

Organizing
Districts
for
Better Schools

**A Summary of School District Reorganization
Policies and Procedures**

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Foreword

The establishment of soundly organized local districts for administering the schools has long been a major problem in American education. Methods of dealing with this problem have varied greatly ranging from compulsory reorganization of districts by legislative decree to dependence upon highly permissive laws to be used or ignored as local people might desire.

For a number of years, however, there has been a widespread movement to make permissive-type reorganization methods more effective, especially through establishing state-wide programs for systematic development of redistricting proposals which, most commonly, must then be submitted to the local people concerned for final approval. This movement has also been accompanied with a growing emphasis upon other factors, besides the reorganization legislation itself, which influence the effectiveness of these newer type programs.

In order to determine factors which may facilitate the successful operation of such programs, and likewise factors that may hinder their success, a comprehensive study was made of 16 State programs. The results of that study have been reported in considerable detail in an Office of Education publication, *School District Reorganization Policies and Procedures*. (Special Series No. 5, 1957.)

This bulletin summarizes the major findings of that report and also includes all of one chapter, "Guideposts for Successful Reorganization Programs." It has been designed particularly for local school officials, planning groups, and lay citizens generally who may find a summarized version of the longer original report more practical for their needs.

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PART I

Part I

**A Digest of Sixteen State School
District Reorganization Programs**

Introduction

SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION is by no means a new or revolutionary idea, and neither is the need for it. School districts were being reorganized in some States more than 100 years ago and in many others well before 1900. It is something that has happened at least to some degree in every State, even those which today still have major redistricting problems.

Although district reorganization is not new, it has increased rapidly in recent years. Since 1945 the number of school districts in the Nation has been cut nearly in half—from about 103,000 in 1945-46 to approximately 54,000 at the beginning of the 1956-57 school year. During that 11-year period nearly three-fourths of the States reduced the number of their districts. While in some the amount of reduction was small, in others it was little short of phenomenal.

However, even though recent progress has been rapid, there still remain major unsolved problems. Information collected for use in the White House Conference on Education¹ showed the following conditions existing in 1954-55:

Less than one-eighth of all districts employed as many as 40 teachers; almost two-thirds employed 9 or fewer.

More than half of all districts operated elementary schools only, and only a fourth operated both elementary and secondary schools.

About one district in seven did not operate a school of any kind.

In 23 States more than half of the districts operated elementary schools only.

In 22 States more than half the districts employed 9 or fewer teachers.

Only 4 States had no districts employing fewer than 40 teachers.

The responsibility for improving district organization, keeping it adapted to changing needs and conditions, rests with State legislatures.

¹ *Statistical Survey of School District Organization in the United States, 1954-55.* Washington, D. C., October 1955. U. S. Government Printing Office.

Within constitutional limits, a legislature has complete power over district organization, including the power of abolishing existing districts and creating new ones in their place. Most State legislatures, however, have not reorganized districts by legislative degree, but instead have enacted laws prescribing procedures by which local people could take action. Many such laws have been highly ineffective in improving district organization.

A significant movement has been underway for some years in making permissive-type reorganization programs more effective. That movement was the concern of the study which is summarized in this bulletin.

State Programs Studied

SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION programs in 16 States were studied. These States and the year in which the program in each began were as follows:

California -----	1945	Missouri -----	1948
Colorado -----	1949	Nebraska -----	1949
Idaho -----	1947	New York -----	1925
Illinois -----	1945	North Dakota -----	1947
Iowa -----	1945	Pennsylvania -----	1947
Kansas -----	1945	South Dakota -----	1951
Michigan -----	1949	Washington -----	1941
Minnesota -----	1947	Wisconsin -----	1947

With two exceptions, the year shown for each State was the year when the reorganization legislation was enacted. New York's law was enacted in 1914, but it was not until 1925 that the reorganization program began. Pennsylvania's law was first enacted in 1937, but practically nothing was accomplished until it was amended in 1947.

The year shown for Michigan was the date when legislation was enacted providing for a program of redistricting studies, but other statutes had to be used in carrying out redistricting recommendations. The 1945 Kansas law was invalidated in 1947 by court decision, but reorganization activity continued afterward by means of other legislation.

The amount of reorganization accomplished varied greatly. By the 1954-55 school year, three States (Idaho, Illinois, and New York) had reduced the number of their districts by more than three-fourths; and three others (Kansas, Missouri, and Washington) had reduced their totals by more than half. There were four States (Iowa, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and South Dakota) where the reduction was less than 10 percent. The amount of reduction, however, does not actually show the degree to which redistricting problems were solved. For example, much of the reduction in Kansas involved small elementary districts only, with major problems involving small 12-grade districts remaining unsolved.

Other measures of progress give added insight into what was accomplished in several States. Wisconsin's program raised the total area of the State included in 12-grade districts from 15 to 48 percent. In Illinois, where in 1945 only 99 of the 11,955 districts operated both elementary and high schools, 65 percent of the State's area had been placed in 12-grade units. In New York, 95 percent of the State's area where the redistricting law applied had been included in reorganized 12-grade districts. Nearly all of Idaho's area had been included in reorganized districts, the great majority 12-grade units. In California the number of unified districts—units operating both elementary and secondary schools—was more than doubled.

Further progress has been made in a number of the 16 States after the data used in this study were collected.

Securing the Legislation

AN ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP was that of securing enactment of legislation for the reorganization programs. The experience of these 16 States indicates that this was no simple or easy undertaking.

Studies and Surveys Point the Way

In most instances the legislation grew out of, or was preceded by, State school surveys or studies emphasizing the need for it. Some of these were made under legislative authorization, but others were not.

In California, Idaho, and Washington the legislation was an outgrowth of comprehensive surveys of the public school system authorized by the legislature. In all three States the legislation enacted was essentially as recommended by their surveys.

In some States, notably Iowa and Kansas, the legislation grew out of studies made by school code commissions, legislative research councils, or comparable bodies authorized by the legislature.

In Illinois, Missouri, and New York significant studies were made by State leaders and organizations on their own initiative—in Illinois by the State farmer's organization; in Missouri by State school leaders, assisted by various State organizations and agencies; and in New York by a committee representing seven State organizations, with a foundation grant of funds secured by the State department of education.

In other States (notably Colorado, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) important studies emphasizing the need for reorganization were made by State leaders or committees representing various State groups.

Survey and Study Procedures

The methods used in making many of the studies and surveys were significant from the standpoint of developing readiness for a reorganization program.

- ◆ Some of the most fruitful studies were started through the initiative and foresight of a few leaders. In Missouri the initial decision came in a schoolmen's meeting at one of the teachers colleges, in New York during a State conference of school and community people.
- ◆ Many studies became possible only through widespread cooperation, including donation of services and funds. This was true of practically all which were not made under legislative authority. It also happened in California where the legislature failed to appropriate enough funds for making a comprehensive survey.
- ◆ Special efforts were commonly made to reach local leaders. In several States numerous public hearings and meetings were held to inform local people about the study and to get their views on school problems and needs.
- ◆ After the study was completed, special efforts were often made to inform local people about the findings and recommendations. Study reports were widely distributed. In some States brief popularized versions of the longer report were prepared for this purpose. Publicity materials were prepared and distributed to the State press, including weekly newspapers in smaller centers.

Support by State Organizations

The activities of a number of State organizations, as already indicated in part, were particularly significant. State education associations were quite active, in a number of instances exercising strong leadership.

Several State school boards associations were active supporters, notably in Colorado, Illinois, and Washington. Strong support by State farm organizations appeared to be an influential factor in some States, particularly in Illinois, Missouri, and New York.

Teamwork among State organizations advocating enactment of needed legislation was prominently evident in a number of States.

Developing Legislative Proposals

Of prime importance was the drafting of the proposed reorganization legislation. There were indications that more study was given to this in some States than in others.

The experience of a good many States indicates that it may be easier in the long run to strive for enactment of a sound law than to get a weak one enacted and then try to strengthen it later. Although some laws were later strengthened by amendments, in most instances it has not been easy to do.

Major Features of the Legislation

DESPITE IMPORTANT FEATURES held in common by most of them, the reorganization laws enacted in the 16 States varied significantly. Many of the laws were later amended, some beneficially, but others were seriously impaired.

All the States had other older redistricting laws, but these are not dealt with here except in an incidental way.

Applicability of the Legislation

All the States had major redistricting problems which made a comprehensive law highly desirable. In most of them the legislation that was enacted did not contain restrictions on its applicability; that is, it could be used wherever reorganization might be needed.

New Types or Classes of School Districts Created

Several of the laws created new types or classes of districts to be established under their provisions. In Idaho an entire new classification of districts was created, but in other States (notably in Illinois, Iowa, New York, and South Dakota) only one new type of district was created.

State Administrative Provisions

In all States the legislation placed at least some administrative responsibility for conducting the reorganization programs at the State level, but the nature and amount of that responsibility varied greatly.

State Administrative Organization.—The State agencies to which the State-level administrative responsibility was assigned were as follows:

1. The State board of education or the chief State school officer. This was the most common pattern.
2. A special State advisory commission or committee, created by the legislation, with its functions and activities channeled through the State department of education. This plan was used in Illinois, Minnesota, and Nebraska.
3. A special State commission or committee created by the legislation to function independently of the State department of education, although in all cases the membership included either the chief State school officer or a State board of education member. California, Idaho, and Washington used this plan for 4 years, then changed to the first one shown above. North Dakota also used it for 2 years.

Nature of State Administrative Responsibilities.—The most important responsibilities included the following:

1. *Development of principles, policies, and procedures for conducting the programs.*—The laws in 10 States contained provisions of this general nature, but some were much more comprehensive than others.
 2. *Furnishing professional personnel to assist in conducting the programs.*—There were also 10 States where this was specified. In the other States, however, professional assistance was provided but under provisions of other legislation.
 3. *Examination of reorganization plans or proposals developed by county or comparable planning agencies, recommending changes or modifications where desirable.*—This was a responsibility in all States except Kansas.
 4. *Approval or disapproval of reorganization plans or proposals.*—This was a key provision, the importance of which would be difficult to overemphasize. In 8 States the law at first required that all proposals for new districts had to be approved by the State administrative agency before being submitted to the voters for ratification. In 2 of the 8 States this provision was later repealed, in each instance seriously impairing the effectiveness of their programs.
- There were also other responsibilities worthy of mention, including the following: Appointment of county reorganization committees where the local appointive agencies failed to do so (1 States); appointment of new county committees where those earlier appointed failed to function (3 States); and granting county committees additional time to complete their studies and plans. In half the States the legislation contained a provision authorizing the State agency to expend or approve the distribution of funds allocated for the programs.

County Planning Agencies

In all the States except New York the legislation provided for county or comparable local agencies to make studies and develop reorganization plans. This was a key feature for securing systematic statewide planning on a decentralized basis, but some laws were not effective in securing it.

Structure and Organization for Planning.—Iowa's and Pennsylvania's laws made county boards of education responsible for making reorganization studies and plans. In the remaining 13 States the legislation provided that special planning agencies were to be created. Except in California from 1945 to 1949 and in Michigan, these had to be county agencies. They bore various titles, most commonly "county committees," (which will be used here in referring to all of them).

In 9 States the formation of county committees was mandatory. But in Illinois, Minnesota, and South Dakota local district school boards were empowered to decide whether committees would be formed in their counties; Michigan's law made it optional also. The optional procedure worked well in Illinois, but was a serious handicap in the other 3 States because in many counties committees were not established.

Most laws when first enacted specified the length of time committees were to remain in existence, ranging from 3 to 6 years. But in 4 States no time limits were prescribed, and later several other States either made their committees continuing bodies or extended their terms by a fixed amount.

Most laws specified a uniform size for all committees within the State—5, 6, 7, or 9 members. Others permitted a choice of size within prescribed limits. Some form of rural-urban representation was commonly required.

In all except three States, committee members were to be selected by local school boards, and in most States only lay citizens could be chosen. In most States committee members were to serve without pay, but were to be reimbursed for necessary expenses. Everywhere except Michigan the legislation designated the county superintendent to serve as committee secretary.

Reorganization Planning Responsibilities.—There was great variation in the reorganization planning requirements placed upon county committees, including county boards of education in Iowa and Pennsylvania.

1. *Making studies of school conditions and preparing a comprehensive reorganization plan for the county.*—In a few States the development of plans was entirely optional with committees, and little hap-

pened. But in most States this was a specific requirement of committees—Missouri's law, for example, stated that: "shall make, or cause to be made and completed a comprehensive study of each school district of the county and prepare a plan of reorganization."

2. *Completion of plans within a specified period.*—Most laws required that studies and plans had to be completed and a report submitted to the State agency within prescribed time limits, except in some instances the State agency could grant an extension where necessary. The time limits ranged from 6 months to 2 years. Where limits were shortest, experience showed that more time would have been desirable, even though widespread planning was secured.

Although stating that plans were to be developed some laws set no time limit for their completion. In these States many committees failed to develop comprehensive plans for their counties.

3. *Development of Partial County Plans.*—In several States requiring comprehensive plans, committees could prepare plans for only a portion of the county and, if approved by the State agency, could submit them for adoption by the voters.

4. *Cooperation with committees in adjoining counties.*—Most laws provided for development of reorganization proposals which included territory in more than one county. Such proposals were to be developed cooperatively by the committees concerned.

5. *Factors to be considered in making studies and plans.*—Some laws listed in considerable detail the factors that committees were to consider. Others specified them in general terms, or goals to be attained, such as: equalizing educational opportunities, securing more efficient and economical administration of schools, and equalizing local burdens of school support.

6. *Elements to be included in reorganization plans or proposals.*—Some laws required that the written reports of plans include maps and descriptions of existing and proposed new districts, and a statement of the reasons for the new districts proposed; other laws were less specific in this respect.

In nine States the legislation either required or permitted recommendations regarding matters related to the plan or proposal. These included: (a) Recommendations concerning school building utilization and needs; (b) pupil transportation requirements; (c) adjustment of assets and liabilities of component districts; (d) disposition of bonded indebtedness of component districts; and (e) division of proposed new districts into areas for school board representation.

7. *Public hearings.*—Most laws required the county committee to hold at least one public hearing on each proposed new district before the proposal was submitted to the State administrative agency.

8. *Subsequent planning where proposals were rejected by the*

voters.—In 5 States if the voters refused to adopt a proposed plan, the committee was required to continue its efforts to develop another; in 4 States this was optional. The calling of a second election was optional in 9 States, but was required in Missouri.

Ratifying Reorganization Proposals

Mandatory Action.—In Kansas and Wisconsin reorganized districts were to be established directly by order of the county committee. However, Wisconsin's law was amended in 1949 making a county committee's order subject to a referendum upon petition by local people, or a committee could itself call an election if it chose to do so.

Voting Procedures.—In all the States except Kansas and Wisconsin a referendum was required for adoption of proposed new districts. Widely different voting procedures were prescribed; and in most States they were changed one or more times, in several instances with highly unfavorable results for continued progress.

In 4 States the original legislation required a majority of the total votes cast in the election for adopting a proposal—this procedure proved highly effective. In 7 States a single majority vote was required for some proposals but two majorities for others, usually if a proposal included an incorporated center—this procedure also was very effective in some States. Several States, however, later adopted more cumbersome methods, making further progress extremely difficult.

Six States at one time or another had provisions making each component district in a proposal a separate voting unit, in most instances requiring a favorable majority vote in each. Little reorganization was accomplished by this ratification procedure.

Use of Other Redistricting Laws

In most States the older redistricting laws still in effect could be used independently of the reorganization laws summarized here. In some States, notably Minnesota and Wisconsin, the older laws were used extensively after the reorganization programs began. In Pennsylvania widespread use was made of an old law permitting formation of joint school systems with each component district retaining its corporate identity. In Michigan other legislation had to be used because the reorganization planning law contained no procedures for ratifying proposed new districts.

However, in a few States the reorganization legislation placed restrictions on the use of other redistricting laws, making their use subject to approval by county committees and in two States by the State agency as well. Two of these States later repealed all of their older redistricting laws.

State Leadership and Services

A SIGNIFICANT FEATURE of the reorganization programs was the services of the State administrative agencies and their professional staffs. There was abundant evidence that State leadership, coordination, guidance, and technical assistance were indispensable to the successful operation of such programs.

Staffing the Programs

Size of Staff.—In a few States funds were not available for employing new personnel to assist with the programs during their early stages, but in most States full-time professional assistance was provided from the beginning.

Some States never had more than one full-time professional staff member; others started out with one, but added a second later on. Several States had three or more staff members from the beginning.

Staff Size in Relation to Work Load.—There was no direct relationship between staff size and the amount of work to be done. Some of the States with the largest number of counties had the smallest staffs. There seems little doubt that some programs were understaffed. In fact, in some of the larger staffed programs it was reported that additional professional personnel would have been advantageous, particularly during the intensive planning stages.

In several States other staff members in the State department of education rendered important services in addition to their regular duties.

Staff Assignment Methods.—In most larger staffed programs, field work was assigned on a statewide basis with each member going wherever his services were needed. In two States, however, each staff member was assigned to a particular region.

Helping Counties Get Started

Assistance in Establishing Committees.—In some States extensive efforts were made to insure that the officials responsible for establishing county committees were fully informed before they took action. Informational materials were prepared and distributed, statewide or regional meetings were held, and State staff members attended county meetings for setting up committees.

Orienting County Committees.—In several States statewide or regional conferences were held for county committees shortly after they were organized to explain the program and their responsibilities in it. Such procedures filled an important need in helping committees get started.

Study and Planning Materials

Manuals or Guides.—In most instances State staff members prepared a manual or procedural guide to aid county committees in making studies and developing reorganization plans. In other States mimeographed materials dealing with various aspects of committee's responsibilities were distributed from time to time.

Other Informational Materials.—Various other kinds of informational materials were prepared for county committees and for local people in many States. These materials included the following: bulletins supplementing certain features of the manuals, bulletins or leaflets emphasizing the educational advantages of soundly organized districts, newsletters dealing with various problems and issues, periodic progress reports, and publicity materials.

Standards for New Districts

Development and Purposes.—In nearly all States standards of some kind for reorganized districts were developed by the State administrative agency. Their development indicated the State agency's position regarding new districts to be established and at the same time provided a yardstick for county committees in drawing up their plans. Where the State agency was empowered to approve county plans, the standards could be enforced but elsewhere they could only be suggestive.

Types of Standards.—In some States guiding principles or general criteria were developed, but in most States standards were more specific. The most common feature of all of them, however, was the emphasis given to 12-grade, or unified districts. Another feature, nearly as common, stressed sociological factors or formation of natural community-type districts.

In over half the States standards of size were specified for elementary or secondary schools or both. Recommended maximum time limits for transporting pupils were stated in several instances. In a few States standards of size for new school districts were also stated in terms of pupil enrollment.

Staff Field Services

Wide Range of Services.—One of the striking features of many programs, particularly those having larger State staffs, was the wide range of field services provided, covering practically every aspect of the programs from the time committees were first organized until new districts were established.

Stimulating Planning Activities.—A particularly important leadership service was the assistance given to committees which were reluctant to begin planning. In several States it was reported that by carefully helping such committees take an objective look at their schools and by helping them get a better understanding of what good school districts were like, they often became active in drawing up plans. But this often called for maintaining contacts with committees over a period of time.

Consultative Technical Services.—Of key importance were the consultative services that were provided on request by county committees on various technical matters: the interpretation of legal problems, State school regulations and policies, analysis and interpretation of information about school conditions, analysis of tentative plans with regard to their meeting State standards or criteria, and public relations techniques.

Another highly important service in many States was the assistance given in use of procedures which had proven successful elsewhere in the State.

Assistance in Holding Public Hearings.—In many States committees depended heavily upon the State staff for assistance in holding formal public hearings, and also in other meetings held to test public reaction toward proposals under consideration. Their role in this was that of expert consultants to be called upon as needed.

Contacts With Local Groups.—Still another activity, often time-consuming because of the number of requests, was attending meetings of various local groups and organizations interested in the program. In many States local school boards sometimes requested a State staff member to meet with them to discuss district problems, and many such meetings eventually resulted in the establishment of new districts.

Reviewing and Approving Plans

Values of Approval Powers.—The powers of the State agency to approve or to disapprove plans had an important effect on sound planning. This was a means of preventing unsound plans being brought to a vote. It also encouraged development of plans which met State standards.

Assistance of State Staff Members.—Especially helpful to the State agency in evaluating plans was the assistance given by State staff members. In many instances the staff was able to furnish information about a proposed plan that the written report did not contain.

Activities of Other State Agencies and Organizations

Organizational Support.—State organizations that were active in helping secure enactment of reorganization legislation nearly always continued their support after the program began operating. Several State teachers associations, school board associations, and a few State farm organizations were particularly active: scheduling reorganization talks on their meeting programs, giving much publicity in their periodicals, and in some instances even preparing special bulletins or pamphlets.

College and University Support.—Outstanding assistance was given in several instances by college and university staff members. Among services they provided were the following: Organizing and conducting conferences on reorganization; preparation of bulletins and other materials, including in one State a motion picture; consultative services to committees; and participation in local meetings.

Local Processes and Procedures

IN ALL of the States the focal point of reorganization activity was at the local level, the term "local" being used here to include counties as well as the communities within them.

Conditions for Getting Started

Readiness to Begin.—There appeared to be a much higher degree of readiness locally for a reorganization program in some States than in others. It seemed evident that the background of events and activities leading to the enactment of the legislation was influential in this.

Establishing Committees.—Selecting the members to serve on committees was an important responsibility, influencing subsequent study and planning activities. There was evidence that the problem of securing effective committees was greater in some States than in others. This was apparent among the States where committee members were selected by school boards, so it could not be attributed to differences in the legal procedures involved.

Approaches Toward Planning Responsibilities

Importance of Openmindedness.—There was abundant evidence that willingness to serve on a committee was not equivalent to willingness to engage in reorganization planning activities. But of great importance everywhere was the degree to which committees came to understand, and likewise became willing to accept, the purposes of the reorganization program and their responsibilities in it. This proved to be essentially an educational process in which an openminded, objective point of view was basic.

Hasty Decisions.—There was a marked tendency among some committees to rush, to decide matters one way or another and get the job over with. This was evidenced in different ways.

In some States were committees which evidently decided very early to do nothing, for they met a few times and became dormant. In striking contrast were many in other States that started out very rapidly, hastily drawing up plans within a few months.

Cautious Movers.—Many committees which became effective started out cautiously. Some were skeptical about the program. Others did not fully see the need for it. Given time and encouragement without pressure, they became productive.

Making Objective Studies.—There was abundant evidence that an objective study of school conditions influenced almost every other aspect of a committee's work. Many were never fully convinced of the need for reorganization until studies were made. Not only that, but a careful study was an essential part of sound planning.

Learning About Good School Districts.—Many committees had hazy ideas about good school districts at first. The importance of getting a clear understanding was abundantly evident. As expressed by one State reorganization director: The more a committee studied the qualities of good school districts, the greater was the likelihood it would come up with a sound plan.

Study and Planning Methods

Collecting Information.—In most instances county superintendents assembled the statistical information used by committees in their studies. In this, the forms commonly included in State manuals were helpful for tabulating and analyzing information.

The fact that many county superintendents did not have a background of training and experience for making analytical studies was in many instances a handicap. Moreover, in most States sufficient funds were not made available to employ someone qualified to make a thorough study.

Studies by Other Persons or Agencies.—In some instances, however, studies or surveys were made by college staff members or graduate students, but in none of the States was it a common practice.

Firsthand Study.—There were many indications of the prime importance of committee members themselves getting firsthand information about school conditions. Some committees visited the schools to get a better understanding of conditions.

Study and Planning by Subcommittees.—In some States a subcommittee approach was used. This was very commonly used by com-

munity study groups, to be mentioned later; but it was also used by county committees.

In Idaho many county committees set up special subcommittees, each headed by a county committee member, but with the remainder of the membership made up of representative lay and school people in the county. Each subcommittee was assigned a particular aspect of the total job, such as pupil transportation or school buildings. In Michigan where committees were much larger the same principle was used, with the committee membership divided into subgroups.

In Washington a different subcommittee procedure was often used. Each area under consideration for reorganization was assigned to the county committee members most familiar with the situation. The subcommittee then prepared the plan and presented it to the full committee. This method was similar to the procedure prescribed by several State laws where a proposal under consideration included territory in more than one county.

Liaison with Local School Boards.—In making studies and developing plans committees as a rule kept in close touch with local school boards, keeping them informed regarding proposals under consideration and getting their reactions. This was a valuable technique in allaying unfounded fears of arbitrary action on the committee's part.

Considering Requests Made by Local People.—In at least two States (Washington and Idaho) it was not uncommon during the first year or two for local people to request the county committee to prepare a plan for their locality. Many such requests were for reorganizations fully measuring up to State standards. This kind of action was by no means typical everywhere in either State, or in other States.

Testing Public Reaction.—A technique used by many committees was to test public reaction toward proposals under consideration. This proved to be a highly desirable procedure when the most advantageous time was chosen to use it. But, sometimes it was done too early, before the committee itself clearly saw what should be proposed. Oversensitivity to public opinion, especially when it was not fully informed, was often hazardous to sound planning.

Preparing Written Reports of Plans or Proposals.—County superintendents usually prepared the written reports, but sometimes committee members did much of the work. Where State staffs were larger, a staff member usually assisted.

Reports varied greatly—in length, format, thoroughness, and with respect to practically every other feature of their content. Although there were many exceptions, it appeared that more often existing school conditions were described more thoroughly and in greater detail than were the new districts proposed.

Arousing Local Interest and Support

Public Hearings and Meetings.—Many committees far exceeded minimum legal requirements for public hearings, particularly in States where only one or two were required for each reorganization proposal.

Public meetings were often held during various planning stages—quite early to explain the reorganization program and its purposes, later on to discuss the plans being considered, and still later after the plans were drawn up.

In State after State it was reported that small-group meetings were more effective than the large mass-meeting type of hearing. This was especially true for people living in the open country. However, large meetings when carefully planned were helpful.

Whether large or small, experience showed that effective hearings or meetings required careful preparation and also showed the importance of the committee member serving as chairman having a thorough knowledge of the proposal and its merits.

Bulletins on Proposed Plans.—In some instances an informational bulletin was prepared for each new district proposed in the county. Sometimes this was done by a subcommittee or by a group of citizens in each locality. Copies were widely distributed in the locality.

Community study committees, referred to later, commonly prepared informational bulletins describing their proposals and distributed them to local citizens.

Visiting Reorganized District Schools.—Reorganized districts already established and operating were useful in stimulating interest in other localities. Visiting reorganized district schools by local leaders in communities considering reorganization was a common procedure in several States. Often the visits were arranged by the State staff.

Local Newspaper Publicity.—Generally speaking much publicity was carried in the local papers. Where it was favorable or at least objective, as was most often the case, the general feeling was that it had been helpful.

Activities of Community Organizations.—There was a general tendency for community organizations to take no official stand on reorganization, although in many instances their leaders or some of the members were active supporters. Many organizations made special efforts to keep their members informed about the reorganization program.

Reaching the Local Leadership.—This appeared to be one of the distinguishing characteristics of successful reorganization activity. Identifying the local leadership was highly important. Many leaders

did not volunteer their support, but became active only when the program was explained to them and their help was requested.

Informal Contacts.—The most effective leadership activities appeared to be of a quiet informal nature. Personal contacts for purposes of explaining a reorganization proposal seemed to be the most commonly used and effective technique of local leaders.

Community Study Committees

Situations in Which They Functioned.—In New York, where the legislation does not provide for county committees or comparable planning agencies, the technique of organizing community study committees has long been used, and has been the standard practice since the early 1940's. The same technique was also used during the early part of Washington's program.

In other States, particularly Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, its use has become increasingly common in recent years. In all instances, these have been extra-legal groups in the sense that the reorganization laws do not provide for their establishment.

More detailed information about these local planning groups may be found in another publication.¹

Ratification Practices

Some County Plans Not Acted Upon.—In several States not all county plans were acted upon. This happened to a much greater extent in some States than in others. In a few States ratification action was not required by the law.

Scheduling Elections.—There was considerable evidence that greater flexibility should have been allowed in some States between completion of plans and bringing them to a vote. In some, the legal limits were too short, and sometimes elections had to be held before the people were ready. In others the elections could be postponed so long that a loss of public interest in the plan resulted.

Many People Failed to Vote.—Information was obtained on the votes cast in over 350 successful reorganization elections in 4 States. Evidence was found of some elections where the total number of votes cast was less than one-fourth the number of pupils in the new district that was established, and in over half the elections the total vote was

¹ C. O. Fitzwater and Winston L. Roesch, *Local Planning for Better School Districts*. Pamphlet No. 121. U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. 1957.

smaller than the pupil enrollment. In general, there was an inverse relationship between district enrollment and number of votes cast—in other words, smaller reorganizations generally attracted a relatively heavier vote than those that were larger, and this tendency was evident in all 4 States.

In two of the States the smaller reorganizations generally attracted heavier majorities of favorable votes, but this was not nearly so evident in the other two.

Relationships of School Finance to the Reorganization Programs

THERE WAS WIDESPREAD evidence that school finance and district reorganization were interrelated, indicating (1) that a sound and equitable school finance system required school districts which were capable of making effective use of school funds, and (2) that the establishment of such districts could either be facilitated or hindered by the school finance system.

Variations in Local Conditions

High Costs in Small Schools.—Studies made in most of the States either before or during their reorganization programs showed that small schools were much more expensive to operate than those of larger size.

Many small schools were in districts with a high per pupil taxable wealth; others were in low-wealth districts.

Wide Variations in Financial Ability.—On a statewide basis these variations were large, in some cases extremely so. Also, wide differences within localities were common. Small districts, especially those in the better farming areas, often had a higher per pupil taxable wealth than the village or city districts they surrounded.

Wide Variations in Financial Effort Required.—One-teacher districts, particularly in the Midwest, commonly had much lower tax rates than districts operating high schools, in some States only a third as high on the average. Districts that did not operate a school usually enjoyed a stronger financial advantage as a result of their nonoperating status.

Financial Purposes in Reorganization

Purposes Stated or Implicit in the Reorganization Laws.—The laws in over half the States specifically expressed finance purposes or goals to be achieved through reorganization, commonly including (1) more efficient and economical administration of the schools; and (2) a more equitable distribution of school revenues, or equalizing the burdens of school support. Even where not specifically stated, such goals were implicit in the legislation.

Improved Conditions To Be Gained.—Reorganization, resulting in adequately sized 12-grade districts, also improved conditions for financing the schools in a number of ways:

- ◆ By eliminating inequalities *within* communities in financial efforts for school support
- ◆ By making all of a community's property tax wealth available for supporting the total school program
- ◆ By eliminating duplication in fiscal matters and likewise eliminating competition for tax rate increases and issuance of bonds in communities having overlapping, separately organized elementary and high school districts
- ◆ By providing the necessary flexibility to plan and adapt the school finance program in terms of the total school program
- ◆ *Most important of all*, by providing a situation for effective and economical use of school tax dollars—both community tax dollars and State school funds. In other words, reorganization was the means of getting more and better education per tax dollar expended—a fact which many reorganization leaders strongly emphasized.

Sources of School Financial Support

Local Districts.—At the time their programs began more than half the total school revenue was raised by the local districts in all except 3 States; and in 5 States more than 80 percent came from the local districts. By the 1953-54 school year the local district share was still above 50 percent in all except 4 States; at that time the national average was 54.7 percent.

County School Funds.—County school revenues accounted for over a tenth of the total in 2 States at the beginning. In 3 other States large increases were later made, to more than a fifth by 1953-54. None of these 3 States had a large amount of reorganization.

Amount of State School Support.—At the beginning the proportion of school revenues from State sources ranged from 8.8 percent in one State to 54.2 percent in another, and was below 25 percent in 9 of the 16 States.

In most instances the proportion of school support provided by the State did not change greatly during their reorganization programs. Nine States had percentage-wise increases, in most cases rather small; but 6 States had decreases. In many of the States where the percentage changed but little, substantial increases in dollar amounts of State aid had been made but were largely or wholly offset by rising school costs. In 1953-54 only 4 States had percentages above the national average.

In general, there was little relation between percentage of school support provided by the State and the amount of reorganization accomplished. There was no evidence that larger proportions of State aid, in itself and without regard to how it was apportioned, paved the way for a successful reorganization program.

Improving Apportionment Methods

Few Plans Favorable at First.—Up to the time of enacting reorganization legislation, very few of the States had a system of State aid for schools which on the whole provided more than limited encouragement for organizing larger districts. Most State aid programs not only lacked positive features providing incentives for reorganization, but they also had features which would exert a negative influence.

Changes Were Made.—A number of States made changes in their State aid plans at the time they enacted reorganization legislation, creating a more favorable situation. In several States these changes were incorporated in the reorganization law.

Many States, including some of those just referred to, made changes during the course of their programs. Some States with quite unfavorable State aid plans at first improved them greatly for encouraging establishment of soundly organized districts.

Not all changes resulted in adding strong incentives for reorganization, however. Among the State aid plans that were improved the least, or not at all, were many of those which at the beginning were least favorable for facilitating reorganization.

General Approaches.—Most changes that were made in apportionment methods resulting in improving the conditions for reorganization were of a positive nature—that is, they provided additional State funds under specified conditions. A few changes, however, were

of a penalizing nature—that is, State funds which previously had been provided to small districts were no longer provided.

With respect to the changes of a positive nature, two general approaches were used so far as providing incentives for reorganization was concerned:

1. Most commonly, the additional State support was provided to all districts that could qualify for it—both districts already in existence and those established later.

2. Some States, however, provided additional State money only to the reorganized districts that could qualify for it.

Some States used both approaches, providing some funds for reorganized districts only but also providing other funds, which served as reorganization incentives, to all districts able to qualify.

State Aid Apportionment Methods

Flat Grants for General School Purposes.—In most States the major portion of all State aid was distributed to local districts for general school purposes as flat grants—that is, it was allocated without regard to local district financial ability. This method of apportionment was generally considered to have a retarding effect on reorganization, the reason being that inadequate districts were treated as liberally as those which were adequate, and in some cases much more liberally.

Equalization Aid.—All except two of the States apportioned at least some State aid on an equalization basis—that is, the method of allocation took into account local district financial ability. Where equalization aid was sufficient to compensate largely for differences in financial ability, it was considered a favorable factor. The lack of sufficient equalization aid was considered a retarding influence on reorganization in many States.

Apportionments to Small Schools.—In a number of States small school districts were provided State funds on a more liberal basis because of the higher per pupil costs in such districts. In every instance where this was done it was reported to be a retarding factor in reorganization, in several instances strongly so.

In contrast, Idaho and Illinois provided no State aid to school districts having enrollments below a specified size. In both States this penalizing feature facilitated reorganization.

Rewarding Soundly Organized Districts.—Illinois also provided another incentive for reorganization by setting the tax rates required for receiving State aid in favor of 12-grade districts with the result

that when a community formed a 12-grade district it received additional State aid equivalent to 3 mills on its assessed valuation. In Wisconsin all school districts meeting specified standards, measured in terms of scope and quality of school program, were allocated more liberal amounts of State aid.

Additional General Purpose State Aid for Reorganized Districts Only.—California allowed new unified districts a 5 percent increase in their foundation programs, the increase being reduced by a fifth annually over a 5-year period. This was not reported as being a strongly encouraging factor.

Pennsylvania provided additional equalization aid to joint school systems; even more liberal amounts were allowed reorganized districts. (Joint school systems were formed directly by school boards without a referendum and many were set up. Reorganized districts required a favorable majority vote in each component district, and few were established.)

Since 1925 New York has provided additional general purpose State aid for reorganized districts, for years in very liberal amounts. In recent years, however, the additional amounts allowed have not been as liberal and have not furnished as strong an incentive for reorganization.

State Aid for Pupil Transportation.—Such aid was not provided in four States, and its lack was reported to be a retarding factor in all of them.

Practice varied widely in the other 12 States not only in the amounts provided but also in methods of allocating it. In some States it was reported as being insufficient in amount to serve as a reorganization incentive. Where it was larger in amount and especially where it was allocated on an equalization basis, it was reported as an encouraging factor.

State Aid Grants for School Buildings.—Four of the States provided grants-in-aid for school buildings and two others provided funds on a loan basis. In all of the States where grants-in-aid were not provided, this lack was reported to be a retarding influence.

Practice varied widely in the four States where grants-in-aid for school buildings were provided. In Missouri the maximum amount allowed a reorganized district was small and, although an incentive, tended to encourage formation of small districts rather than larger ones. This aid was allowed reorganized districts only.

In New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington much larger amounts were allowed. In New York one-fourth the cost of approved building projects (in reorganized districts only) was allowed until 1941. That year the method of apportionment was changed from a flat-grant to an equalization basis and has proven much more effective

as a reorganization incentive. In Washington and Pennsylvania State aid for school buildings was allocated on an equalization basis, and in both was allowed to all districts for approved building projects. In Pennsylvania it was also allowed to joint school systems and greatly stimulated their formation.

State Aid for Tuition of Nonresident Pupils.—Practice varied greatly regarding tuition allowances for nonresident pupils. In States where the amount of State aid allowed was substantial, it was reported as a retarding factor. But where a smaller amount was allowed than for resident pupils, reorganization tended to be facilitated. The general provisions governing tuition costs in many instances contained retarding factors.

Disposing of Bonded Indebtedness

Effects of Legislative Provisions.—In States where the law required that the bonded indebtedness of a former district had to be assumed by the new district, this was reported as a retarding factor. In States where the law required that bonded indebtedness must remain an obligation of the district which incurred it, this was reported as generally facilitating reorganization. There were some indications, however, that the latter plan may not have been the most satisfactory in all cases. Such indications came from States where the law permitted the people to vote on the question of whether the new district would assume the indebtedness.

Recognition of Difficulty in Prescribing a Satisfactory Uniform Disposal Plan for All Reorganizations.—Evidently the desirability of a uniform method was considered questionable in a number of States. In some States the reorganization legislation as originally enacted either required or permitted inclusion of a plan for disposition of bonded indebtedness in a reorganization proposal. Moreover, in at least two instances, reorganization laws were later amended to include such a provision, as an optional feature.

PART 2

Part II

A Statement of Policies and Procedures

Guideposts for Successful Reorganization Programs

THIS SECTION DEALS with conclusions reached in a conference of State school district reorganization leaders held to evaluate policies and procedures applicable to establishing and conducting permissive-type reorganization programs involving systematic planning. The section consists of four major parts: Legislation for a planned program of the permissive type, school finance provisions for facilitating establishment of adequate school districts, State leadership and services for administering the program, and local processes and procedures.

Legislation for the Program

General Policy

Applicability.—The legislation should be sufficiently comprehensive to apply to all redistricting problems and needs in the State.

Duration.—The legislation should not have a fixed time limit at the end of which it becomes inoperative; instead, it should be a permanent law, providing the means for solution of redistricting problems already existing and those arising in the future.

Relationship to other redistricting laws still in effect.—Advantages would be gained in some States by repealing all other redistricting laws, replacing them with a single comprehensive law. But where that is not practicable or considered desirable, then their use should be restricted during the intensive phases of the reorganization program and all proposals for larger districts or other district boundary changes involving their use should be subject to the approval of the county and State administrative agencies responsible for administering the reorganization program.

Types or classes of districts that may be established.—In some States the kinds of districts which can be formed may be inadequate, so that it would be necessary for the reorganization legislation to include provisions for an additional type, or types, in order to facilitate establishing a system of adequate administrative units throughout the State. In other States this would not be necessary because those already authorized include types which would be adaptable to redistricting needs. In either case, the legislation should indicate the types or classes of districts to be formed under its provisions and specify the kinds of changes that can be made in the existing district structure in order to establish such districts.

The State Administrative Agency

Kind of agency.—In States confronted with widespread reorganization problems, the legislation should create a special State commission or committee to administer the reorganization program, rather than assign that responsibility to an already existing agency, such as the State Board of education; the reason being that the responsibilities involved are both highly important and time-consuming, justifying a special agency to concentrate its efforts on them alone, whereas an existing agency like the State board of education would have to carry the responsibility in addition to all its other responsibilities.

Duration of the special State commission.—The length of time the commission is to function should not be limited to a specified number of years—how long it will be needed cannot be predicted accurately in advance and will vary among States. Because of this, the legislation should provide for the continuance of the commission until the major reorganization problems in the State have been solved.

When that point has been reached and the task of administering the program is no longer so demanding, then the commission might justifiably be disbanded and its functions assigned to the State board of education, or, if the State does not have such a board, to the chief State school officer.

Selection of the commission membership.—If the State has a State board of education, then that body should be empowered to select the members of the commission. If not, then past practice in selecting the membership of other commissions created for educational purposes should probably be followed.

Composition of the commission.—The size of the commission should be sufficiently large to be broadly representative, but not so large as to be an unwieldy body unable to reach decisions readily. Geographic or area representation might be prescribed, although it is not

so important as securing representation from the major social and economic interests in the State. All or at least a sizable majority of the members should be lay citizens rather than professional educators.

Length of members' terms.—The length of term should be long enough to prevent rapid turnover; if the number of years is prescribed, terms should be overlapping; and no restriction should be placed on reappointment.

Compensation.—Prevailing past practice in the State with respect to compensating the members of comparable commissions might be followed, but in any case members should at least be compensated for travel and other necessary expenses.

Powers and duties.—The powers and duties of the commission should include the following:

- ◆ To employ an executive secretary and such other professional and clerical personnel as may be necessary for effective performance of its functions and to assist county committees, or comparable local planning agencies, to perform their functions.
- ◆ To formulate policies and principles for administering the reorganization program.
- ◆ To develop methods of procedure for use by county committees, or comparable local planning agencies.
- ◆ To formulate standards or criteria for reorganized districts and attendance areas.
- ◆ To examine and approve or disapprove reorganization plans and proposals developed by county committees, or comparable local planning agencies, with authority to approve only that portion of a county plan meeting prescribed standards; to approve proposed changes in school districts involving use of all other redistricting laws which are still operative.
- ◆ To grant county committees, or the comparable local planning agency, additional time where required for completion of their plans.
- ◆ To appoint a county committee in any county where the local appointive agency fails to act within specified time limits.
- ◆ To appoint a new county committee in any county where an existing committee fails to perform its assigned functions.
- ◆ To expend on its own order such funds as may be appropriated for administering the program.
- ◆ To make periodic reports on the operation of the reorganization program to the legislature.

Relationships to State department of education.—Provision should be made whereby close cooperation will be maintained by the State commission and its staff with the State department of education, and the services of personnel in the latter be utilized whenever available and needed in carrying on the reorganization program.

The County Administrative Agency

Kind of agency.—The same general principles applicable to the State administrative agency should be applied; i. e., in States having widespread reorganization problems, a special county administrative agency should be created (which will be designated hereafter for purposes of convenience as the county committee).

Mandatory requirements.—A county committee should be required in every county.

Duration.—Provision should be made whereby each county committee will continue in existence and function until a system of adequate school districts has been established in the county. Some States may find it desirable to establish such committees on a permanent basis; while others having county boards of education may find it desirable to assign the county committee's functions to them after reorganization has been largely completed.

Method of selecting members.—Although selection of the county committee membership by local district boards has been the most common practice and that method has much in its favor, other methods have also proven practicable in some States. The method used should either provide for election of the members by the people or appointment by local officials who are elected by the people.

Composition of committees.—Committees should be composed of 5 to 9 members, and only lay citizens should be included in the membership. Provision should be made for representation from both the open country and population centers of the county.

Length of term.—The same principles applicable to the State commission members terms should be applied to the county committee.

Meetings.—Time limits for holding the first meeting to organize and elect a chairman should be specified. Thereafter, meetings should be held on call by the chairman or a majority of the members.

Compensation.—Committee members should be compensated for necessary expenses only.

Committee secretary.—The county superintendent should be designated committee secretary.

Development of Reorganization Plans

Factors to be considered.—The legislation should specify, preferably in general terms, the factors for county committees to take into consideration in making reorganization studies and plans.

Comprehensive plans required.—Provision should be made for all county committees to make a study of county educational conditions and to prepare a comprehensive plan for a system of school districts for their counties meeting the standards of the State administrative agency. This should be a mandatory requirement, and time limits should be specified within which the comprehensive plans are to be completed and submitted to the State administrative agency. Whenever a county plan or portion of a county plan is disapproved by the State administrative agency, the county committee should be required to prepare and submit a revised plan within a specified time.

Provision should also be made permitting committees to submit plans involving only a portion of the county before completion of the comprehensive plan.

Content of the written proposals.—The legislation should specify what the written proposals for new districts should contain, as a minimum requiring maps and descriptions of the existing districts involved, as well as of the proposed new districts, and a summary of the reasons for the proposed reorganization. Some States may find it desirable to require more, such as: recommendations concerning location of schools, utilization of existing buildings, and pupil transportation needs; and plans for adjusting the assets and liabilities, including bonded indebtedness, of the districts involved.

Time limits for submitting the comprehensive plan.—Ample time should be allowed to permit careful systematic planning (some States have found at least 18 months should be allowed). Provision should be made whereby the State administrative agency may grant additional time to county committees unable to complete their plans within the limits prescribed.

Inter-committee planning.—Provision should be made whereby any reorganization proposal involving territory in more than one county will be developed by subcommittees of the county committees concerned.

Proposals initiated by local people.—Provision should be made authorizing local people to initiate reorganization proposals for consideration by the county committee, but such proposals should be consistent with the comprehensive plan in order to be approved by the county committee. All proposed school district boundary

changes involving use of other redistricting laws should be subject to approval by the county committee.

Public hearings.—At least one public hearing should be required for each reorganization proposal, and the county committee should be authorized to hold more than one if considered necessary or desirable. The hearings should be held either by the county committee or a subcommittee of it; and minutes of the proceedings should be required.

Election Procedures

Authorization for elections.—A referendum should be mandatory on all proposed new districts approved by the State administrative agency, but should not be authorized for any reorganization proposal not approved by the State agency.

Provisions for calling and holding the elections.—The county superintendent as committee secretary should be responsible for calling the election and making the necessary arrangements specified. In some States it may be desirable that the legislation include all the provisions governing the manner in which elections are to be held; in other States, the provisions in the statutes relating to school elections might be adequate.

Time limits for holding the election.—A time limit should be specified within which the election is to be held. It should allow sufficient time after approval of the proposal by the State administrative agency to permit development of additional public understanding and support of the proposal, but should not encourage unnecessary delay.

Ratification of proposed new districts.—A majority of the total vote cast should be required for ratifying the proposal. However, if it is not possible to secure such a provision an acceptable alternative would be that if the proposal contained a center above a specified size, or if it contained a component district having more than a specified percentage of the total population, two favorable majorities would be required—one in the center or large district, as the case might be, and the other in the remainder of the territory involved.

Second Elections

Revision or resubmission of rejected proposals.—In cases where a proposal is rejected by the voters, provision should be made requiring the county committee to prepare a revised proposal, submitting

it to the State administrative agency for approval, after which if approved it would be brought to a vote, or the proposal first rejected would be submitted to a second vote.

Time limits for a second vote.—While there are advantages and also some disadvantages in specifying a definite time limit for the second election, such a provision may be unacceptable in some States. Where such is the case, the time for holding the second election should be left to the discretion of the county committee.

Status of the New Districts Established

Effective date.—The date when a reorganized district should begin functioning cannot be prescribed for all States, being a matter that should be specified in terms of each State situation.

The reorganized district board.—The legislation should include provisions for election of the reorganized district board, and specify its powers and duties. The latter should be sufficiently comprehensive to enable the new board to deal effectively with problems arising out of the transition from the old districts to the new administrative unit. After the transition period, the existing statutes relating to school boards of the same type or class of district should apply.

Financing the Program

- Sufficient appropriations should be made to the State administrative agency to enable it to provide the specialized services necessary in carrying on the reorganization program, and State funds should be provided through the State administrative agency to meet the expenses of county committees. At the same time provision should also be made whereby county funds may be appropriated to help finance the program.

School Finance Provisions for Facilitating Establishment of Adequate School Districts

General Considerations

School finance and district reorganization tied together.—In the development of a school district reorganization program it should be recognized that its purposes and likewise its operation are inter-related with the State school finance program.

Consistency.—The State school finance program should be consistent with the goals and purposes of the school district reorganization program.

Improving the finance program.—Improvements needed in the State school finance program, making it more efficient and equitable, should not be postponed because of the existence of major school district reorganization problems.

Basic Policies

Responsibility for school support.—The financing of the public schools should be a joint responsibility of the State and the local districts.

State support.—The proportion of total school costs that should be borne by the State cannot be prescribed here, but is a matter of State policy which may be decided in terms of the relative share of the total school cost that should be borne by local district property taxes.

Adequate support.—Through an equitable combination of State and local funds, a level of financial support should be provided for an adequate educational program in all soundly organized districts, including those which are small but are necessary operating units.

Avoiding Roadblocks to Reorganization

Financial treatment of unnecessary small districts.—While State aid may be justified for unnecessary small districts and schools, depending upon State policy in that regard, it should not be provided in such amounts or manner as to place a financial reward on the continuation of such districts. Instead, if such districts choose to continue functioning rather than becoming a part of a larger unit,

then they should be required to bear the extra costs involved in maintaining high per pupil cost schools.

Nonresident tuition.—When viewed purely in relation to its retarding effects on the establishment of soundly organized districts, State aid for the tuition of nonresident pupils should be eliminated entirely. But where that is not practicable or considered desirable, it should be less in amount than would be provided through other State aid apportionments if the area were reorganized; in other words, the privilege of sending pupils to another district should not wherever possible be rewarded. In determining tuition costs, a charge for capital outlay should be included.

Disposition of bonded indebtedness.—While the provision that bonded indebtedness will remain an obligation of the component district incurring it has served to facilitate reorganization in many instances, that has not been true in all cases. Essentially, this is an issue that should be left to the local people concerned to decide.

Providing Incentives

Approaches vary.—In a number of States special State aid apportionments of one kind or another have been provided as incentives for reorganization but such apportionments have not been made available to soundly organized districts already in existence. Although not available to other districts, it would appear that these could not rightly be regarded as being merely inducements to reorganize but that they were designed to assist in enabling the new district to meet the extra costs involved in providing better educational programs.

Other States have provided more liberal State aid allowances, either for general or special purposes, to all better organized districts, and in so doing provided incentives for reorganization. Both approaches have had beneficial results, and no sweeping generalizations can be drawn as to which approach is superior for all situations.

Special Purpose State Aid as Incentives

Pupil transportation aid.—The lack of State aid for pupil transportation, or an insufficient amount of it especially when allocated on a flat-grant basis, handicaps reorganization. Such aid should be apportioned on an equalization basis and should be sufficient in amount to equalize from a minimum local district effort up to the full approved cost, as determined by the State department of education:

State aid for capital outlay.—The lack of State aid for school facilities retards the establishment of soundly organized districts. In all the States where such aid was provided it facilitated reorganization; and in two of them was regarded as being the most influential of all favorable finance factors.

State aid for capital outlay should be apportioned on an equalization basis. It should be sufficient in amount for approved school building projects to facilitate establishment of school districts of adequate size. All building projects for which State funds are provided should be subject to approval by the State department of education.

State Leadership and Services in Administering the Reorganization Program

Administrative Policies

Development of policies.—To foster orderly and systematic development of the program, policies should be formulated by the State administrative agency for carrying out its assigned functions and providing the services needed. What these policies should include is a matter that should be decided in each State after careful consideration of the reorganization situation.

Standards or criteria for reorganized districts and attendance centers.—Standards or criteria should be developed indicating the qualities that a satisfactory administrative unit should possess and should include such factors as: size of district, size of elementary and high schools, scope of services, and sociological factors. In States having very sparsely populated areas, the standards should be sufficiently flexible for application in such areas, but this flexibility should be of such nature as not to impair their usefulness in communities where sparsity is not a problem.

The Professional Staff

Size of staff.—Provision should be made for a professional staff of sufficient size to provide the services needed by county committees in developing their reorganization plans and bringing them to a vote. How many staff members will be needed depends on a number of factors which vary from State to State. However, most reorganiza-

tion programs have not been adequately staffed. In view of past experience, it would seem that any State during the intensive stages of the program should have a director and at least two or three field workers. Many States having a large number of counties with major reorganization problems would need more field workers or consultants.

Adequate staff a continuing need.—It is equally important that adequate professional services be provided after the intensive planning stages of the program.

Organizing the Program

Informing local officials.—Before county committees are selected, county superintendents should be fully informed about the method of selecting committees, and the same should also be done for local district boards. Meetings should be held for this purpose, and informational materials should also be prepared and distributed. Whenever possible a State staff member should attend the meeting when the committee members are selected for purposes of further explanation of the program and answering questions about it.

Orienting county committees.—As soon as the county committees have been set up, a concerted effort should be made to acquaint them with the program and their responsibilities in it. Statewide or regional meetings should be held for this purpose. Informational materials dealing with the program should be made available for their use, including the manual of procedures if it can be prepared by that time.

Early publicity.—Efforts should also be made during the early phases of the program to provide publicity about it through both the daily and county weekly newspapers and through the periodicals of State organizations, especially those serving rural areas.

The Manual of Procedure

Importance.—A manual of procedures to assist county committees in their work is a necessary part of the services the State staff should provide. A well-prepared manual is an important means of fostering orderly and systematic development of the reorganization program.

Major Features.—The manual should contain the necessary information and explanation of procedures that committees will need in developing plans and bringing them to a vote.

Field Service

Helping make studies and prepare plans.—The State staff should assist county committees on request in analyzing and interpreting study information and in the preparation of the reorganization plans. However, they should not be expected to do the detailed work of the county superintendent in that respect—the proper role of the State staff is advisory and consultative.

Helping prepare the written reports of reorganization proposals.—As a general rule this assistance should be of an advisory nature. However, there may be occasions where it will be necessary for a State staff member to do a very large share of the work.

Assisting with public hearings.—The State staff should when requested attend the public hearings on reorganization proposals. In this also, the proper role is that of a consultant, available when called upon to give expert advice.

Checking on the legal steps followed.—It is highly important the State staff make a careful check to insure that all of the legal procedures have been complied with fully in the various steps involved in developing the proposal and bringing it to a vote.

Helping the State administrative agency evaluate proposals.—Because of their first-hand knowledge and experience, the State staff members are in position to render an invaluable service to the State administrative agency when proposals are being evaluated for approval. This is another reason for an adequately sized staff and the services of its members should be utilized fully in evaluating proposals.

Participating in community meetings.—One of the very important aspects of the work of the State staff is that of explaining the reorganization program and its purposes to local people. Whenever local groups express interest in the program and desire more information about it, a State staff member should whenever possible render that service.

Keeping the People Informed

Publicity materials.—Articles and reports prepared by State staff members have been useful in keeping local people informed about the progress being made, and have thereby served useful purposes.

Special bulletins.—In many States bulletins dealing with various phases of the programs proved to be useful.

Relationships With Other State Agencies and Organizations

State department of education.—Throughout the period when the program is being administered by the State commission, a constant effort should be made in maintaining close working relationships with the State department of education. The services of State department personnel should be used whenever practicable in carrying on the program, and special efforts should be made to keep them fully informed throughout all stages of its development.

College and universities.—In a number of States, college and university staff members have taken an active part in the reorganization programs—in participating in reorganization meetings, in making studies and surveys, in arranging conferences on reorganization, and in a few cases in preparing informational materials.

State organizations.—In many States a number of State organizations have been actively interested, particularly State education associations, State school boards associations, and State farm organizations. The interest and support of these State groups should be actively encouraged.

Local Processes and Procedures

Making Studies of School Conditions

Importance of studies.—A careful study of school conditions should be emphasized as essential to the development of sound reorganization plans. Such a study should be encouraged as a means of avoiding premature judgment and decision as to what ought or ought not to be done.

Visiting the schools.—Committees should be encouraged to visit the schools in the county. This provides a sound basis for judgment about them, and it also stimulates the interest of local people in reorganization.

Extensiveness of studies.—Some counties have very complex problems requiring a more extensive examination of all the factors affecting school conditions than is true of others. However, in all situations, whether highly complex or quite simple, studies should be sufficiently comprehensive to provide an objective basis for sound planning.

Developing Plans

Importance of comprehensive planning.—The development of comprehensive plans embracing the entire county should be encouraged even though the people in some sections of the county will likely reject the proposal developed for their area. The importance of making countywide plans would be difficult to overemphasize.

Values of partial plans for the county.—If a sufficient degree of readiness for reorganization is evident in some particular locality, it is usually desirable to develop a plan for that area before completing the plans for the entire county. Establishing a new district in one locality often stimulates favorable sentiment in other localities.

Liaison with local district boards.—Throughout the various stages of making studies and developing plans, county committees should maintain close touch with local district boards, keeping them fully informed.

Public Hearings and Informal Meetings

Small group meetings.—Such meetings held by county committees for purposes of explaining their plans have been an effective procedure in developing public understanding and support for larger districts, and especially has this been true in the open country.

Mass meetings.—While large meetings often are less effective than small gatherings, their effectiveness depends on how well they are organized and conducted. By having well-informed community leaders present to speak on crucial issues certain to come up, such meetings can be very useful.

Holding formal hearings.—The formal hearings required by the legislation should be carefully planned in advance. Public reaction is more favorable when the chairman has a good working knowledge of the reorganization law and is thoroughly familiar with all the details of the proposal under consideration. The committee chairman or a member should always be in charge of the hearing.

Involving Interested Local Leaders

Identifying leaders.—In the process of developing a reorganization proposal a special effort should be made to locate leaders willing to support it. This should be done as early as possible. The county

superintendent and persons in the community such as the township supervisor, the village banker, and newspaper editor, can assist in identifying those who should be contacted.

Frequently, some leaders in the community emerge of their own volition and become strong supporters—careful systematic planning encourages this. But others do not; they must be searched out.

Farm leaders.—Special emphasis should be given to enlisting the support of open-country leaders, including farm housewives. Some of the most potent leaders for better schools are young farmers and the parents of younger children in the community.

Community Study Committees

Effectiveness.—The use of community study committees or groups has become increasingly common, and such groups have been highly effective in a wide variety of situations. This technique is by no means new, for it has been used in several States for more than two decades. In two States it was used during the intensive stages of their programs and was very useful in implementing county committee planning.

Methods of organizing.—Such groups have been organized in various ways, and no particular method can be prescribed which would be applicable to all situations.

Local Publicity

The local newspaper.—Objective publicity given to reorganization by local newspapers is helpful and should be encouraged.

Special bulletins.—A useful procedure in developing support for proposed new districts is the preparation of a special bulletin describing the proposal and the educational improvements it will make possible. Such bulletins should be brief and written in layman's language. In some States such bulletins have frequently been prepared by the local community study committees.

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