed building. However, there are large areas in several States and some areas in almost any State which will require special support from the State if they are to have an adequate housing of their minimum educational program.

8. Generally the larger the administrative units, the less the variations in either expenditures or tax resources per child.
9. Large administrative units afford better opportunities for efficiency and economy. Although reorganization of local school units can frequently give a better program at less cost, even after transportation is provided, the chief objective for the reorganization of schools and the creation of large school units is not to decrease expenditures for education but to provide richer and better opportunities for the children affected.

REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL UNITS

- (a) In larger administrative units the per pupil cost of a comparable program of instruction is less than the smaller units.
 - (b) In larger administrative units adequate administrative, accounting, purchasing, and supervisory services can be supplied at a reasonably low percentage of the cost for instruction. In small units this cannot be done.
 - (c) In larger administrative units special services such as library service, periodic health examinations, and transportation can be supplied at a reasonable per pupil cost. Excessive costs of transportation in many regions are frequently due to the fact that the administrative units are too small and too few children are transported.
10. In reorganizing local school units care should be taken to recognize the close relationship between existing tax limitations and the formulation and operation of a program of State participation in school support.

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS,
EUGENE S. LAWLER, *Chairman.*

PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES
IN
REORGANIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

EDGAR L. MORPHET

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To facilitate the provision of optimum educational services and opportunities is the major objective in the reorganization of units. When administrative units are too small, or attendance areas overlap, this objective is not likely to be realized. Reliance on custom and traditions for guidance without regard to changed conditions will at least retard, if not prevent, needed progress.

Reorganization should not be left to local initiative, or lack of initiative, but should be stimulated by objective studies made by State or by State and Federal agencies. Desirable reorganization should be facilitated by favorable laws, promoted through educational or publicity programs and, to some extent at least, encouraged by the method of apportioning State aid.

In many States reorganization of local units is desirable to facilitate equalization of educational opportunity. Children who attend small schools in cramped administrative units are likely to be denied the breadth of educational offerings and the stimulating educational leadership to which they should be entitled. If they are fortunate enough to have these advantages, then they are likely to be unfortunate enough to provide just the example of extravagance for which earnest economy leaguers are likely to be so eagerly searching.

Organization of attendance areas is somewhat dependent on the definition or specification of *educational centers*. An

educational center might be defined as *elementary center*, an *elementary-junior high center*, or an *elementary-junior-senior high center*, regardless of the size of the school and the number of teachers. In the first case the territory served by the school would be the elementary attendance area for that school and a *part* of the junior-senior high school attendance area for some other school. In the last case, the territory served by the school would be the elementary-junior-senior high school attendance area, although there might be but 60 pupils and 2 teachers in the entire school.

Uniform terminology should help to keep thinking clear and thus facilitate needed reorganization. For example, if *superintendent* is always used to mean the person in charge of all schools in an administrative unit, and *principal* is always used to indicate the person in charge of a school in a given attendance area, some of the confusion that now exists with reference to the implication of these terms would be avoided.

Below are listed some additional assumptions with reference to the organization or reorganization of local units:

I. General assumptions:

(a) A satisfactory local administrative unit need not—

- (1) Imply arbitrary distinctions between urban and rural areas.
- (2) Be coterminous with or limited by other local political units.
- (3) Be restricted to the attendance area for any one school.

(b) A satisfactory local administrative unit should—

- (1) Permit the unhampered development of a complete range of educational offerings through at least the elementary and secondary grades.
- (2) Permit the development of the most economical and efficient system in terms of administration, supervision, and teaching.

- (3) Be based on social, economic, and topographic conditions as well as on the number of school children.
- (c) In general, units which are too small make impossible the development of schools large enough to be adequate in the light of modern needs.
- (d) In most parts of the country there is more likelihood of a unit that is too small than one that is too large.
- (e) There is probably no one type of unit which will be equally satisfactory in all parts of the country.

II. Assumptions regarding the significance of the unit:

- (a) The administrative unit affects, if it does not determine—
- (1) The breadth or richness of the program that may be offered.
 - (2) The extent of the program.
 - (3) The economy or expensiveness of the program.
 - (4) The facilities that may be provided.

III. Assumptions regarding the steps involved in developing desirable administrative units or attendance areas:

- (a) The diversity of attitude on the part of the people toward local self-government greatly complicates the problem of determining the most satisfactory local unit.
- (b) Method of developing a satisfactory local unit depends largely on leadership, local, State and national, rural and urban.
- (c) Satisfactory units may not be obtained until the majority of the people are informed concerning the soundness of the principle of equalization of educational opportunity.
- (d) Constitutional and statutory provisions should be sufficiently elastic to facilitate the reorganization of local units as the need for such reorganization is shown.

- (e) There should be provision for expert planning
• by authorized commissions or agencies, who, after thorough studies, should recommend desirable changes to the constituted authorities.

**REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES
IN CONDUCT OF STUDIES SHOWING POSSIBILITIES OF
REORGANIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS**

A generally recognized procedure involved in the reorganization of attendance areas and/or school units includes three major steps, as follows:

- I. Collecting essential data from official records in offices of school authorities and other agencies concerning existing organization and status of schools and districts. Such data are to be used to show strengths as well as weaknesses and inefficiency of present systems of administrative units, and to be used in the development of plans for the location of satisfactory schools, and for the formation of satisfactory and desirable attendance areas and administrative units, and therefore will be related to:
 - A. Population trends:
 1. General.
 2. Scholastic.
 - B. Location of existing local school units, municipalities, and schools; to existence and condition of roads; to location of rivers and other natural barriers. Additional data obtainable from the Department of Agriculture and elsewhere should be considered also. Practically all, if not all, of these data can rather readily be shown on maps. In addition to "location maps" there should be valuation maps, topography maps, soil maps, and possibly others.
 - C. Pupil personnel:
 1. Census.

2. Enrollment according to:
 - (a) Size of schools.
 - (b) Length of term.
 3. Average daily attendance.
 4. Progress of pupils, as indicated by grade distribution.
 5. Spot population maps.
- D. Teaching personnel:
1. The number distributed on the basis of—
 - (a) Instructional salary levels.
 - (b) Grades or fields of assignment or work.
 - (c) Schools according to size as determined by the number of teachers and/or enrollment.
 - (d) Schools according to length of term.
 2. Pupil-teacher ratio.
- E. Financial data relating to and involving accompanying factors in the matter of public support of the educational program:
1. Assessed valuations:
 - (a) Total per unit.
 - (b) Rate of assessment of property for school purposes.
 - (c) Determined on per capita basis—census, enrollment, or average daily attendance.
 2. Tax rates for—
 - (a) Bonded indebtedness.
 - (b) Maintenance.
 3. Outstanding bonded indebtedness.
 4. Current costs:
 - (a) Total.
 - (b) Per pupil in average daily attendance.
 5. Transportation:
 - (a) Number transported.
 - (b) Costs—total and unit.
 - (c) Routes.

II. Using as a basis the aforementioned data and possibly other raw data and data derived therefrom, a plan for the location and the organization of satisfactory schools and the division of territory involved into attendance areas and administrative units can be projected. Such plan should be formulated as a result of the cooperative thinking of a professional survey staff working with the assistance of a council composed of local schoolmen and one or more recognized lay leaders.

The formulation of plans naturally and logically involves discussion and decision pertaining to the closing of existing schools, not properly located to serve satisfactorily their respective areas, as well as the location, based upon sound factual data (either raw or derived) of new schools necessary because of enlarged administrative units requiring more comprehensive and more desirable offerings.

III. Effecting the proposed plan, or plans, of reorganization referred to in the preceding paragraphs, is probably more readily realizable when a practical procedure for reorganization is worked out (as noted in II). A council consisting of school and lay leaders should assume the responsibility of presenting to and familiarizing the public with the plans—

A. By setting forth characteristics of a satisfactory school attendance area and administrative unit.

B. By setting forth a comparison of the existing administrative set-up with the one proposed.

Citizens in the territory affected by the proposed reorganization should be thoroughly acquainted with the reports of this council. Maps and graphs should be used freely and clear statements of expected efficiencies under the proposed plan as compared to existing deficiencies, as well as of the probable general effect of the entire proposal, should be explicitly set forth.

COMMITTEE ON SATISFACTORY ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS.

H. F. ALVES, *Chairman.*

LEGISLATION TO FACILITATE REORGANIZATION

PRESENTATION OF PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING LEGISLATION

J. Y. SHAMBACH

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Conditions which prevail in each State determine largely the kind of legislation that will facilitate the reorganization of school districts in the State. Many conditions in Pennsylvania are similar to those in other States. We have a number of school districts that are functioning in an approved manner. Some districts, however, need the kind of assistance that can be furnished on a permanent basis only after an approved plan of amalgamation of districts has been put into operation.

It has been fortunate for the pupils in the public schools of Pennsylvania that it has not been necessary to close any of the schools because of lack of funds. However, it has been necessary for the general assembly to appropriate an emergency fund of \$5,000,000 during the past biennium to keep the schools open in financially distressed districts. This emergency assistance has been likened to a pulmotor method of enabling these districts to function.

According to the 1930 Federal census, school districts in Pennsylvania vary in total population from 38 to 1,950,961. The district having a total population of 38 does not operate a public school within its borders. However, the pupils residing there are assigned to the public schools of a nearby district.

We have 33 districts that do not operate public schools within their borders. Public-school pupils residing in these districts attend school in other districts. One hundred and eighteen districts employ only 1 teacher per district; 163, 2 teachers per district; and 141, 3 teachers per district. There are 811 districts that employ fewer than 6 teachers

per district, 491 that employ from 6 to 8 teachers per district, and 1,423 districts do not operate high schools of any kind. A short time ago it was found that approximately 32,000 high-school students resided in districts that had not paid high-school tuition that had accrued during the preceding year and that more than 700 had not been permitted to enter high school because the tuition due had not been paid. In addition, more than 800 pupils were admitted to high school conditionally, with the understanding that they would not be permitted to continue unless satisfactory arrangements should be made regarding the payment of their tuition.

Although districts that do not operate schools cannot control the kind of educational program that is provided for the pupils residing within their borders, and although those that do not operate high schools cannot control the high-school program, they are in a position to have complete boards of school directors and elect the officials authorized by law. It has been found very expensive to provide for some of these officials in the smaller districts. For example, it costs \$3.10 to collect \$100 in taxes in small school districts, while in the largest districts it costs 19 cents to collect an equal amount.

We have approximately 5,500 taxing units in our State. This means considerable duplication. A convention for the revision of the constitution has been proposed. One of the major problems to be considered is the reorganization of all governmental units within the State. Dr. Arnold Bennett Hall, one of the speakers at the Citizens' Conference on School Recovery in Pennsylvania, said: "I am going to argue that it has become a tremendously important issue that the people, in exercising their right of local self-government, exercise it as wisely as possible; that means, to exercise it over an area as wide as the nature of their problem requires. That is not destruction of local self-government—that is a step toward its perfection."

Some time ago a cooperative local unit committee was organized to make an intensive study of local school administration and organization in our State. This committee was

composed of leading educators and prominent school directors. National leaders who had studied the problem were invited to meet with the committee. One of the members of this committee, a school director, said that in an effort to make available enough money to provide adequate educational facilities in each district the formula that is developed "should be as simple as possible, because the average person is not interested in an elaborate formula and he is suspicious of the results derived from the application of such a formula." It was generally agreed that in the development of an adequate program transportation should be considered as a separate item.

Any group that attempts to solve the local unit problem should set up minimum standards with the understanding that a duly authorized board of review such as a State board of education, may make modifications when necessary. For example, we have in our State a law which specifies that when the average daily attendance in a 1-teacher school is 10 or fewer for a given year, the school shall be closed unless it is demonstrated to the State council of education by local officials that it is not practicable to have the pupils accommodated in another school. We should, of course, distinguish clearly between the consolidation of schools and the amalgamation of districts. The ultimate goal should be the amalgamation of districts in such a way that the consolidation of schools can be effected in an economical and equitable manner.

The following suggestions summarize some of the principles that should be taken into consideration in developing legislation regarding reorganization of school districts:

1. The type of administrative unit proposed should be large enough to provide as a minimum an educational program including grades 1 to 12 within the unit.
2. The plan should be flexible enough to permit adaptations to the varying needs of the several counties of the State.
3. A unit of better school organization should provide for competent administration, efficient control and accounting of school funds, and local initiative.

4. The plan should contemplate the reduction of taxation on real estate wherever excessive and provide a more equitable and more adequate basis of financing education, which would mean in most cases the assumption on the part of the State of a much larger share of the total cost of public education.
5. Reorganization of school districts should be considered a phase of the reorganization of governmental units.
6. Unless all governmental units are reorganized, the plan should be made so attractive financially and otherwise that local districts will adopt it without making it necessary to make its adoption mandatory.

LEGAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES CONCERNED WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL SCHOOL UNITS

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THE POWER OF THE LEGISLATURE OVER SCHOOL UNITS

The control and maintenance of the public-school system is a State function. The State legislature has, within the limits set by the State constitution, or by the Constitution of the United States, absolute control of the public schools, both as to administration and financial support, and can provide agencies directly to administer the school system and delegate to those agencies authority which the legislature itself possesses. The courts are unanimous in their decisions that the power of the legislature in this respect, within constitutional limits, is plenary.²

The legislature may require political subdivisions of the States, such as counties, cities, townships, or towns, to estab-

¹ At the time this article was written the author was consultant in administration and finance, unofficially attached to the U. S. Office of Education.

² The following citations are from Edwards (3: 673): *Attorney General v. Lowrey* (199 U. S. 233, 26 S. Ct. 27, 50 L. Ed. 167); *City of Louisville v. Commonwealth* (134 Ky. 488, 121, S. W. 411); *Pearson v. State* (56 Ark. 148, 19 S. W. 499); *State v. Hine* (59 Conn. 50, 21 Atl. 1024, 10 L. R. A. 83); *Kuhn v. Board of Edu.* (175 Mich. 438, 141 N. W. 574, 45 L. R. A. (N. S.) 972).

lish and maintain schools, or it may provide that such subdivisions shall constitute corporate school districts. Such corporate school districts may be either dependent upon the political subdivision for their powers or they may be entirely independent of the subdivision and merely coterminous as to territorial boundaries. On the other hand, the legislature may create school districts that are entirely independent of all other Governmental subdivisions and not coterminous with any other political unit.³

The legislature may form school districts by its own acts, or it may delegate the authority to create, form, or alter school districts. Such delegation of authority is not construed by the courts to be a delegation of legislative power but the creation of administrative bodies vested with local discretion.⁴

The legislature may create or alter school districts without the consent of the inhabitants in the territory affected, or it may delegate such authority to whatever administrative body it may choose. Likewise the legislature may require school districts and their officials to perform such duties as the State may impose upon them.⁵

The question of vested interest of school districts that have long been in operation sometimes arises in the abolition and consolidation of districts. The following quotation from Edwards (3: 689) is a complete answer to such a question:

Whatever agencies the legislature may select as the instruments for the execution of its educational policies, these agencies are com-

³ The following citations are from Edwards (3: 674): *Assoc. Schls. of Independent Dist. No. 83 v. Sch. Dist. No. 83* (122 Minn. 254, 142 N. W. 325, 47 L. R. A. (N. S.) 200); *State v. Haworth* (122 Ind. 462, 23 N. E. 946, 7 L. R. A. 240); *State v. Freeman* (61 Kans. 90, 58 Pac. 959, 47 L. R. A. 67); *State v. Hine* (59 Conn. 50, 21 Atl. 1024, 10 L. R. A. 83); *State v. Delaware Iron Co.* (160 Minn. 382, 200 N. W. 475).

⁴ The following citations are from Edwards (3: 675): *Trustees of Slaughter-ville Graded School Dist. v. Brooks* (163 Kans. 200, 173 S. W. 305); *Bodditt v. Blake* (25 Idaho 53, 156 Pac. 211); *Landis v. Ashworth* (57 N. J. L. 500, 31 Atl. 1017); *Brouin v. Board of Dir.* (136 La. 393, 67 S. O. 191); *Norton v. Lakeside Sp. Schl. Dist.* (27 Ark. 71, 133 S. W. 184); *Mitchell v. Dir. of Sch. Dist. No. 15* (237 S. W. 371); *Bay State Live Stock Co. v. Bing* (31 Nebr. 570, 71 N. W. 311); *Reynolds Land & Cattle Co. v. McCabe* (72 Tex. 57, 12 S. W. 165); *School Dist. No. 17 v. Zediker* (4 Okla. 509, 47 Pac. 482).

⁵ *Fisher v. Foy* (288 Ill. 11, 122 N. E. 811); *State v. Norwood* (24 Tex. App. 24, 57 S. W. 875); *School Dist. No. 17 v. Zediker* (4 Okla. 509, 47 Pac. 482); *Buckman v. State* (81 Ohio St. 171, 90 N. E. 158. (3: 674.)

pletely subject to its control within constitutional limits.⁶ Since school districts are purely creatures of the State, they possess no inherent local rights; no rights at all, in fact, except such as are delegated. Their powers and the mode of exercise of these powers are defined by legislative acts and may be added to, diminished, or destroyed, as the legislature may determine.⁷ In the words of the Supreme Court of North Carolina, "such organizations are intended to be instrumentalities and agencies employed to aid in the administration of the government and are always under the control of the power that created them, unless the same shall be restricted by some constitutional limitation. Hence the legislature may, from time to time, in its discretion, abolish them, or enlarge or diminish their boundaries, or increase, modify, or abrogate their powers. It may provide that the agents and officers in them shall be elected by the electors, or it may appoint them directly, or empower some agency to appoint them, unless in cases where the constitution provides otherwise, and charge them with duties specific and mandatory, or general and discretionary in their character."⁸ Moreover, the State is not limited in its choice of policies. "The legislature, having tried one plan is not precluded from trying another. It has a choice of methods and may change its plans as often as it deems necessary or expedient."⁹ In other words, long exercise of powers on the part of local units does not give rise to vested interests, for the State does not relinquish control of the school system by delegating some of its authority to the different localities.¹⁰

Suits cannot be instituted against abolishment, consolidation, or alteration of school districts on the ground that the Federal Constitution prohibits the State or its agencies from impairing the obligations of contracts and from depriving any person of property without due process of law. "Duties of a school district are obligations imposed, not a contract", is the decision of the courts.¹¹

The Supreme Court of the United States has answered such contentions in the following words: "(School districts)

⁶ *Floydada Independent Sch. Dist. v. Shipley* (238 S. W. 1026); *State v. Freeman* (61 Kans. 90, 58 Pac. 959, 47 L. R. A. 67); *State v. Hine* (59 Conn. 50, 21 Atl. 1024, 10 L. R. A. 83); *McCormac v. Robeson County* (90 N. C. 441); *State v. Haworth* (122 Ind. 462, 23 N. E. 946, 7 L. R. A. 240); *Stephens v. Jones* (74 S. D. 97, 123 N. W. 705). (3: 689.)

⁷ *Bopp v. Clark* (165 Iowa 697, 147 N. W. 172, Ann. Cas. 1918E, 417, 52 L. R. A. (N. S.) 493); *Honaker v. Board of Edu.* (42 W. Va. 170, 24 S. E. 544). (3: 689.)

⁸ *McCormac v. Robeson County* (90 N. C. 441); (3: 689.)

⁹ *State v. Haworth* (122 Ind. 462, 23 N. E. 946, 7 L. R. A. 240). (3: 689.)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *In re School Committee* (26 R. I. 164, 58 Atl. 628) (3: 687).

cannot have the least pretensions to sustain their privileges or their existence upon anything like a contract between them and the legislature of the State because there is not and cannot be any reciprocity of stipulation, and their objects and duties are utterly incompatible with everything of the nature of a compact."¹²

PROVISION FOR LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOL UNITS

An accepted principle in school administration is that the statutes provide a board of education to administer the affairs of each school district, whether a county, city, or any other designated unit.

The following specifications concerning the composition, qualifications of members, term of office, compensation, powers, and duties of boards of education are very generally accepted as desirable.

Composition.—The board of education should be composed of representative citizens selected at large from the territory affected and elected by the people from that territory. It should be small enough to work easily and effectively and at the same time large enough to be representative. Five to nine members are desirable.

Qualifications of members.—The law usually provides that board members shall be citizens and residents of the district represented; shall be of good moral standing in the community and known to be interested in public schools. It is also frequently stipulated that no person who is subject to the board's authority or who is financially interested in its transactions shall be eligible for membership on the board.

Term of office.—Stability and continuity of policies are best insured by relatively long terms, as 4 to 7 years, so arranged that less than a majority of members will go off or come on the board during any one year. Members should be eligible to reelection and should be subject to removal only for cause.

Compensation.—No salary should attach to the office of school board member. Actual expenses for transacting the

¹² *Attorney General v. Lowrey* (190 U. S. 233, 26 S. Ct. 27, L. Ed. 167) (8:687).

business of the board should be allowed. The theory on which this provision is based is that persons who would be attracted by financial awards, rather than by the dignity of the service to be rendered, should be eliminated.

Powers and duties.—A school board is responsible to the people of the district for the satisfactory conduct of their schools. The board should possess full power over the financial, business, and educational administration and management of the schools, which it should exercise through its executive officer, the superintendent of schools. *The powers of the board should be commensurate with its responsibilities.* Among the most important powers of the school board to be exercised as indicated are the following:¹³

1. To appoint an executive officer, the superintendent of schools, through whom the board exercises the powers vested in it, and to provide him with an adequate number of assistants.
2. To plan a complete system of public schools for the district, to determine the kinds and grades of schools to be established and maintained, to locate them, divide the district into school attendance districts, and provide for the transportation of school children.
3. To provide and maintain grounds, buildings, and physical equipment for all schools of the district.
4. To prescribe courses of study, within general State regulations.
5. To adopt textbooks, within general State regulations.
6. To provide instructional equipment and supplies.
7. To employ all principals, supervisors, teachers, janitors, bus drivers, and other regular school employees, fix their salaries, assign them to their positions or work, and dismiss them for cause.
8. To prepare a budget and to fix, subject to the tax-rate limits of the State law, the current school-tax rate, and make or cause to be made, the annual school-tax levy.

¹³ 1: 16-17.

9. To issue bonds, subject to the limits of the State law, for new permanent improvements, or submit to the people for their approval the question of issuing bonds.

PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE SETTING UP OF ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

There are certain well-accepted major principles which should be followed in the drafting of laws regulating the creation or formation of local school units. These are:¹⁴

1. The local unit of school government should be sufficient in size and resources to maintain schools that possess all the major characteristics of satisfactory schools and should be able to offer a complete educational program covering 12 years of instruction for all the children within its borders.
2. It should be sufficient in size to maintain, at a reasonable cost, desirable administrative and supervisory services.
3. The type of school district organization is closely associated with public-school support. Any proposed modification in the plan for distribution of State subventions should be studied in relationship to the school district organization.
4. Since population and resources are subject to modification, and means of transportation also constantly improving, school district boundaries should be flexible.

Elaborating upon the four principles, Engelhardt and Zeigel make the following statement that seems to be fundamental:¹⁵

Factors like improved highways, changes in means of transportation, social movements affecting population growth, and modern methods of doing business are constantly building up some areas of a State and destroying others. Shifts in resources and population are continuously under way in all States. Many small towns are growing smaller, and cities more strategically located are rapidly extending their boundaries. Areas that once supported many families are

¹⁴ 4 : 82-83.

¹⁵ 4 : 83.

practically uninhabited. *It is fundamentally unsound to allow local areas to have complete control of the nature of the districts and schools to be operated when changes of the kind referred to are continuously in progress.* School district organization cannot remain static and unchanging under such circumstances. Educational problems must be viewed not solely for their local application but must find their solution through studying them in relation to the State as a whole.

In the past, even though the principle that "education is a State function" was generally accepted, the State's educational program had been considered too largely from the local point of view. *It was assumed that the school offering must be adjusted to the prevailing separate administrative divisions, even though there was no justification for many of the school districts in existence.* Educational leadership has frequently overlooked the fact that the legislature, in operating a school-district system, did so to provide the educational services needed at that time, and that the legislature continues to have the power to modify the school district system in such ways as will provide public education of the type and form needed today.

KINDS OF LOCAL SCHOOL UNITS

Before entering into a discussion of the legal methods of providing for the creation of local school units it is essential that a functional differentiation of two distinct kinds of local school units be recognized. The first of these units may be designated as an *attendance unit* or area which may be defined as the geographical and population area served by a single school. An attendance area does not necessarily constitute an area for local taxation for schools nor possess independent administrative powers. The second of these units may be designated as an *administrative unit*, which may be defined as a unit for school purposes which comprises all the area under a single system of local administration and may be composed of more than one attendance unit, and usually constitutes a local taxing unit for school purposes.

The distinction between attendance units and administrative units indicates that there are two distinct problems of organization of territory into school units. The first problem pertains to the organization of territory of the State into administrative units. This problem, because it involves the organization of external controls of the schools located within the area affected, is referred to as the problem

of *external organization*. The second problem pertains to the organization of territory into attendance areas. This problem, because it involves organizing the territory of an administrative unit, or district, into attendance units, or areas, is referred to as the problem of *internal organization*.

These distinctions offer a basis for a discussion of the legal provisions for these two types of local school units and their corresponding problems of organization.

LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR EXTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL SCHOOL UNITS

In general, the State laws make provision for 1 of 2 types of administrative units for school purposes. The first type is created directly by act of the legislature. School districts which are coterminous with counties, cities, townships, or towns represent this type. The second type is created usually by some board or State or local official or by the people themselves acting under delegated power from the State legislature. Examples are the common-school district, central school district, community school district, consolidated school district, and high-school district.

Examples of the type of school unit created by direct act of the legislature are to be found in Louisiana and Maryland, which States are organized on the basis of the parish and the county, respectively, as the unit of school administration. In Louisiana all cities except two are included in the parish school systems and in Maryland each of the 23 counties and the city of Baltimore comprises a complete school district. Other States, which, by legislative action, have designated the county as the unit of school administration, have excluded cities having more than a stipulated population from the control of the county district and have set up such cities as independent school districts. For example, in Alabama each county constitutes a school district, but all incorporated places having a population in excess of 1,000 may become independent districts. Authorities in school administration are practically unanimous that small cities, usually those of less than 10,000 population, should be included in the county unit system.

There are some advantages, especially in States in which the county is the chief local political unit, in designating the county as the unit for school administration. Among these advantages are the following:

1. The people are accustomed to look to the county as a unit of local government.
2. The county is the agency through which taxes are collected and frequently through which they are levied.
3. The county is the only existing political unit which is large enough, in the majority of cases, to afford adequate administrative and supervisory services at a reasonable cost.

In States where the county is not a political unit of any considerable importance, as, for example, in the New England States, some other political unit, such as the New England town, seems to have about the same advantages that the county has in other States.

In other States, such as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, the legislature has designated the township as the administrative unit for school purposes. Where the township has sufficient population to justify the maintenance of a complete school system, including administrative and supervisory services at a reasonable cost, the township is probably as satisfactory as the county for a unit of school administration. The difficulty is that the majority of townships are not of sufficient size, either to provide satisfactory schools or satisfactory administrative and supervisory services.

In other States, such as New York, Missouri, California, and most of the Western and Central States, schools are organized on the basis of what is ordinarily known as the "common-school district." Such districts are usually independent of any other political subdivision except that cities of certain stipulated population are frequently designated, by law, as school districts. The "central district", as found in the State of New York, formed by uniting the territory of several small districts, is an example of the common-school district type of organization. Its area is usually much less than the "county." It is independent of any other political unit and has a sufficient number of children and

resources to give at least 12 years of instruction to the children living within its borders.

The chief shortcoming of the central, or community, school district is that too frequently it is not large enough to afford the necessary administrative and supervisory services without excessive cost. This shortcoming frequently results in the superimposing of administrative and supervisory services through some higher unit of government, such as the State, the county, or the district superintendency union. Furthermore, unless plans for the creation of such districts are made on a State-wide basis, or at least on an area-wide basis, they are likely to be formed in such a way as to be detrimental to the educational advantages of the children who do not live within their borders. There is a tendency to gerrymander in such a way as to include territory that has considerable wealth and that really ought to belong to another district. The result of such organization is likely to be a school system that offers good school advantages only in favored localities. For the most part, these shortcomings are due to a failure to distinguish between attendance units and administrative units for school purposes. They are the direct result of assuming that a satisfactory attendance unit is also a satisfactory administrative unit.

The problem of organizing school districts of the second type, namely, those created through authority delegated by the legislature to some board or official, is much more complicated than the problem of creating school districts by general act of the legislature, as in the case of designating the county as the school district. A common practice is to empower a county board of education to alter, create, or consolidate school districts. In some cases this power is left arbitrarily to a county board of education and in other cases such power can be exercised by the county board only when authorized to do so by petition or by majority vote of the people affected. In some States, as in Missouri, there must be a majority of the qualified electors, voting on the question in each existing district, in favor of a proposed formation of a new school district before it can be formed. In other cases, as in Arkansas prior to 1931, it is required only that

there must be a majority obtained, either by petition or election in the territory affected, without regard to the vote in each existing district. Where districts are formed by petition it is usually required that a majority of the qualified electors in the territory affected, or in the district affected, shall sign the petition. It is possible, however, to name some designated percentage of the electors to sign the petition before it can be acted upon. The county board of education may be required to form school districts or to make school-district consolidations in accordance with the will of the electors, as expressed through petition or election, or they may be given power to exercise their discretion in the matter.

The order of preference of these plans for forming new school districts or for consolidating school districts, appears to be as follows:

1. Arbitrary power delegated to the county board of education or some other central board.
2. Discretionary power by the county board of education to make consolidations or to form new school districts when authorized to do so by petition of a majority of the qualified electors in a territory affected, or by a majority of those voting favorably in an election held on the question in the territory affected.
3. Requiring the county board of education to form new school districts or consolidate school districts when a proposed plan has been approved through petition signed by a majority of the qualified electors in the territory affected, or by a majority of those voting favorably in an election held in the territory affected.
4. Requiring a county board of education to form new school districts or to consolidate school districts when a proposed plan has been approved by a majority in each school district affected.

(See appendix 1 for illustrative legal provisions for the reorganization of administrative units.)

LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR THE INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL SCHOOL UNITS

The most frequent provision of State law for the internal organization of local school units, viz. the organization of attendance areas authorizes the board of education of the administrative unit to locate and maintain such schools as, in the judgment of the board, are necessary to accommodate the children residing within the administrative unit. The law sometimes sets up certain restrictions on the authority of the board to abolish and consolidate schools. For example, the law may require a school board to maintain a school for a stipulated number of children (for example, 10) residing more than 2 miles from the nearest school, or to provide transportation to school at public expense for such children.

The law may also require giving notice of the holding of hearings concerning the plans for the abolition of schools and the location of new schools.

(See appendix 1 for illustrative legal provisions for reorganization of attendance areas or units.)

SPECIAL POINTS OF LAW REGARDING THE ALTERATION, CREATION, AND FORMATION OF LOCAL SCHOOL UNITS

In drafting laws governing the reorganization of school units, especially where district boundary lines are to be altered, school districts to be abolished, and new school districts created, special attention should be given to certain well-established points of law regarding such matters as notice, petitions, elections, disposal of property and obligations, the provision of a board for new school districts, and the compulsory location of schools.

Notice.—The requirements as to the giving of notices and hearings on elections should be very specific as to the time limits within which notice shall be given and the form of publication. The most frequent basis for attacking the legality of consolidations is to attack the form or the time of giving notice. There is considerable difference of opinion as to how strictly the statutes must be followed in the matter of detail in the giving of notices. Some courts have held that a strict compliance with the statutory requirements is

necessary.¹⁶ Other courts have adopted the rule that a defect in giving the notice shall be inmaterial where the results could not have been changed if the notice required had been given.¹⁷ As a rule the courts will not hold an election void as a result of a mere irregularity in the giving of notices where the purpose of giving notices has been actually accomplished. In view of these differences of opinion, however, it is necessary that both the letter and spirit of the law be complied with by those who are responsible for the administration of the laws in the consolidation of schools or districts. It is especially important that new school laws be very specific in requirements and directions for giving notice of elections and hearings.

Petition.—Where a petition signed by a designated percentage of the qualified electors is a prerequisite to the calling of an election or to taking action by administrative officers with respect to the creation of districts or the changing of boundary lines, the filing of such petition is jurisdictional, and any election held or any action taken without such a petition having been filed is void.¹⁸ Since the courts seem to be divided on the question of whether or not the names of petitioners may be attached to the petition by an authorized agent, the law should be specific as to whether such authorized signature is acceptable. A frequent point of dispute is whether or not the signer of a petition has the right to withdraw his name therefrom. The weight of court authority supports the rule that anyone who signed the petition may withdraw his name at any time before action is taken by those to whom it is addressed.¹⁹ It will save

¹⁶ *Cantle v. Board of School Inspectors* (73 Mich. 40, 46 N. W. 928); *Bohen v. Greensboro* (79 Ga. 709, 4 S. E. 159); *Lewis v. Young* (116 Ark. 291, 171 S. W. 1197).

¹⁷ *State v. Hall* (73 Oreg. 231, 144 Pac. 475); *Sharp v. George* (5 Ariz. 65, 46 Pac. 212); *People v. Union High School Dist.* (101 Cal. 655, 36 Pac. 119); *Plott v. Board of Comm. of Heywood Co.* (178 N. C. 125, 121 S. E. 190).

¹⁸ *School District No. 2 v. Pace* (113 Mo. App. 134, 87 S. W. 580); *In re Sch. Districts Nos. 2, 3, and 4* (122 Minn. 283, 142 N. W. 723; 20 C. J. 95).

¹⁹ *Montgomery Township Bd. of Edu. v. Ashland Co. Bd. of Edu.* (8 Ohio App. 120); *Valley Center Sch. Dist. No. 20 v. Hensberger* (28 Ariz. 493, 237 Pac. 958); *People v. Strawa* (233 Ill. 292, 106 N. E. 840); *Sch. Dist. No. 11 v. Sch. Dist. No. 20* (63 Ark. 543, 39 S. W. 850); *Territory v. City Council of Roswell*, (16 N. W. 340, 117 Pac. 866, 35 L. B. A. (N. S.) 1113); *Sch. Dist. No. 24 v. Renick* (83 Okla. 158, 251 Pac. 241); *In re Mercersburg Independent Sch. Dist.* (237 Pa. 368, 85 Atl. 467).

any dispute if the law is specific in a statement that the right to withdraw names ceases when the petition has been filed with the body that is to act upon it.

Elections.—The law pertaining to the calling of an election and the holding of elections should be specific as to the manner of calling the elections and the giving of notices, the time and the manner of holding the election, the canvassing of the returns, and the certifying of the results. The law should also be specific as to determining the results of the election. It is common practice for the law to state that if the question being voted upon receives a majority of the votes of those voting at the election the question carries. Such a statement, however, should be made specific.

Disposal of property and obligations.—In the consolidation of school districts specific provision should be made for the disposal of property and the indebtedness of the districts affected. The law should specifically declare that all property in the districts dissolved shall become the property of the new district and that all debts and obligations of the old districts shall become the debts and obligations of the new district. The courts have held that such a statute cannot be construed as impairing the obligations of a contract and that the contract does not become impaired whether the law provides that the new district shall take over the indebtedness of the old district or not.²⁰

Sometimes the law states that the bonded indebtedness of old districts shall remain the obligation of the territory originally affected by them. An example of such procedure is the recent county unit law enacted by the legislature of West Virginia.

It sometimes happens that when a district is dissolved contention is made that all the debts of the district fall due and must be liquidated. For this reason the statutes should state specifically and emphatically that the abolition of districts does not cause the debts to fall due immediately.

Where districts are divided some provision should be set up in the law for dividing the property of the district as

²⁰ *Perriso v. Kistler* (93 Mich. 280, 53 N. W. 391); *Ranson v. Spencer* (113 Kans. 40); *Attorney General v. Lowrey* (199 U. S. 203, 26 S. Ct. 27, 50 L. Ed. 167); *People v. Bartlett* (304 Ill. 288, 136 N. E. 654); *Board of Ed. v. Board of Education* (30 W. Va. 424, 4 S. E. 640).

well as for a division of the debts. A general rule is to divide the indebtedness in the same ratio as the assessed valuation of taxable property is divided. If the school property is sold an equitable rule is to divide the proceeds of the sale in the same ratio as the assessed valuation of taxable property is divided.

Provision of a board for the new district.—Consolidation laws should make specific provision for the creation of a school board for the newly formed district. In some cases it is provided that all the old board members hold office until the next school election. Such a plan results in a very cumbersome board and frequently makes it practically impossible for the board to take any action until the school election is held and a small workable board is elected. The law should provide either for the appointment of a board to serve until the next regular school election or for the calling of a special election to elect a board of workable size.

Compulsory location of schools.—While it is usually safe to leave the location of schools and the provision of transportation of pupils to the discretion of the school board, it is frequently helpful in dealing with the public if the law states that wherever there are 10 or more children (or some other stipulated number) who live more than 2 miles from the school, the board shall either establish a school for their benefit or furnish transportation at public expense to the nearest school. Such a statement in the law gives a definite answer to the objections of people who have the fear that the board of a large district may not make schools accessible to the children affected.

SUMMARY

Since education is a State function, the public schools are wholly within the control of the legislature, subject only to constitutional limitations. For this reason the legislature can create school districts or delegate the authority to create them. The legislature usually delegates the authority to create districts to some central board of education or to the people themselves. The legislature can abolish school districts, or alter or change their boundary lines, or delegate authority to stipulated bodies to do so, and such action is

held by the courts to be no impairment of the obligations of contracts, since school districts do not maintain contractual relationship with the State, but they perform certain duties imposed upon them by the State.

The law should provide that each school district shall be under the control of a small board elected by the people for overlapping terms. This board should have authority to elect a superintendent of schools and such assistants as he may need, to levy taxes within the limitation of State law, locate schools, provide buildings and other school property, contract with teachers and other employees, and administer, within the limits of the power granted to them by the State law, all affairs pertaining to the schools within the respective district.

The law concerning the establishment of school districts should be written in conformity with the principles that the district should be large enough to provide satisfactory schools; that all districts should be sufficiently large to furnish needed administrative and supervisory services at a reasonable cost; that districts should be such as will best contribute to the equitable and economic distribution of State school funds; and that district boundaries should be flexible so that they can be changed as economic and social conditions change.

In considering the organization of local school units it is necessary to recognize two distinct kinds of local units: (1) An *attendance unit* which is composed of an area served by a single school and which does not necessarily constitute a unit for taxation and school administration; (2) an *administrative unit* which comprises all the area under a local system of administration, which may be composed of more than one attendance unit, and which usually constitutes a local taxing unit for school purposes. Problems concerning the organization of administrative units may be designated as those of *external organization*; and those concerning the organization of attendance units, as those of *internal organization*.

The usual method of setting up local administrative units is for the legislature to designate the county, city, town, or

township, or some other political subdivision, as the school district, or to provide for the creation of administrative units by delegating authority to some central board or official. Examples of local school units created by the first kind of legislative action are to be found in the county school systems of Maryland and Louisiana, the town school systems of the New England States, and the township school systems of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Indiana. The usual method of forming administrative units through delegated authority is by empowering a county board of education or some other central board or the county superintendent of schools to act either upon their own initiative or upon being authorized to act by a petition or election of the electors. The county or central board of education may be given either mandatory or discretionary power to create new administrative units when authorized by petition or election to act, i. e., the board may be compelled to act in accordance with the will of the electors as expressed by petition or election, or it may be authorized to use its discretion in the formation of proposed school units. Furthermore, the law may require that the will of the electors be determined, either upon the basis of a majority in the *territory affected* or upon a majority in each *affected existing district*. Examples of the external organization of school units through delegated authority are to be found in the laws and administrative procedures in New York, Arkansas, and Missouri.

The authority to provide for the internal organization of school units is usually delegated by the legislature to the board of education of the local administrative school unit. Examples of how this authority is delegated and exercised are to be found in the laws and procedures used in Louisiana, Maryland, and North Carolina.

In the drafting of laws regulating the alteration, creation, and formation of school districts, special care should be exercised in drafting the provisions concerning notices, petitions, elections, creation of a board for new districts, disposition of property and obligations of old districts, the compulsory location of schools, and the furnishing of transportation for pupils.

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION TO FACILITATE
REORGANIZATION OF LOCAL UNITS OF SCHOOL ADMINIS-
TRATION

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In view of the fact that a large majority of the 127,000 administrative school units in the United States are incapable of providing proper educational facilities for their children, the several States should move in the direction of reorganizing administrative units to the end that an adequate educational program may be provided. Legislation to facilitate reorganization of administrative units should emphasize the following basic principles:

1. The need for school reorganization is in harmony with the need for reorganization of all governmental units.
2. State departments of education should be equipped and required to make studies preliminary to the reorganization of any administrative unit or units.
3. The State should adopt an equalization principle based on the two factors of educational need and ability to pay for financing education so as to enable each school district to provide an adequate educational program.
4. The State's program of financing education should be adjusted so as to promote and encourage more efficient administrative units.
5. Before new administrative units are created, they should be approved by the State department of education.
6. The fiscal policy of the State with respect to the reorganization of school administrative units should include provision for adequate transportation and school plant.
7. Legislation should not only guarantee an adequate educational program for all children but should also protect and foster the principle of school initiative in the control and development of schools.

A SUMMARY OF SOME RESULTS OF REORGANIZATION OF SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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Two purposes sought through the reorganization of small school districts into larger ones should be pointed out as preeminent. In general, the purposes are first to provide an enriched and expanded program; second, to overcome the disparity among the districts concerned in financial ability to provide modern educational services. If two or more local communities pool their resources and undertake a modern school program cooperatively, the task can be more efficiently performed, its purposes more economically

achieved, and a more equitable distribution of the costs entailed effected through the larger unit of school administration. It will be the purpose of this presentation to review briefly the available facts showing the various outcomes which have been found to result from such reorganizations. Since studies of this problem involve many contingent and qualifying factors a review of the findings of such studies must be confined to general observations rather than detailed and specific data.

ADVANTAGES INHERENT IN LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

There are obviously a number of important results of the reorganization of small school districts into larger ones which are not particularly due to the elimination or consolidation of the small, inefficient schools. A reorganization of school districts does not always involve the abandonment or consolidation of the smaller units of school administration. Indeed, the major purpose of such reorganization often is to enlarge the tax area and to effect cooperative relationships in the business and professional activities of the districts affected. Through the former the financial status of the small indigent district is almost invariably improved and through the latter a greater degree of efficiency and economy is achieved than is commonly possible when the small districts are conducted independently.²¹

It has also been observed that the reorganization of small school districts into large ones tends to bring about the abandonment or consolidation of smaller inefficient schools. States operating their schools on a centralized or large unit basis have shown greater progress toward consolidation than those continuing on a local district basis. For example, in North Carolina, a State in which the schools are organized on a county unit basis, the 1-room schools have been reduced from 2,500 in 1926 to 1,500 in 1934. Reports from Delaware, which maintains what is essentially a State system, show a reduction in 1-room schools during the same period from 251 to 134; West Virginia reports an increase in the number of consolidated schools from 374 in 1932, the year before

²¹ Covert, Timon. Larger Units for Educational Administration—A Potential Economy. U. S. Office of Education, Pamphlet No. 45. (See Bibliography.)

the county unit was adopted in that State, to 1,084 in 1934. By contrast, similar data from such local district States as Illinois and Nebraska may be briefly examined. The former reported 10,148 1-room schools in 1926; in 1934 more than 10,000. Nebraska reported 6,185 such schools in 1926; by 1934 there were still 6,068. It is, of course, recognized that some of the States organized on a local unit basis. Washington, for example, has also shown excellent progress toward consolidation. But closer investigation reveals that such States have effected such consolidations through vigorous campaigns to that end, often involving special inducements through financial aids. The point is that consolidation has been found to be easier in States or counties organized as large units of school administration than in those organized on the local district basis. The consolidation of the small, ineffective schools, therefore, must be regarded as one of the important results of reorganizing schools on a large unit basis.

Generally speaking, the smaller the units of school administration the greater have been the chances for loss and inefficiency due to petty politics, nepotism, and like types of the personal influences from school board members. A recent study²² showed a total of 423,974 school-board members in the United States. For the Nation this is an average of 1 for every 2 teachers. In the county unit States there was an average of 18 teachers per school board member, in States organized on a town or township basis the average was 6 teachers, and in local district States there was approximately 1 board member for each teacher. In 1-teacher districts the ratio is usually 1 teacher to 3 board members. Controlled studies have not been made to show the extent to which the reorganization of the small district units into larger ones overcomes the financial and professional handicaps but the evidence²³ available, as well as the general

²² Deffenbaugh, W. S., and Covert, Timon. *School Administrative Units*. U. S. Office of Education, Pamphlet No. 34.

²³ Cressman, G. R. *Local Units for Educational Administration*. Doctor's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1932, p. 117-120.

Seay, Maurice F. *Nepotism in Kentucky Mountain Schools*. *Mountain Life and Work* (10:16-18). October 1934.

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observation of school administrators, points to the conclusion that reduction in the number of school board members is an important outcome of school reorganization.

It is obvious that the more direct and personal the relationships between the representatives of the people and those furnishing either services or goods to the schools the greater is the risk of favoritism and loss. In the larger school unit it is much easier to establish checks and balances in the actions of school officers than in the smaller districts.

COMPARATIVE MEASURES OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS BY SIZES AND TYPES OF SCHOOLS

Most of the evidence showing the results of reorganizing the small school districts into larger ones must be gleaned by comparing the available data showing the effectiveness of the consolidated and other large schools with those from nonconsolidated and smaller schools. As already pointed out, school authorities, as well as the available facts, tend to agree that the consolidation and elimination of small schools is not only a major purpose of reorganization but is a natural consequence. This presentation will be, therefore, briefly to examine comparative measures of the educational effectiveness of schools classified on the basis of size and on the basis of whether or not they are consolidated.

Length of term.—Perhaps the most obvious of the educational advantages of consolidated and other large schools over the smaller schools are those relating to the comparative amount and the grade level of education provided in the two types of schools. First, the annual school session is longer in the larger than in the smaller schools. For the Nation as a whole statistics for 1930²⁴ show the 1- and 2-teacher schools to have been in session an average of 160 days during the school year; in nonconsolidated open country schools employing 3 or more teachers the term was 163 days; in consolidated schools it was 168 days; in village and town schools it was 174 days. In 5 of the Southern States comparison of 1-teacher schools and the consolidated

²⁴ Gaumnitz, W. H. Status of Teachers and Principals Employed in the Rural Schools of the United States. U. S. Office of Education, Bulletin, 1932, No. 3, p. 65.

schools showed a differential in length of term of 2 months or more per year; in 8 others, 1 month or more.

Regularity of pupil attendance, progress, and retention.—The differentials between the lengths of school term provided in schools of various sizes are usually augmented by the fact that pupils attending the consolidated and other large schools attend and progress more regularly through school than those attending smaller schools.²⁵ Moreover, pupils attending the larger schools tend to remain longer in school.²⁶ This latter result is partly due to the fact that in the consolidated schools transportation at public expense is furnished those living beyond reasonable walking distances. Continuance in school is especially traceable to the higher quality and the richer variety of educational services provided by the larger schools.

For example, the smaller school districts, especially those of the one-teacher type, cannot provide secondary school facilities within their own territory. Instruction on this level is either contracted for by the home district with some nearby district maintaining a high school or the children involved must secure it on their own responsibility. The latter alternative usually means traveling long distances daily or boarding away from home. Sometimes it even means personal responsibility for tuition. The consolidation of schools, if properly planned, generally results in schools which are large enough to provide high-school services for boys and girls within the home district.

INSTRUCTIONAL AND CURRICULUM ADVANTAGES

The consolidated and other large schools also tend to offer qualitative as well as quantitative educational advantages. First of all, teachers in the larger schools are likely to be held responsible for but 1 or 2 grades. In the 1-teacher

²⁵ Cooper, Herman. *An Accounting of Progress and Attendance of Rural School Children of Delaware*. Teachers College, Columbia University, 1930. (Contributions to Education, No. 422.)

Skidmore, C. H. *Marked Progress in Consolidating Rural Schools*. *American School Board Journal*, 82:52-53, 87, Nov. 1981.

²⁶ Larson, E. L. *One-room and Consolidated Schools of Connecticut*. Teachers College, Columbia University, 1925. (Contributions to Education, No. 182.)

Gaumnitz, W. H. *Availability of Public-School Education in Rural Communities*. U. S. Office of Education, Bulletin, 1930, No. 34, p. 22.

schools they commonly must teach all the elementary grades. Moreover, instruction in many of the larger schools, especially in the upper grades, is departmentalized by subjects. In such schools teachers can specialize in 1 or 2 subjects and can thereby achieve a much higher degree of efficiency than is possible in the smaller schools. A school having two or more teachers on its staff also has a larger variety of ability to draw upon for instruction in such specialized fields as physical education, music, the practical arts, and the like. An enlarged staff is likely to include teachers who can give trained leadership to extracurricular and community activities, now recognized as vital services of the school, especially in rural communities. Such special services, if undertaken at all in the local district schools, must depend upon 1 or 2 teachers often untrained and overworked.

A number of studies²⁷ have presented comparative data showing the growth in curricular offerings which have come with the reorganization of small local schools. There is also much general testimony claiming for consolidation increased extracurricular and community services. It has, however, been difficult to tabulate such changes in school services by types of school organization. Considered solely on the basis of size of schools, data showing enlarged offerings and services in the larger schools are abundant. As was pointed out above, such data may at least by inference be accepted as a direct effect of the reorganization of small districts into larger ones.

Improvements in teaching staff.—Closely associated with the advantages shown in the matter of the quality and grade levels of educational opportunity provided is the fact that the larger schools are consistently found to employ a better-paid and a better-trained teaching staff. In 1930²⁸ a Nation-wide study revealed that teachers in 1-teacher schools received an average salary of \$788 per year; those in 2-teacher schools received \$829; and those in consolidated schools received \$1,037, annually.

²⁷ Roberts, Lyle E. Trends in the Development of Central Rural Schools in New York. Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1934.

²⁸ Gaumnitz, W. H. Status of Teachers and Principals Employed in the Rural Schools of the United States. Op. cit. p. 57.

It is only natural that such marked differences in annual income should be reflected in the training and the tenure of teachers employed. The same study showing comparative data on salaries also investigated the training and the teaching experience of the teachers of the several classes of rural schools. Teachers of 1-room schools were found to have an average training of 4 years and 1 month above high-school education; teachers of consolidated schools, an average of 5 years and 5 months beyond high school.²⁹ There is also definite evidence³⁰ to show that when a given number of small schools are reorganized into centralized schools the training status of the teachers employed tends to rise rapidly. Before reorganization 19 percent of the teachers employed in certain common-school districts of New York were college graduates and 27 percent more were normal-school graduates; after these districts had become constituent parts of central rural-school districts the children of these same communities were taught by teachers, 29 percent of whom were college graduates and 38 percent more were normal-school graduates. In other words when the schools operated as small independent units, 64 percent of the teachers employed in them had less preparation than 2 years in normal school; after reorganization only 33 percent of the teachers had as little training.

Experience data also show the teaching staff of the consolidated schools to be superior, if continuance in service is accepted as a mark of superiority. The Nation-wide study³¹ of the status of teachers and principals referred to above found the average teaching experience of 1-room teachers to be about 2 years and 6 months; in consolidated schools it was 3 years and 8 months.

Achievements in scholarship.—One of the questions properly and most persistently raised is whether or not consolidated and other large schools can show greater achievements in the scholarship of the children attending them. Educational literature is replete with evidence on this point in

²⁹ Ibid., p. 85.

³⁰ Gaumnitz, W. H. The Central Rural School District of New York. Doctor's thesis, George Washington University, 1935.

³¹ Ibid., p. 104.

favor of the consolidated and larger schools. Studies on this point have carefully controlled such contingent factors as the mental and chronological ages of the children compared, the variations in the length of the school term, and the like. Such factors are found to be of great importance. However, some of them, increases in term length for example, are in themselves outcomes of reorganization. The conclusion of the various studies³² is inescapable. The consolidated, and the larger schools in general, get better classroom results than the smaller schools.

EFFECTS OF THE REORGANIZATION OF LOCAL DISTRICTS UPON COSTS

Perhaps the most important consideration, especially so far as the progress of reorganizing small rural schools into large ones is concerned, is the question of comparative costs of consolidated and nonconsolidated schools. Considered from the standpoint of the number of pupils per teacher and the consequent per pupil cost of instruction the data available show clearly that the consolidated and other large schools cost less than 1- and 2-teacher schools. The available facts on this point were reviewed by two recent studies.³³ The data presented by these studies clearly show that the abandonment of small schools effects appreciable savings in the per pupil costs when the same amount and type of education is provided. But the studies point out that reduction in the per pupil or even in the total cost is not the major purpose of the reorganization of small school districts. The

³² Mousaw, C. J. A Study of Need and Opportunity in the Town of Crown Point, Essex County, N. Y. University of the State of New York. Bulletin No. 907, 1928.

Wilson, W. K., and Ashbaugh, E. J. Achievement in Rural and Consolidated Schools. Educational Research Bulletin, 8: 358-363, November 1929.

Covert, Timon. Educational Achievements of One-Teacher and Larger Rural Schools. U. S. Office of Education, Bulletin 1928, No. 15.

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Van Wagenan, M. J. Comparative Achievement in Rural, Town, and City Schools. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1929.

³³ Little, Harry A. Potential Economies in the Reorganization of Local Attendance Units. Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1934. (Contributions to Education, No. 628.)

Gaumnitz, W. H. Economies Through the Elimination of Very Small Schools. U. S. Office of Education, Bulletin, 1934, No. 3.

major purposes emphasized are: To create a more efficient unit of education, to provide better and more suitable educational opportunities, and to broaden the base of educational support.

Indeed, so generally are these the purposes actually sought in practice, that per teacher or per classroom costs are usually found to be higher in the reorganized schools. Economies from school consolidation find expression in the greater amount, the superior quality, and the enriched character of the education provided by the two types of schools rather than in the reduction of the tax bill. As was indicated by the quantitative and qualitative results of school reorganization reviewed by this presentation, the consolidated and the larger schools provide more and better educational opportunities. If these can be provided by the reorganized unit of administration at no additional costs, a condition frequently found⁸⁴ to obtain by students of this problem, then the superior results achieved must be regarded as a clear, economic gain. If the costs of maintaining the larger and better schools are increased but such increased costs are less than the increased value of the additional quality and quantity of education purchased, then the net result is also an economy. School districts considering reorganization must obviously weigh the costs entailed in the same way as the purchase of commodities is considered. If a better quality, or a larger amount of a given commodity is desired, the purchaser must be prepared to pay a higher price. He must look to longer service and greater usefulness for his economic differential.

⁸⁴ Larsen, E. L. Op. cit.

Compton, C. E. The County, a School Administration Unit. Minnesota Municipalities, 15: 181, 183, May 1930.

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APPENDIX A

LEGAL PRINCIPLES AND EXAMPLES OF LEGISLATIVE PRACTICE

(Supplementary to "Legal Principles and Practices Concerned with the Organization of Local School Units", pp. 43 to 60.)

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EXAMPLES OF PROCEDURE IN THE EXTERNAL REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL UNITS IN STATES HAVING THE COMMON SCHOOL DISTRICT TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

The New York plan.—In New York the law provides for the creation of central school districts formed by the consolidation of contiguous school districts. The State commissioner outlines the procedure under which such district may be formed. The regulations of the State commissioner require that the proposed district shall consist of a group of existing districts around a natural or logical center and that it shall include all the territory that may reasonably be included therein. A central district is required to include such resources, population and taxation, as will insure well-organized, graded instruction in both elementary and high-school subjects. The procedure in forming central districts is described as follows:¹

The districts desiring to organize a central rural district secure petitions outlining the boundaries of the proposed district, its bonded debts, taxable resources and other detailed facts. Either the electors in a majority of the districts to be included, or a majority of all electors in the proposed district must favor the reorganization. When the commissioner of education receives this petition he sends out an examiner from his office to check up on facts, meet the people, and report back to his office. If satisfied with the value of such a district he proceeds to issue an order laying out the district. A school meeting of electors residing in the proposed district is then held

¹ Engelhardt, Fred, and Zeigel, William H., Jr., et al. *District Organization and Secondary Education*. Bulletin, 1932, No. 17, monograph no. 8. U. S. Office of Education, pp. 163-164.

and a formal vote taken on the establishment of the central rural school. If favorable the meeting proceeds to elect a board of education of five members. This board has jurisdiction over all schools in the central rural district. It becomes, in fact, a rural consolidated district or, as it is called in New York State, a "central rural school."

*The Arkansas plan.*²—In 1927 the Arkansas Legislature enacted a law giving discretionary power to the county boards of education to consolidate school districts when petitioned to do so by a majority of the qualified electors residing in the territory affected. The county board of education was composed of five members elected by popular vote in the respective² counties. When the county superintendent and a group of interested citizens decided upon the territory to be included in a proposed district, petitions were drawn up describing the boundaries of the territory and circulated among the qualified electors. If a majority of the qualified electors residing in the territory affected signed the petition (present district lines were not considered in determining the majority) the county board of education gave notice of a hearing on the question, and if, in their judgment, the proposed district would adequately serve the educational interest of the children affected they issued an order creating the proposed district. If, in the judgment of the county board of education, the proposed district did not include the territory that should be included and was set up without giving due consideration to the educational welfare of children residing outside the proposed district, as well as inside, the county board could deny the petition and refuse to create the proposed district. When the proposed district was created by act of the county board of education, all the directors of the component districts remained in office until the next annual school election, at which time a new board of six directors was elected by the people.

The State board of education, in order to facilitate the creation of consolidated districts set up a division of surveys

² Dawson, Howard A., and Little, Harry A. *Financial and Administrative Needs of the Public Schools of Arkansas*, vol. I, 1930, State Department of Education, Little Rock, Ark.

in the State department of education. Through this division complete surveys were made of each of the 75 counties and county-wide plans for the formation of consolidated districts and for the location of consolidated schools were drawn up. Although there were no legal requirements that the plan proposed by the State department of education be adopted, the county boards of education, without exception, adopted county-wide plans of consolidation. The plans adopted were usually the ones worked out cooperatively by the State department of education and the county superintendent of schools. After the adoption of such county-wide plans the county boards of education, with few exceptions, did not permit any consolidations to be made that did not conform to such plans.

This plan of consolidating school districts together with the establishment of the State equalizing fund in 1929, which guaranteed each school district sufficient funds to maintain an 8-month school term on the basis of a uniform salary schedule and a uniform schedule for other costs, including transportation and debt service, greatly accelerated the consolidation of schools. Insofar as the number of children affected was concerned, about 60 percent of the proposed plans were put into operation in a period of 2 years.

The chief objection to this plan is that in order to have adequate administrative and supervisory services for the schools, a county system of administration had to be superimposed over the central districts. The State-wide survey showed that the State would be divided into 507 central districts and that not more than 73 administrative and supervisory units were needed. In all cases, however, the plans for the consolidated schools were such that they would fit into a county unit plan of administration. This plan has the advantage of forestalling the need for superconsolidation of districts if the larger unit of administration, such as the county, is adopted in the future.

*The Missouri plan.*³—Under the provisions of an act by the Missouri Legislature of 1931, the county superintendent

³ Missouri, Revised School Laws, 1931, State Superintendent of Public Schools, Jefferson City, Mo.

of schools of each county is required to call a meeting of the presidents and clerks or secretaries of all the various school districts in his county for the purpose of selecting a board of six members to be known as a "redistricting board." The members of the redistricting board are required to be residents of the county for which they serve and not more than one member can be chosen from the same municipal township. It is the duty of the redistricting board to formulate plans for enlarged and consolidated districts composed of contiguous territory in their county. The board has no authority to propose a district that has an aggregate assessed valuation of less than \$1,500,000 unless such district has an area of 50 square miles or more. The county superintendent of schools is given authority to authorize the board to propose the establishment of districts having a smaller area, but such action as to the forming of proposed enlarged districts of less than 50 square miles shall be subject to the approval of the State superintendent of schools. The redistricting boards working through their county superintendents are also authorized to propose districts consisting of territory in two or more counties. The county superintendent is required to file with the county clerk a map showing the boundary lines of the proposed school district and to cause to be published once, in at least one newspaper in each county, the numbers of such proposed school districts, together with the list of the existing school districts of which the proposed enlarged districts are to be composed.

Upon the receipt of a petition signed by not fewer than 50 legal voters residing in the proposed enlarged district and not fewer than 5 from each component district affected, the county superintendent is required to call a meeting of the electors in each component district for the purpose of accepting or rejecting the proposal for an enlarged district. Both printed and posted notice must be given to the electors of each district affected. In order to form the proposed district, a majority of the electors voting on the question at the meeting or election in each district, must approve. If any district fails to give a majority approval of the proposed district the proposal fails. The county superin-

tendent is then authorized to formulate another plan and meetings or elections are held upon the question of approving the proposal. The same proposal cannot be submitted to the districts twice within a period of 12 months.

The State department of education set up a division of surveys and, through trained workers in this division, made surveys and set up proposed plans for enlarged districts in 107 counties. These plans can be accepted or rejected by the redistricting boards. The purpose of making such plans was to lay off districts taking into consideration the children of the whole county and its surrounding territory, and to set up schools that conform to the minimum standards of school efficiency.*

There are three fundamental weaknesses in the Missouri plan:

1. The law forbids the redistricting boards to divide any present school district in setting up enlarged districts. This means that the best convenience of many children will be neglected. Wherever gerrymandering has been practiced in the formation of local districts, the inequalities and inconveniences produced by this system will, to some extent, be perpetuated. It is a very difficult matter in any county that is divided into numerous small districts to set up a convenient and economical plan that will not require the division of the territory of present districts.
2. The law does not permit the formation of the proposed districts without the approval of a majority of the electors in each district affected. Such a plan means that a very small minority of the people in a logical school area can defeat the purpose of an overwhelming majority. Such a plan is undemocratic and, of necessity, will result in denying many children adequate school advantages and in perpetuating a school situation that is unnecessarily

* Missouri, Eighty-third Report of Public Schools, 1932, State Superintendent of Public Schools, Jefferson City, Mo.

expensive to the taxpayers. But small progress is made in the consolidation of school districts except where such districts can be formed by the approval of a majority of the electors voting on the question *in the territory affected*. A majority should not be determined on the basis of present existing district lines.

3. Many of the proposed districts will have neither sufficient children nor financial resources to afford a complete arrangement for administrative and supervisory services under the control of the board of the district. In order to have such services it will be necessary to superimpose them through the county or some larger unit.

Examples of procedure in the internal reorganization of school units.—The problems of locating and organizing schools within the administrative unit is very much the same whether the administrative unit is created by direct action of the State legislature or by action of central boards created by the legislature; that is, the problems of the internal organization within a county school system or a centralized school district system are very much the same except the problem in the first case is likely to be concerned with a larger area and a larger number of pupils. The examples of procedure in the internal reorganization of school units, given below, are taken from States organized on the basis of the county as the administrative school unit. The procedure in organizing attendance units in centralized or consolidated school districts, such as those described for New York, Arkansas, or Missouri, would be very much the same. It happens, however, that in making plans for centralized school districts the plans for attendance units are usually made first, and the creation of the administrative units is an outcome of the plan for attendance units.

The Maryland plan.—In Maryland the county board of education has complete authority to consolidate schools and to locate such schools as, in its judgment, are necessary to provide for the education of the children in the county. The

following is the only provision of law in Maryland regarding these matters:

The county board of education shall consolidate schools whenever, in their judgment, it is practicable, and arrange, when possible without charge to the county, and shall pay, when necessary, for the transportation of pupils to and from such consolidated schools.⁵

The Louisiana plan.—In Louisiana the authority to consolidate schools and to locate schools rests in the parish board of education. Their authority in this respect is very much the same as the authority of the county board of education in Maryland. The provision of the law, however, is somewhat more specific than in the case of Maryland:

The parish school board shall have authority to establish such public schools as it may deem necessary to provide adequate school facilities for the children of the parish, and also trade schools, evening schools, schools for adults, schools and classes for exceptional children, and such other schools or classes as may be necessary to meet all special or exceptional requirements. Central or high schools may be established when necessary, but no high school shall be established without the sanction of the State department of education. Practical, industrial, and agricultural courses shall be fostered by the public-school officials, and the State board of education shall have authority to extend special financial aid to schools meeting required standards in such courses, with such funds as may be available for such purposes. The general fund of the parish school board shall consist of State current school fund, poll taxes, fines, bond forfeitures, police jury appropriations, proceeds from the sale of timber or income from oil or gas; in short, all school funds except those voted or appropriated for special purposes. No special advantage shall be given out of the general school funds for the high schools. Buildings, additions to buildings, repairs, supplies, sites, and equipment may be provided out of the general funds. Communities desiring better facilities and longer sessions than can be provided by a distribution of the general funds giving equal sessions to all schools shall secure same by voting special taxes or obtaining funds from other sources than the current or general funds.⁶

The North Carolina plan.—In North Carolina the power of the county board of education to consolidate and locate schools is very much the same as in Maryland and Louisiana, the chief distinction being that the county board of educa-

⁵ Maryland Public School Law, 1927. State department of education, Baltimore, Md. Ch. 4, sec. 50.

⁶ Louisiana, Public School Laws of. Thirteenth compilation, 1926. State department of education, Baton Rouge, La., p. 161, sec. 2 of art. 100, 1922.

tion is required by law to draw up a county-wide plan for the location of schools and the creation of local attendance districts, and, after such plan is drawn up, consolidations not in conformity with the plan cannot be made.

*School districts.*¹—The county board of education shall maintain in each county a convenient number of school districts. There may be one district for each elementary school or there may be two or more elementary schools in the same district. There may be one district for both the elementary and the high school, or a special high-school district may be created embracing two or more school districts. But no special high-school district shall be created unless provisions are made for conducting all the elementary schools and the high school in the proposed special high-school district in the same length of term. Whenever a special high-school district is created embracing two or more elementary schools, the committee, or board of trustees, of the district in which the high school is located shall have the same jurisdiction over the high school that it has over the elementary school.

There may be one district and one school committee for both races, or the races may have separate districts and separate school committees. The county board of education shall consult the conveniences and necessities of each race in fixing the boundary lines of school districts for each race, and it shall be the duty of the county board of education to record in a book kept for the purpose the location of each school district and the boundary lines of each.

County-wide plan of organization.—The county board of education shall create no new district, nor shall it divide or abolish a district, nor shall it consolidate districts or parts of districts, except in accordance with a county-wide plan of organization, as follows:

1. The county board of education shall present a diagram or map of the county showing the present location of each district, the position of each, the location of roads, streams, and other natural barriers, the number of children in each district, and the size and condition of each school building in each district. The county board of education shall then prepare a county-wide plan for the organization of all the schools of the county. This plan shall indicate the proposed changes to be made and how districts or parts of districts are proposed to be consolidated so as to work out a more advantageous school system for the entire county.
2. Before adopting the county-wide plan, the county board of education shall call a meeting of all the school committee-men and the boards of trustees and lay the proposed plan

¹"School districts", as used here, refers to attendance units or districts, not to administrative units, which in North Carolina are the counties.

REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL UNITS

before them for their advice and suggestions. After receiving the advice of the committeemen and trustees, the county board of education shall have authority to adopt a county-wide plan of organization, and no districts or parts of any district, including nonlocal tax, local tax, and special charter districts hereafter referred to in this article, shall be consolidated, or the boundary lines changed, unless the consolidation or the change of boundary lines is in accordance with the adopted county-wide plan of organization; *Provided*, That in the event the county board of education deems it wise to modify or change the adopted plan, the board shall notify the committeemen and interested patrons and give them a hearing if they desire to be heard before any changes shall be made.

The meeting required to be held before the adoption of the county-wide plan shall be called, and the notification required to be given of a contemplated modification or change of an adopted plan shall be given by publication once, at least 10 days before the meeting or the hearing, in a newspaper published at the county seat, of a notice addressed to those affected thereby, giving the hour and day and place of the meeting or the hearing and the purpose thereof, and by the mailing to or serving of like notices upon all committeemen and trustees. If no newspaper be published in the county seat, such notice shall be posted at the courthouse and at a public place in each township in the county 10 days prior to such meeting.

No adoption or amendment of such plan shall be held invalid or ineffectual because of any failure to comply with the requirement hereof as to the mailing or service of notice.

3. The county board of education shall have authority to execute the entire plan or any part of the same, but the county board of education shall have no authority to create a debt for the execution of any part of the proposed plan, unless authorized by law, and if the amount necessary to put into operation all or any part of said plan shall be greater than the amount that may reasonably be expected from the operating and equipment fund for this purpose, the amount shall be guaranteed by the districts affected by the execution of the plan; or if the districts do not guarantee the funds the county board of education shall lay the proposed plan before the county commissioners, together with the estimated amount necessary to put the same into operation, and if the amount necessary to carry out all or any part of the proposed plan shall be approved by the county commissioners, the county board of education shall then have the authority to organize the districts in accordance with the county-wide plan.

4. When the proposed county-wide plan is adopted the county board shall notify the committeemen and boards of trustees as to what part of the plan the board proposes to carry out first and in what order the other parts of the plan will be considered, and the preference shall be given to those districts in which the needs are greatest, if the funds for providing the equipment are made available.
5. In the event that any child, or children, of any district, or any part of a district, are without adequate school advantages and those advantages may be improved by transferring said child or children to a school or schools in adjoining districts, the county board shall have authority to make such a transfer. But this shall not empower the county board of education to abolish or divide a district unless such act shall be in harmony with the county-wide plan of organization. The temporary transfer of such child or children may be made until such time as the county-wide plan will provide more advantageously for them.⁵

⁵ North Carolina, Public School Law of, Codification of 1923, as Amended, and Subsequent Legislation Enacted by General Assemblies of Extra Session, 1924, and Regular Sessions of 1925, 1927, and 1929. State department of public instruction, Raleigh, N. C. Pp. 22-23, sec. 73-a, art. 6.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY FINDINGS REGARDING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE
UNITS

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Considerable constructive criticism is given in regard to school administrative units and their relation to school finance in practically all educational survey reports involving rural areas. Such criticism varies from mention of unsatisfactory situations to providing detailed plans for redistricting an entire State, county, or smaller area. The excerpts which follow are typical of the many findings to be found in survey reports published during the past 15 years.

In one of the older survey reports¹ we find a statement pointing out some deficiencies of small school districts:

The school district is, generally, too small, both in point of taxable wealth and school population, to make a good school possible. There is great inequality in the ability of districts to support schools. This inequality inevitably results in such reduction in expenditures in many hundreds of districts that strong schools are out of the question.

Quoting again from the same report,² a similar criticism appears, but the difference between the enlargement of administrative and taxing units and the consolidation of schools within districts is explained:

While the survey staff is quite prepared to recommend, as it does in the preceding paragraph, a larger emphasis on local initiative in the matter of consolidation, it is compelled by the facts which it has discovered to describe as one of the greatest evils of the New York State school system the small school district. The smallness of the districts leads to the most striking inequalities in taxation and to inefficiencies of administration so glaring that it believes the people of the State can be led to see the necessity of a change through a straightforward statement of the case,

¹ Rural School Survey of New York State, Administration and Supervision. Vol. II, p. 102. Ithaca, N. Y., 1923.

² *Ibid.*, p. 594-595.

Before reviewing the criticisms of the present small district it is important that the minds of readers be freed from one possible source of misunderstanding. An increase in the size of a school district is not to be confused at all with the consolidation of schools. A large school district may have several schools. This is the case in every city in the State. The city is a unit of taxation and a unit of administration, but it does not limit its school operations to a single building. What the rural people of New York State object to ordinarily is having the pupils from several school districts sent to one building. Consolidation of schools has been disposed of, so far as this survey is concerned, by the recommendation made in an earlier paragraph. Let consolidation come only at the option of the people, not under compulsion from the district superintendent or the State department. When, on the other hand, this survey states, as it must, that the small district is the bane of New York State education, and when it advocates, as it must, a reform in this matter, the argument is not at all about consolidation of schools but about a correction of difficulties in taxation and control which grow out of the small size and consequent inefficiency of the governing unit.

The most striking evidence that the small unit is a source of gross injustice appears in the fact that again and again common-school districts can be found which lie next to each other and have about the same number of pupils but are widely different in the value of their assessable property. For example, a district having a railroad or a factory will have a high valuation; a neighboring district made up entirely of farming land will have a very low valuation. These conditions will always continue so long as districts are as small as they are now. There ought to be a large enough unit drawn on in each case so that the advantages of the tax derived from the factory or the railroad will be distributed to all the people who contribute even indirectly to the life of the community. * * *

Another report of a survey made at about the same time as that of New York State recommends definitely for a county school administrative unit to replace the township district:³

1. The county unit of organization makes possible statesmanlike administration and businesslike management. Policies and methods of procedure may be evolved applicable to the entire county. The county may be divided, without regard to township or town lines, into an appropriate number of elementary-school, junior high-school, and senior high-school attendance districts; school grounds, school

³Public Education in Indiana. Report of the Indiana Education Survey Commission. Pp. 198-200. New York, N. Y., General Education Board.

buildings, and equipment for all schools may be standardized; a uniform salary schedule for all teachers may be adopted, based on length of preparation, length of service, and efficiency; uniform courses of study may be prescribed for all schools; etc. On the business side, the adoption of the county unit enables one person to buy all school supplies, to employ all janitors, to provide for the transportation of all school children, to keep all school accounts, to make all school reports, etc. For the sake of economy alone, the county system should displace the decentralized and extravagant township system.

2. The county system makes it possible to provide at a reasonable cost appropriate educational leadership in the person of a well-trained and experienced superintendent; also, and especially, adequate supervision, as there is enough administrative and supervisory work in a county system to warrant the employment not only of a competent county superintendent but also of a number of well-trained and experienced helping teachers.

3. The county system also makes it possible to offer uniform and accessible elementary- and high-school opportunities to all children. Thus the children of one section will not have to attend poorly maintained and antiquated one-teacher schools, while the children of another enjoy the advantages of modern consolidated schools.

4. A county system makes the support of the schools of the county a common obligation, each citizen of the county contributing according to his taxable wealth. Inequalities in financial sacrifice thus disappear.

Reports indicate greater educational values in large districts.—The report of the survey of education in Utah calls attention to good school administrative conditions in that State, as a result of large districts and as compared to systems in small-district States. Very little difference was found in the progress through school between pupils in rural territory and those in urban schools of the State. The report⁴ states:

The people of Utah are and have been over a period of years devoted to education. The community as a whole has developed under adverse conditions an educational system which, while not without weaknesses, has far more advanced and progressive features than the systems of many blider and richer States.

The State has advanced further than any other Western State in the organization of rural schools, with a view to business and professional efficiency and in the consolidation of small schools into larger and more efficient ones. The rural schools of Utah approach, at least, the standard of the city schools of the State.

⁴ Survey of Education in Utah. U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1926, No. 18. P. 8.

In contrast to the findings of the Utah survey report concerning the efficiency of schools, Cavins found⁵ a marked difference between pupils of small and large schools, indicating greater efficiency in the large schools and districts:

In respect to intelligence, the rural pupils are only 68 percent of the standard, whereas the city pupils are 78 percent. This would lead us to expect the city pupils to make a higher percent of achievement in the various school subjects. On the contrary, we find the opposite is true. This is one of the most surprising revelations contained in the entire investigation. We find the rural pupils are ahead in every single subject; 2 percent ahead in arithmetic, 9 percent ahead in rate of reading, 12 percent ahead in comprehension of reading, 10 percent ahead in speed of writing, 6 percent ahead in quality of writing, and 30 percent ahead in spelling.

Financial implications regarding large and small districts.—In a report of the Missouri school survey it is stated that the ability of districts in the State varies to a marked degree. For example,⁶ one district in Laclede County had a taxable valuation per child of \$640, as compared to \$108,537 valuation per child in another county. The survey commission pointed out the need for revision of revenue units on a more scientific basis and recommended the State as a unit for a large part of the public-school cost.

A later report of a school survey in Missouri recommends among other things:⁷

To eliminate all districts having a low assessed valuation. There are 1,504 districts that cannot raise \$400 per year with which to run their schools and 3,383 that cannot, by voting the constitutional limit, raise more than \$650 per year. Of course, the State in many instances appropriates special money to these poor districts, but even then many districts do not have enough money to maintain an efficient school. And in addition, the money contributed by the State is often wasted because of the small enrollment. According to the last annual report, 55 teachers for the school year 1927-28 received less than \$200, 106 received between \$200 and \$300, and 368 received from \$300 to \$400. During the same year 3,552, or almost one-half of the rural teachers, received less than \$600 for the year, which is less than \$50 per month for the 12 months. The proposed plan, with

⁵ School Survey of Type Counties of West Virginia. State Department of Schools, Charleston, W. Va., 1923. Pp. 60-61.

⁶ Facts Concerning Public Education in Missouri. Supplement to the seventy-fifth report of the public schools. . . . State superintendent of public schools, Jefferson City, Mo., 1924. P. 37.

⁷ Financing Education in Missouri. State superintendent of public schools, Jefferson City, Mo., 1929. P. 21.

sufficient State aid for the poor districts, will make it possible for all boards of education to have enough money to provide adequate educational facilities for the children.

The commission which surveyed schools in Florida reports:⁸

- An adequate and efficient school administration seeks to—
- Establish accepted and recognized sound financial policies and programs.
- Establish equitable distribution of tax burdens.
- Establish insurance of conformity to contractual obligations on the part of all persons dealing with the board of education.
- Enforce compliance with all legal requirements in the transaction of school business.
- Anticipate all financial needs for the future educational program as developed by the educational staff.
- Safeguard school funds against misuse or loss.
- Develop a procedure which will assure proper standardization and care of all school material, supplies, equipment, and buildings provided by public funds.
- Install a complete and satisfactory system of accounts in all its ramifications, and a program of publicity which portrays facts concerning the school system, and thereby establish confidence in the school system on the part of its teachers, the community, and the public at large.

The creation of special-tax school districts and the legislation consequent on this has produced a history of confused interpretations and varied organization types. The laws are not at all clear as to the relative authority of the three branches of the school organizations, namely: (a) County superintendent of public instruction, (b) county board of education, (c) trustees of special-tax school districts.

Recommendations for reorganization of public-school systems.—In its survey of the public schools of Arkansas, the research department of the State department of education made explicit recommendations for reorganizing the State's public schools and placing them on sound financial and educational basis. The recommendations are in part as follows:⁹

The study shows that in order best to meet the educational needs of the children it will be necessary to reduce the number of school

⁸ Educational Survey Commission. Official report. The commission, Tallahassee, Fla., 1929. P. 31.

⁹ Financial and Administrative Needs of the Public Schools of Arkansas. State superintendent of public instruction, Little Rock, Ark., 1930, vol. I, p. 90-91.

districts from approximately 4,200 that existed in 1929 to at least 307 consolidated districts and to reduce the number of schools from approximately 4,200 to at least 1,786. When budgets were worked out for each of the 307 proposed school districts it was found that 216 of them would not have sufficient funds to maintain elementary and high schools for an 8-month term on the basis of the equalization schedule now set up by the State board of education. A school program of this kind in these 216 centers would require annually \$1,982,000 in addition to their income from an 18 mill tax and the present State apportionment.

It was found that many of the proposed consolidated school districts could not erect the necessary school buildings without incurring bonded debt in excess of 7 percent of the assessed valuation of taxable property. The amount of indebtedness in excess of 7 percent necessary to build new buildings was found to be \$749,288. It is recommended that the State furnish this amount of money for school-building purposes. This should probably be done by a State bond issue.

Many school districts that have maintained the best schools are greatly embarrassed because of excessive bonded indebtedness contracted during the past few years. Relief from this situation must be had if many of these schools are to continue to operate. It is recommended that for any one of the proposed districts formed through the consolidation of districts, the State assume the obligation of meeting the annual payment of interest and principal on the bonded indebtedness of that district in excess of 3 percent of the assessed valuation of taxable property. It is also recommended that the State undertake to equalize the educational opportunities in those consolidated districts on the basis of 9-month school term in each central high school and at least an 8-month school term in each subsidiary school. The annual amount of State aid necessary to equalize on this basis, and to assume the responsibility for all indebtedness in excess of 3 percent of the assessed valuation, would be approximately \$2,559,000.

If these recommendations are carried out it would be necessary to enact laws rigidly restricting the power of school boards to contract indebtedness in the future. It will also be necessary to amend some of the present laws concerning consolidation so as to facilitate the consolidation of districts and to remove some of the uncertainties concerning consolidation. If this program is put into effect adequate standard school buildings can be provided for every child in the State and a 9-month school term can be maintained in each high-school center and at least an 8-month school term can be maintained in each elementary school center. There will be 255 consolidated districts that will receive aid on this basis. The other 52 centers have sufficient funds to maintain a school program considerably better than the one maintained in the other 255 centers.

The commission created by the legislature of the State of Mississippi in 1930 to study the government of that State and make recommendations for desirable changes reported concerning school administration as follows:¹⁰

The following changes in local school administration are recommended:

Statutory.—1. That the control of the county school fund be placed in the county school board and that it also be given the authority of fixing the salaries of teachers, retaining for the county superintendent full responsibility for the preparation and recommendation of such plans as are involved in the proper disposition of this fund in order that his professional leadership in such matters may have proper opportunity to function.

2. That the members of the county school board be elected by the members of the local boards as provided in the act of 1931 (Session Laws 1930, ch. 278, p. 611).

3. That in case the county school board is given the authority mentioned above (but only in that case) the members of all local boards be elected by the qualified voters of the district.

4. That the county superintendent of education be chosen and be removable by the county school board which should also have authority to fix his salary, one-half of which up to a fixed minimum shall be paid by the State. Residence within the county should not be a qualification for this position. The professional requirements for the position of county superintendent should be raised by the State board in order to secure a professionally trained person in the position. This is an example of the way in which a non-ex-officio State board removed from the influence of political considerations can assist in the promotion of the welfare of local schools. (It is believed that an amendment to sec. 204 of the constitution is not necessary to carry out this recommendation.)

5. That the county superintendent of education thus qualified and appointed should be given the authority to nominate the superintendent or principal teacher in all districts except separate districts. The measures recommended above will shift the center of gravity of the county superintendent's duties from administration to supervision and he cannot well perform these functions without cooperative relationships with the heads of each of the local schools. The higher qualifications required of this officer should also make him helpful to such boards in securing the best persons for these positions. In case he is not given the power to nominate as suggested he then should be given definite authority to disapprove nominations of the local boards until persons satisfactory to him are chosen.

¹⁰ Report on a survey of the organization and administration of State and county government in Mississippi. By Institute for Government Research of the Brookings Institution, Washington, D. C. (1932), pp. 846-847. The Research Commission of the State of Mississippi, Jackson, Miss.

6. That the special consolidated school districts which have the essential characteristics of an educational service unit, namely, an adequately equipped high school of 150 pupils or more, should be given greater independence than that provided for in the present law. Whenever the State board of education so authorizes, such a district should have the power to elect teachers, fix their pay, sign contracts, and issue pay certificates directly upon the county depository, but subject, for the time being at least, to their being countersigned by the county superintendent.

7. That a general law be passed placing local budgetary control and the tax rates of all school districts in any county, except the municipal separate districts, in the hands of the board of supervisors, subject to an appeal to the State board of education which, if it approves the appeal, should carry it to the department or commission of local government, the decision of which should be final.

8. That a law should be passed authorizing the transfer from the board of supervisors to the county school board of the budgetary control and the fixing of the tax rates of all school districts in the county, except the municipal separate districts and the special consolidated districts, when such transfer is approved by a vote of the majority of the qualified voters at an election duly called, on petition of a specified percentage of the qualified electors.

9. The same authority over budgets and tax rates should be conferred upon local boards in such special consolidated districts constituting the educational service unit defined above as are approved by the State board of education, whenever the transfer of this authority from the board of supervisors is authorized by a majority of the vote of the people.

Administrative.—That the State board of education in the distribution of the equalization fund treat any educational service unit as a distinct unit. In other words, it should not be considered as a part of the county but as an independent unit. The purpose of this proposal is to make it possible to try out the educational service unit as the local territorial unit for the administration of schools. It is believed that this cannot be fairly done unless such a procedure is followed.

A commission reporting on local government in New Jersey states that excessive cost of government is due in large part to the multiplicity of governmental units. The report states:¹¹

Excessive number of small local units.—It would be impossible to examine these facts, the number and variety of local governmental units, without bias and avoid the conclusion that there are far too

¹¹ The Organization, Functions, and Expenditures of Local Government in New Jersey. The commission to investigate county and municipal taxation and expenditures, Trenton, N. J., 1931. Report no. 1, pp. 174-175.

many such units. They are crowded one against another, and packed in layers one on top of another. Their boundary lines do not correspond with any natural or logical demarcation of the territory to be governed or the governmental services to be performed. They were created because the State lacked the proper appreciation of what this expansion meant, and because there was no carefully developed policy of dealing with certain local problems, the presence of which seemed to demand the creation of additional small municipalities. This was the line of least resistance, but it was also the weakest possible method of dealing with many problems of local administration. In consequence, some of these problems are yet to be solved, while the immense number of separate municipal corporations now constitutes one serious obstacle to a proper attack upon them.

The multiplicity of local units has resulted, naturally, in a great amount of overlap and duplication in the attempt to provide the people with governmental services.

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