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Public school district consolidation: Technical, economic, social, and community considerations

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PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION:
TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND
COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

CATRON

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PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION: TECHNICAL,

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

(TITLE)

BY

Dennis G. Catron

FIELD STUDY

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist in Educational Administration

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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**PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION; TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC,
SOCIAL, AND COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS**

by

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A.B., University of Illinois, 1975

M.S. in Education, Eastern Illinois University, 1981

FIELD STUDY

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Specialist in Educational Administration
in the Graduate School, Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois
1986**

ABSTRACT

Purpose

This paper deals with school consolidation. It is not a paper describing the legal procedure to close a school or a school district, nor is the primary purpose of this paper to review current laws or trends.

The purpose of this paper is to create a list of issues which should be considered during a school consolidation. The list is divided into four sections and includes technical, economic, social, and community issues.

Procedure

To accomplish the purpose, this paper begins with a brief background of the problem. Chapter Two continues with an historical look at the trends which have affected small school districts and small town life in general both in the United States and in the state of Illinois where the author lives and works. The chapter also presents both pro and anti-consolidation stands followed by a final section which summarizes some conclusions found while reviewing the literature.

Chapter Three begins with a presentation of the issues found by the author. The author's recommendations and conclusions follow.

Synopsis of Conclusion

The author concludes that there were enough issues to be found in the written literature to start the list and to divide it into the four sections previously described. The list will be useful to those who are about to undertake a consolidation study and wish to become active participants.

The list is not intended to be the final and complete list of issues which could emerge. Communities are unique and each will have its own particular problems to solve in each study.

The issues contained in the list are those which probably will emerge at some point in consolidation talks. Those conducting meetings may find the list useful as a guide as they prepare for public meetings.

The author does conclude that more study is needed to follow school consolidations after they have occurred. This follow-up is needed to confirm or dispute some of the issues and concerns raised during the consolidation process.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1930 there were 149,000 one-room, one-teacher schools in the United States of America. In 1980 the number of these schools had declined to 755 (Carlsen & Dunne, 1981).

In the 1961-1962 school year, two out of every three school districts enrolled less than 300 students. Ten years later, in 1971-1972, this ratio had changed to only one out of every three districts enrolling less than 300 students (Burlingame, 1979).

Nationwide, the total number of school districts has declined. In the 1960s this decline was 53%. Yet during this same decade the number of smaller school districts with 300 or fewer students disappeared at a rate of 79%, from 24,539 districts to 5,112 (Carlsen & Dunne, 1981).

The record of school district closures in Illinois follows the national pattern. At the end of World War II, Illinois maintained over 11,000 school districts. By 1955 this number was reduced to approximately 2,000 districts (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977). During the 1983-1984 school year

the total number of public school districts operating in Illinois stood at 1,007 (not including schools operated by the Illinois Department of Corrections) (Naumer, 1983). An example of the change in one Illinois County can be seen in Appendix A.

Most of the school district consolidations in Illinois occurred from 1940 to 1960 when Illinois eliminated the one-room township elementary schools. In 1940 there were 11,282 elementary districts. Only 960 elementary districts were operating in 1960 (Carlsen, 1981), and the number continued to decline to 435 in 1983 (Naumer, 1983).

The trend appears to have been and continues to be toward larger consolidated school districts. The reasons why two or more schools districts join to organize a new school district have been varied. Usually consolidations have been accomplished by demonstrating that the consolidation would result in improved course offerings or increased financial efficiency (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977).

Today's consolidations in Illinois rarely involve any one-room schools. Instead, many of the communities which had previously formed new districts from the former township school districts are now faced with the problems of increasing costs and decreasing enrollments. Consolidation is again an agenda item for some school boards.

Justification for further consolidation is also beginning to reappear in many school districts for the same

technical (logistical) and economic (fiscal) reasons used for previous consolidations. However, the districts under discussion usually are no longer the little one-room schools located in section 30 in the middle of a cornfield. Discussion and debate now refers to what is perhaps the largest employer in a community. In many cases the school building is considered to be the social center of the community (Forsythe, Carter, MacKay, Nisbet, Sadler, Sewel, Shanks, & Welsh, 1983).

Whatever the size of the school district there usually are those who oppose any movement toward consolidation.

Small rural communities seem often to be intent on retaining their own schools even in the face of pressure, even in the face of financial advantage if consolidation takes place. The reasons for this warrant far more explanation if policy makers are to make wise decisions about reorganizing the remaining schools in small rural districts. (Carlsen & Dunne, 1981, p. 303)

Those who are against consolidation usually raise emotionally charged issues which are of a social nature and community oriented. Those issues do not fit the traditional framework of the economic and technical issues which have historically controlled school consolidations. Social and community issues are also rather difficult to document (Carlsen & Dunne, 1981).

Articles have been written and published both advocating and opposing school consolidations. In 1959, James Bryant Conant wrote that ". . . a district must be of sufficient size. . . . The number one problem is the

elimination of the small high school by district reorganization" (p. 38). Dr. Jonathan Sher and Stuart Rosenfeld (1977) wrote that some districts have benefited from consolidation, but

In many situations consolidation's benefits were illusory. Many rural communities were forced to send their children long distances to attend consolidated schools which were no better than the community schools they replaced. (p. 53)

Statement of the Problem and Purpose

While there have been many school district consolidations in past years, limited information is available to those who are about to undertake such a study. It would appear that each time a consolidation study takes place, those involved must start from the beginning and agree on what to study. Community members are even less prepared to oppose or support the study because they have no information other than that given to them by those conducting the study.

The purpose of this paper is the identification and listing of issues to be considered by school districts and communities that are contemplating a possible school district consolidation. The list will consist of four parts and include (a) technical, (b) economic, (c) social, and (d) community issues.

Limitations of the Study

This author assumes that enough written materials are available for review to permit development of a list of issues as envisioned. It is hoped that the list resulting from this study will be useful to many school districts in varied locations. However, it is probable that each situation will require additions to and deletions from the final factors included in this paper.

No attempt has been made to provide an authoritative document which would be the final source of information before a consolidation decision is made. For example, there is no intention to decide what size school is "correct." Instead, the resulting list should be used as one tool in the decision-making process.

In addition, no attempt to give alternative actions has been undertaken. The list focuses upon issues and topics which could be reviewed before a consolidation so that those concerned will be better prepared to undertake the decision-making process in which they are involved.

Definition of Terms

Listed below are definitions of terms used in this paper.

1. Consolidation--An action by two or more school districts to merge and form a new school district.

2. Reorganization--Changes occurring totally within a school district and not involving another school district.
3. Technical Issues--Items considered in school consolidations which deal with numbers of students, use of buildings, bus routes, number of personnel, and other logistical items.
4. Economic Issues--Items considered in school district consolidations which involve the saving or expenditure of money.
5. Social Issues--Items considered in school district consolidations which affect people directly in terms of social ties, morale, and esprit-de-corps.
6. Community Issues--Items considered in school consolidations, usually economic in nature, which have an effect on the community in general as opposed to those items which affect only the school district.
7. Rural--A small town housing a small school in what would be considered a small school district.

8. Small School District--A school district with less than 500 students.

9. Consolidation Study/Process--Refers to any formal activity made necessary by the move to consolidate including public meetings, hearings, studies by consultants, and school board deliberations.

CHAPTER TWO
RATIONALE AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Rationale

Many school districts in Illinois are small and are currently studying the issue of school district consolidation. While most have successfully delayed any action either by the larger neighboring school districts or by the state of Illinois, the issue is still alive and will probably present itself again as each school year progresses.

This author is concerned by the lack of usable information available to the general public when consolidation studies and decisions are made. As a former teacher in a large school district, this author sees no clear evidence that school district size is indicative of quality education. For example, high schools are compared based on numbers of students and on courses offered, usually with the implication that larger numbers relate directly to better quality. This difference between large and small school quality education becomes even less evident to this author when the elementary schools are at issue because it is difficult to accept that an elementary school classroom is better if it is larger.

Based on this author's experience, justifications for consolidation can be made in many cases, but there appears to be little or no consideration in consolidation studies of the effects on the people or on the community that result from consolidation, especially the community which ends up without a viable school building within its corporate limits.

Admittedly, these are opinions of this writer and no final conclusions can be made concerning these opinions without more information.

What is needed is a compilation of the information gathered by others after previous consolidations. Hopefully, by reviewing printed works, the issues which should become a part of the consolidation study and the decision-making process will become evident in order that a final listing can be made. That is why this field study is being undertaken.

A Review of the Literature

The review of the literature will be divided into the following sections: Historical Considerations, Pro-Consolidation Issues, Anti-Consolidation Issues; Observations, Suggestions, and Conclusions.

Historical Considerations

Consolidation of schools in both rural areas and small cities is an issue confronted by many school districts. No

rural education issue has been as long-lived or volatile as the reform of school and district organization. Horace Mann advocated consolidation of rural schools in the middle of the 19th century (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977).

When the United States of American began, 19 of 20 Americans were considered to be in the rural population. The nation remained predominately rural from 1790 until 1920 with 44% of our population counted as rural as late as 1940 (Moe & Tamblyn, 1974).

To introduce their study on rural schools and rural development, Moe and Tamblyn (1974) wrote:

Industrialization of American Society has changed agricultural and rural life. Agricultural production has increased sharply, size of farms has increased, capital has been substituted for labor, and farms have become highly mechanized production units. The reduced demand for labor has been a major factor in the depopulation of rural areas. (p. 9)

Moe and Tamblyn further wrote:

Massive forces of industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization as they have altered American society generally have profoundly changed rural society, rural communities, and rural schools. . . . Basic changes in transportation and communication have altered time and spatial relationships with far reaching effects. (p. 9)

Moe and Tamblyn (1974) further stressed the changes occurring in American society when they wrote about the serious questions of equity in income, opportunities, and services which emerged after World War I (p. 1).

After World War II, rural Americans continued to migrate to the urban centers and this created fundamental problems for communities, for all rural institutions, and for the rural school (Moe & Tamblin, 1974).

Depopulation of rural areas has undermined the American rural lifestyle according to the research previously cited, but another change has also occurred as a result of population movement. As the urban areas grew, the number of legislators from urban areas increased. In most states the legislature is dominated by urban members (Burlingame, 1979).

As the population centers changed and legislative control changed from rural to urban areas, other changes were occurring in our nation. One change was the specialization of labor in almost every area of our work force. With this latter change came the "development of new professionals and new occupations in education, health and medical care, social welfare, employment, recreation and other fields" (Moe & Tamblin, 1974, p. 10). This specialization created a new member of the work force--the specialist.

During this same change period various agencies were formed to take care of problems. Communities which had in the past usually taken care of their own particular problems now turned to these new agencies to take responsibility for finding solutions to those problems. As each

agency grew, it usually became more specialized and "the placing of this competence in both the private and public sectors has had unintended consequences" by creating a sort of isolation (Moe & Tamblyn, 1974, p. 10). Each agency works on and for itself creating a bureaucracy and perhaps resulting in what is called red tape.

Education did not avoid the changes. Most states created or increased the powers of an agency usually referred to as a state department of education. "The rise of the profession of school administration . . . contributed further to the movement for centralization" (Sher & Tompkins, 1977, p. 47).

Depopulation of rural areas, growth of urban centers, control of state legislatures by urban center representatives, specialists, isolation, and agency formations have changed American society according to the research. As the nation has shifted from a rural to an urban focus, the values of rural American life were being pushed aside leaving Martin Burlingame (1979) to write:

The rapid professionalizing of state departments of education, for example, may result in the domination of policy making by those who are technocratically trained and who are not sympathetic to the values of small community life. (pp. 329-330)

As the farms became more mechanized and more capital intensive, the probable result was that there were fewer jobs available for those laborers forcing them to depend on employment opportunities available in the commercial and

industrial sectors of their communities. If one might assume that the number of these jobs were limited, the worker would move to another location to find employment.

Further, the number of children in today's family is generally less than in the past. Both events, leaving to find work and having fewer children, have probably contributed to the decrease in the school-age population of rural areas.

Carlsen and Dunne (1981) cited Beale from a 1978 article when they wrote:

Changing enrollments is, in many places, the most significant problem schools face, as the demographic pattern for rural areas alter abruptly, draining some rural places and rapidly expanding others. (p. 300)

In 1970, as Dorfman and Ferrara wrote:

In general a school district was more likely to be small than large, but an individual was more likely to be enrolled in a large school district . . . only 6% of the districts in the United States had enrollments more than 10,000--but these served over 1/2 of the enrolled student population. (p. 7)

The number of small school districts has declined in past years. Pro-consolidation groups were successful in their efforts to merge smaller districts. Nearly every state in the union has enacted legislation which mandates or encourages (financially) some degree of consolidation. "It is a developing concept that an entire state or at

least a whole county should consist of one school district" (McClendon, 1977, p. 7). The success of consolidation efforts led Sher and Rosenfeld (1977) to conclude that "rural school and district consolidation ranks as one of the most successfully implemented educational reforms of the past fifty years" (p. 29).

The irony of school consolidation is that it has been opposed mostly by those people who are to receive the greatest direct benefit from the consolidation, and the greatest support comes from those for whom the direct effects would be minimal (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977).

Consolidation was beneficial for many communities. Some of the very inadequate schools were closed along with schools which were unable to provide specialized courses (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977). Whether beneficial or not, it appears that the prevailing theme of rural and small city educational policy making "has been and remains the continuous confrontation of these districts with efforts to consolidate them into larger districts" (Forsythe et al., 1983, p. 313).

In 1982, Alan Peshkin wrote about school consolidation and community conflict. He wrote that ". . . school closing emerges everywhere as the most usual solution to the financial and demographic problems that plague schools" (p. 7).

The state of Illinois is among those states which has played an active role in school consolidation issues. In his 1942 thesis for his doctorate at the University of Illinois, Leon Hiram Weaver wrote:

There has been increasing interest in recent years in the problem of reducing the number of school units in Illinois. The degree to which the problem deserves study can be indicated by the following facts. Illinois has over 12,000 school administrative units--more than any other state. (p. 1)

Remember that Weaver wrote that in 1942. Illinois has not, however, ignored school consolidation before 1986. Illinois now has around 1000 school districts (Naumer, 1985) and has recently enacted one of the most sweeping educational reform packages in its history which includes mandated studies for further school consolidations in the form of Senate Bill 730 (Appendix B).

Illinois' citizens have usually held to the belief in local control of the schools. Yet, "despite a prevailing ethos of local control, consolidations have been part of Illinois school politics since the 1940's" (Burlingame, 1979, p. 315). By 1955 Illinois had reduced the number of school districts to just over 2000 (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977), and, as stated earlier, we now stand at about 1000.

Weaver (1942) advocated the use of state aid to encourage the elimination of small elementary schools by

increasing state aid following reorganization (p. 69). But he also wrote, ". . . local action for consolidation is more likely to come about if there is education plus an economic incentive. Education of the local people is the key. More money alone will not do the trick" (p. 5).

The issues of local control and financial reward continue to be mentioned at various times in Illinois. However, the Illinois State Board of Education observed in 1983 that "Illinois, with its historic concern for local control, is unlikely to adopt a funding scheme that would at least appear to remove from local taxpayers and parents control over educational programs offered in their communities" (Illinois Public School Finance Project, 1983, p. 7).

Illinois has had a decline in school districts. Using the 12,000 given by Weaver and today's 1000 shows an approximate decline of 11,000 school districts or about 92%. This decline can be attributed mainly to reorganization of elementary school districts (Burlingame, 1979).

Pro-Consolidation Issues

As noted previously in this study, school consolidation is not new to American society, and from the decrease in the number of school districts in our nation those in favor of consolidation have not been altogether unsuccessful in their reorganization efforts. Those who champion the consolidation issue usually do so in the name

of equality. The belief is that the small school is economically inefficient and has inferior educational offerings (Burlingame, 1979). "There are some persons, some in decision-making capacities, that deny that rural education exists" (Moe & Tamblin, 1974, p. 32).

Support for consolidation many times comes from influential leaders and policy makers in the education and business worlds (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977). Indirect support comes from the many people in the community who do not take an active stand for or against consolidation because they no longer have children in school (Burlingame, 1979).

In May of 1985, a report from the Illinois State Board of Education entitled "School District Organization in Illinois" said in its first two pages:

For decades, despite many studies to the contrary, Illinois has essentially permitted nature to take its course in determining the number and types of school districts most appropriate for serving its children. In doing so, it has borne a high cost in the efficiency and effectiveness of its educational program. . . . Studies preceding [this study] universally decried the large number of small and extremely inefficient school districts in the state . . . it becomes apparent that uniform access to both adequate financial support and reasonable educational quality is not permitted by the present organization of our school districts. (from Report Summary)

The parts of the Illinois report just given show that the same basic reasons are still given in 1985 that have been given in the past. However, this same report goes on to suggest that the enrollment in a high school which

provided the best results in course offerings, student achievement, and maximum efficiencies through economies of scale was in a range from 500 students to around 1300 (p. 34).

Most arguments in favor of consolidation stress the new district's economic potential and its efficiency in using resources. Sher and Rosenfeld (1977) list upgraded educational inputs as one reason for consolidation. These inputs include: better teacher credentials, more course offerings, better school facilities, an increase in available equipment, and more specialized services. And it is usually claimed that students will have "better success in college and in adult life" (p. 31).

Financial pressure is an issue faced by many school districts. Inflation and rising costs create pressure to close down underutilized buildings. Teachers in some small districts have reported that "inadequate facilities and supplies and restricted budgets" made it difficult to be an effective teacher (Carlsen & Dunne, 1981).

Additional financial pressure results from a decrease in student enrollment coupled with an increase in mandated state and federal programs. This creates the need for specialized staff and makes it even more difficult for the small school district to remain open (Burlingame, 1979). Programs such as those for the handicapped and vocationally oriented students are very costly for high population

areas. To the small school, programs such as those are sometimes prohibitive because they are staff intensive and the small school districts usually have limited numbers of students who would take advantage of some of those programs anyway. Proponents of consolidation show that this lack of financial ability to provide programs is one more reason why small schools should consolidate. These proponents point out the small school's inability to provide adequate books and materials, the use of one teacher to teach many varied subjects which causes the teacher to end up with too many classes and subjects, and a lack of specialist to teach programs for the gifted or the mentally and physically handicapped student (Carlsen & Dunne, 1981).

Others say that small schools are lacking in other ways. There is a need for competition because there are so few students. For the same reason there is also a lack of social interaction (Forsythe et al., 1983, p. 102).

When the decision whether or not to recommend consolidation is made, Forsythe et al. write that four factors are usually taken into account by decision-makers:

1. Educational and social merits of the school.
2. Savings in terms of money costs.
3. Physical state of the building and necessary remodeling costs.
4. Travel distance and time to the new school.

Anti-Consolidation Issues

Just as there are issues advanced by those who support consolidation, so, too, are there issues advanced by those who do not want the schools to consolidate. Rebuking the state of Illinois study in an article in the Hoopston, Illinois, newspaper, The Chronicle, on February 14, 1986, State Representative Tim Johnson is quoted as saying that "When it comes to school districts, good things truly do come in small packages. . . . The idea that bigger schools are better schools is a fallacy based on defective logic" (p. 1). The article goes on to say:

The statewide reorganization plan was approved by the legislature last year following a State Board of Education study that concludes that students from middle-sized schools do best on ACT tests. Consolidation proponents cited the study in promoting their cause. However, numerous education officials have refuted the study's findings, including a University of Illinois professor who argues the study is based on faulty methodology. "In essence . . . the legislature approved a reorganization plan that is based on a defective study--one which fails to take into account the inherent benefits of small schools and the devastating effects consolidation has on the small-town way of life." (p. 1)

Carlsen and Dunne (1981) observed that "most major battles over small schools are done although no one has attempted to make a systematic assessment of what is true or why" (p. 299). Illinois had a study completed in May of 1985, yet in February of the next year Representative Johnson said it was flawed. Carlsen and Dunne further observed that many times we depend too much on personal

experience and very little study. Forsythe et al. (1983) wrote that "evaluation of the merits of large and small schools depends to some extent on the assumptions of the beholder" (p. 17), and that when asked to pick the ideal school size, respondents tended "to pick the size they already had in their community" (p. 100).

Consideration of the feelings of the community and community good tend to be alluded to in most of the research findings on the anti-consolidation side. It may be justifiable to close a building because the cost of rebuilding is prohibitive in today's world, but " . . . the factor of community good should be allowed to compete with the factors of educational and financial good in the issue of school consolidation" (Peshkin, 1982, p. 208).

The closing of a school building arouses strong feelings in rural areas:

The bitterness--even the sense of betrayal--which is generated by the proposal to close a school is itself an element which now has to be taken into account . . . local resentment persists because what the community sees as very real issues are dismissed as emotional and lacking in integrity. (Forsythe et al., 1983, pp. 13, 81)

One of the basic concerns small communities expressed when faced with school consolidation is the fear that when the school was lost, the community would decline (Moe & Tamblin, 1974, p. 63). Forsythe et al. (1983) expanded on this idea by writing that communities were afraid they would lose other services which had been coupled with the

schools, and that a community without a school deters families from moving into the town (p. 34).

Burlingame (1979) saw a resistance to consolidation brought on by a perception that it interfered with personal freedoms, personal choice, and eroded a community's stability and continuity. Bamber (1978) wrote that "schooling may be the most critical neighborhood service" (p. 37). They "may be dissatisfied with schools, but rural parents and taxpayers assert their rights to control schools" (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977, p. 33).

Peshkin (1982) summed up this community feeling toward its school when he wrote about graduation ceremonies in small towns:

Indeed, the ritual also confirms the community's capacity to empower the school to respond to its needs. Only viable communities continue to meet this test of potency in a ceremony that symbolizes the success of both school and community. (p. 192)

.....
But there is more to schooling than meets the eyes of teachers, legislators, and academics who conceptualize purposes for schooling not fully shared by those who constitute a community. There is a school's non-educative, community maintenance function which usually becomes apparent to its support group only when it is threatened. (p. 208)

The social effects of a school's closing were closely tied to the community good. Forsythe et al. (1983) reported that respondents in communities that have lost the local school have an increased feeling of powerlessness and that they had little or no influence over decisions

concerning local services (p. 3). These respondents also feel that there was less contact with the school and the teacher (p. 48) and that the school seemed like a remote institution (p. 3).

Sher and Rosenfeld (1977) wrote that small schools have a uniqueness that is hard to quantify and researchers and policy makers have tended to discount that which they cannot measure. The four unique qualities they listed are:

1. Slower-paced, less pressured environment.
2. Less formal interactions among students, staff, and parents.
3. Spirit of cooperation.
4. Opportunities for leadership development. (p. 19)

Moe and Tamblyn (1974) saw other benefits of the small school; some have already been touched upon:

1. Training centers supplying education for people of all ages to meet their own needs and the needs of the community.
2. Continually enhance educational leadership of the community.
3. Serve as a catalytic agent and help create a climate for change within the school itself as well as within the community.
4. Forums for community participation on educational issues as well as on major economic and social issues facing the community.
5. Link to outside resources and influences.
6. Educators better educated, more widely travelled-- this is brought to the school and community.
7. Largest economic asset of many communities.
8. Largest consumer of material in many small communities.
9. Largest consumer of energy in many small communities.
10. May be the community's only auditorium.
11. Possesses equipment not otherwise available.
12. Provide support for community activities, programs and activities.
13. Acts as a conduit of communication from the community to the school and to outside resources (universities). (pp. 66-67)

The reader may have noticed that in all the issues given in this section to this point, very little has been written about the economic efficiency of the school or to the quality of education the small school provides. Yet these usually have been cited as the two most frequently given arguments by pro-consolidation groups and by the recent Illinois study (Naumer, 1985).

Many parents of children who attended small schools did not see the quality of education that was being offered to them because, in most cases, they did not see the faults to be as severe as pro-consolidation supporters had represented. Many times the small-town school was seen as being better than what would be offered in a new, larger school. "Small schools stress music, sports, and school pep--not the number of National Merit Scholars they have" (Burlingame, 1979, p. 329).

Opinions of small schools vary based largely on the public's perception of good teaching. In Forsythe et al.'s (1983) study, one half of the respondents associated larger schools with poorer teaching/education and/or a lack of individual attention to students. One-fourth of the respondents mentioned that the atmosphere and relationships were poorer in a large school. Carlsen and Dunne (1981) found that small school supporters felt that the small schools were more responsive to the people they served, had a special intimacy between teachers and students, and

provided more individualized instruction according to the student's needs. Good teachers were seen by parents as outweighing the difficulties of limited facilities and small peer groups, but a large school did not compensate for poor teaching. August Gold (1975) wrote about small schools as being places where "learning has its greatest chance" (p. 24).

Another pro-consolidation stand is that there will be significant cost savings after the consolidation is finished. There have been few follow-up studies to show that this is actually the case, but whether or not consolidation saves money is a major issue in consolidation debates. Representative Johnson, in the same newspaper article quoted earlier, is given credit for saying:

Contrary to pro-consolidation arguments, school mergers do not save taxpayers money. Increased busing costs more than make up for any administrative savings. Moreover, when schools are closed, surrounding property values drop about 50 percent in value. (p. 1)

Busing is also an issue that is brought to the forefront in consolidation talks. Even though many students ride buses in the small school districts, both the parents of those who did not ride and many of those who now ride see the new, longer bus ride as a lengthy school journey which could be harmful to children and detrimental to their education (Forsythe et al., 1983).

To this point in time, however, the arguments used by the anti-consolidation groups have had a net effect of being "sporadically successful, and at best only delayed consolidation rather than prevented it" (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977, p. 30).

Observations, Suggestions, and Conclusions

Thus far, this paper has attempted to give to the reader a background knowledge of the consolidation issue. The review has been concerned with historical patterns of change in the nation's rural population and work force patterns, general consolidation efforts, and consolidation in the state of Illinois. Issues and stands given by both those for and against consolidation have also been presented. This final section of Chapter Two will attempt to give the reader an idea of the major conclusions and suggestions found in the literature reviewed.

Many factors have combined to change rural lifestyles and those changes have affected rural and small city education. "The decline of the family farm and the increase of urbanization have combined to undermine the need for so many small schools" (Peshkin, 1982, p. 5). Yet rural education cannot be ignored because depending on what definition of rural is used, the rural population is from 37.5 to 65.1 million people. This represents 18.5% to 32% of the total population in the United States in 1970:

" . . . 32% of all children in the United States are enrolled in non-metropolitan schools" (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977, pp. 7-14).

"The spectre of losing local schools and/or districts is not new but an ever-present threat to small rural cities and localities" (Burlingame, 1979, p. 313). Despite the efforts of those who do not want their schools to close, many still believe that small school districts must eventually merge with other school districts to create new and larger districts. A 1975 report from the Illinois Office of Education, then under Joseph Cronin, stated:

Everyone agrees that a district should have, both, a student population large enough to make a wide range of programs and services economically feasible and a tax base sufficient to support the facilities and personnel required for such programs. Factors such as population sparsity, transportation, difficulties and local political resistance, however, make the adoption of a single absolute size standard for all districts a practical impossibility. (p. 38)

On a recent television news program, state of Illinois Superintendent of Schools Ted Sanders said that the recently passed Illinois legislation would improve the quality and learning opportunities, and that the size of a unit district should be about 1500 students (Channel 3 News, WCIA Midwest Television, February 23, 1986). About two weeks later, the same news program reported that the legislature in Illinois had changed the school size requirement and the new consolidation bill now stressed quality not quantity. The pressure against consolidation

appears to have, at least temporarily, gained the upper hand.

Perhaps the issue of consolidation has been approached too authoritatively and matter-of-factly. When one reviews past consolidation issues it seems that the issue has been approached by decision-makers who look at consolidation and reorganization as if they were strictly technical issues.

Leading educators (particularly at the state and local levels) argued that their studies and research on the technical aspects of consolidation proved that bigger schools and bigger school districts were inherently better ones. (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977, pp. 30-31)

The importance of a school in a small community is not generally recognized in consolidation studies. What researchers and policy-makers should do is accept that "rural schools do not exist in a vacuum. They are an integral part of rural communities and rural society" (Moe & Tamblin, 1974, p. 1).

Another factor that is rarely seen in a consolidation study is the uniqueness of a community and its relationship to its school. Laws are passed and policies are established which affect local schools with usually very little interpretation of how those laws will affect each individual town and circumstance. Sher and Rosenfeld (1977) felt that rural people and rural communities were so diverse that one could find support for any belief by looking for the right town to study. "It is possible to find poor teaching in small towns, but it is also possible

to find excellent schools and teaching in another small town" (p. 4). The prevailing point here is that while any one community can usually be seen to be quite homogeneous, the characteristics which typify one town may not be seen in another. Differences are not within small communities, rather, the differences are between communities.

Differences between communities could account for the differences in which subjects are stressed in one school when compared to another school. "Despite increasing standardization, rural schools tend to reflect the pluralism found among the rural communities they serve" (Sher & Rosenfeld, 1974, p. 14).

There are those who do not see any benefits in larger schools, just as there are those who see small schools as inadequate to meet the educational needs of the students they serve. Other factors, such as income, could play a major role which is often ignored by consolidation studies. Sher and Rosenfeld (1977) felt that putting a small school student in a large school will not necessarily gain anything if another unresolved factor is the real cause for poor achievement. They wrote:

Since attainment data for central city schools are similar to that for rural schools, it may only confirm that socio-economic factors (like people's income and education) which tend to be markedly lower in both rural communities and central cities, are powerful determinants of student achievement everywhere. (p. 17)

Moe and Tambllyn (1974) agreed that

Many of the basic deficiencies in rural education stem from the serious problems associated with personal poverty, community isolation, limited public services, lack of leadership, . . . and insufficient taxable resources to support services available elsewhere in the nation. (p. 33)

These same authors felt that schools were essential to the development of rural areas because schools provide leadership and resources which probably would not otherwise be available in a small community. The schools could also provide space for training centers and community education programs (Moe & Tambyn, 1974, p. 69).

Forsythe et al. (1983) saw another phase of school consolidation as demanding more attention. They felt that the public should be allowed to be more involved in the decision-making process accompanying a school consolidation:

Public participation and consultation should be used as a means of revealing information about the school in its local context and should not be seen as a hurdle that has to be overcome in order to gain acceptance of a decision that has in principle already been made. (p. 81)

Perhaps if people were more involved from the beginning, there would be less emotional grandstanding. Until the public feels that they are in control of the situation and the decisions to be made, Peshkin (1982) will continue to believe that "Being carried away seems to be a common component of the actions and reactions generated by the closing of a school" (p. 153).

Two articles found in the research had a major impact on this author while doing the review. The first was by Alan Peshkin, and the second was by Martin Burlingame.

Peshkin (1982, pp. 155-168) saw the conflict involved in school consolidations as being divided into seven categories.

The first issue is one of boundaries. Most of the concern expressed in this category is not of academics. The concern is where the children will go to school. The concepts of "we" and "they" emerge and community members become concerned about perceived differences in ethnicity, religions, occupations, social classes, and behavior (pp. 155-157).

The second issue is described by the word integrity. Integrity is "more significant than boundaries, but less apparent" (p. 157). The reaction here is one of unity among community members. When the community fights for its integrity it can mount a response to whatever it perceives as a problem. The "community with integrity is sensitive to threats because it is concerned with survival" (p. 157).

The next issue deals with the community school. The school is a part of the lives of the members of a community which can be seen as the school building itself, the school's operational functions, and its symbolic functions. The school building is a part of the community, part of the

landscape. It belongs there. To many, the "activity of the school is not as important as the memories" (p. 160).

The operational functions of the school are important because the school reflects the community's values. It helps to pass those values and attitudes on to the next generation. The belief is that the schools contribute to the economic health of the community, help to maintain property values, and is a source of recreation.

The symbolic functions of a community school give a community a sense of autonomy and local control, vitality because only viable villages maintain a school, and integration--the school is something everyone can own and belong to. There is also a sense of control over children if they are close, and the feelings of tradition watching children walk, play, and generally do the things they have always done.

The fifth category is one Peshkin (1982) calls Consolidation and Integration. After the consolidation is undertaken, the children usually accept it, ". . . unless parents strongly agitate to prevent their children from coming to terms with this new school, children seem quite soon to adjust to it, if not prefer it" (p. 167).

The final two categories are termed Loss and Secession. Loss refers to the feeling some are left with when the school closes. It is not a predictable feeling and different people react differently. Secession is a phase

where some feel that they have not been treated completely fairly and do not actively participate in that other school.

Burlingame (1979, pp. 318-327) gave 11 steps to the consolidation process which he called the "Process of Marasmus" (p. 318).

ONE--Administrative recognition of declining enrollments. This decline in enrollments then becomes translated into declining monies.

TWO--Initial search behavior by administrators. Usually the superintendent begins checking past enrollment records and becomes concerned with the number of identifiable preschoolers in the district. This process is informal and may have not reached the Board level yet.

THREE--Administrative generation of policy alternatives. The superintendent confers with other district administrators to seek possible courses of action. Three alternatives appear: cut programs, increase taxes, or consolidate. Items involving financing and curriculum are elected as it is not politically feasible to discuss consolidation at this time.

FOUR--Superintendent-school board discussion. Public discussion begins as the administrators discuss the problems and suggest alternatives.

FIVE--School board-controlled public discussions. A public meeting is held by the school board to discuss the compromise needed between cuts and new taxes:

Discussions of issues in these districts are marked by well understood norms which stress the rights of some to be influential, the right to appeal to familial or kinship ties, and the right to argue for the preservation of a well-developed and constructed web of social relations. (p. 321)

Two factions emerge. The first is composed of those ready to tackle the problem and commit both time and energy to finding the solution. The second is a coalition of people who do not like the present school situation and those who oppose the majority in-group in the community.

SIX--School Board Meeting. Usually within two months of the first superintendent-board discussion, a meeting is held with information provided to the public concerning the factors the board must consider in making a decision. Two groups again emerge with one against any movement toward consolidation and the other group calling for increased educational opportunities and berating the lack of leadership in the opposition group.

SEVEN--School board decision. The school board suggests cuts in certain programs and the decision meets with opposition. Trade-offs are made and consensus is reached. "Overt displays of anger or frustration are encouraged, even if the wrong decisions are reached" (p. 323).

EIGHT--Continued declining enrollments. Further declines in enrollment push the board and community toward the closing of a school or consolidation with another district.

NINE--Superintendent-board discussions about alternatives. In the face of declining enrollments the superintendent and board discuss alternatives, usually without the aid of other administrators or members of the public. Four questions are usually raised at this point.

1. Who are going to be the winners and the losers? For instance, what children will be bused who previously walked? What will be the colors, mascot, and name of the new athletic teams? Where will the school buildings be located?

2. What is going to happen to the social matrix of the community now that the school and its activities are gone? For example, how will the Christmas Pageant take place? Can rivalries with other communities be forgotten in the new district? Has the community been destroyed?

3. Why have not the leaders of the school and community been more dynamic in revitalizing the community? For example, why have not conscious efforts been made to attract new industries, to become sites for state facilities such as prisons or to lobby with state officials to change accreditation statutes for small schools?

4. What happens to the tried-and-true educators who have lived and served well in the schools? For example, will they be happy in the new district schools apart from their home students? How will the PTA be able to provide help for their school, teachers, and children?

TEN--Public acrimony over the closing of a school or consolidation with another district. The four question areas listed above become part of public debate. Now people can see what they are going to lose or win. Tempers are raised and some community members are blamed while others take the opportunity to seize political power in the community. Those in favor of the move retreat to factual documentation, state accreditation, and economics. Those opposed see losses to the community, teachers suffering, and an attack on their community.

ELEVEN--School board meeting to close the school/consolidate the district. The board meets in public session to decide the issue. "These meetings seem to follow a pattern of the resolution, an emotional tirade of feelings, a recess, and a vote to close/consolidate" (p. 326). The meeting ends with some believing that a good decision to improve education has been made, while others see a link to the past dismantled and the beginning of the destruction of their community's life (pp. 318-327).

Uniqueness of the Study

It is difficult for the general public to locate enough written information about school consolidation when the information sought concerns the issues which will emerge during the consolidation hearings and other meetings. Most of the available literature has been written to show why a school district should or should not consolidate. Other works available outline legal procedures to follow, while some articles not included in this paper discuss how to run a successful public relations campaign.

The author has attempted to review available studies and commentaries with the goal of finding issues which emerged during the discussions surrounding the school consolidation process. The following chapter will complete the purpose of this study by presenting a listing of those issues and concerns separated into four categories: financial, economic, social, and community issues.

This study is unique because the user is able to find consolidation issues and concerns listed in one article for his/her future reference. The study is the beginning of a list that is capable of being expanded and adapted by interested individuals to accomplish the purposes of their own particular consolidation study.

This author believes that only if everyone knows what is happening, why it is happening, and also understands the emotional aspects of a consolidation study, will people and

communities be able to work together to find the solution to their particular problems. "The financial considerations in district reorganization are secondary only to the potential benefits and/or detriments of reorganization upon the students and the communities and people affected" (Janes, Merigis, & Smitley, 1985, p. 21). "It is difficult for a community to arrive at some reasonable estimate of the value of its school, and the contributions it makes to the community" (Moe & Tamblyn, 1974, p. 66) and "Consolidation fails if the affected communities do not develop the ability to work together" (Peshkin, 1982, pp. 158-159).

CHAPTER THREE
RESULTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Results

The purpose of this paper is to develop a list of issues which should be considered in a school consolidation. The format of the list is in four parts. The first part deals with the technical items all school districts are concerned with day-to-day operations such as buses, number of required personnel, and other logistical concerns. The second part deals with the economic issues and primarily concerns itself with the fiscal affairs of the school district. The third part of the list includes social issues which affect people in terms of their social ties, morale, and esprit-de-corps. The fourth and final part of the list is composed of issues which specifically reach the community itself.

The review of the literature has revealed many issues to be found in school consolidation situations. While some of the studies presented information which duplicated that found in other studies, enough material was found in those studies to create the list of consolidation issues which is the stated purpose of this paper.

This author makes no claim that every issue which could arise during a school consolidation study is contained on the following list. Rather, this author feels that the issues listed are those shown by the review of the literature as needing consideration. These issues will most likely need to be addressed for the consolidation to succeed because the literature shows that they are issues for which answers will be sought by the public.

This chapter will continue with the presentation of the list of issues divided according to this author's interpretation. An item's placement within each list does not signify any ranking, and the reader should not imply any such ranking due to the number appearing in front of an item. Further, in each list the last item is "Other" to account for items which were not revealed by the literature. This author's recommendations and conclusions will follow.

The Technical Issues

The literature reviewed for this paper revealed the following items as those occurring in school consolidation debates:

1. Student enrollment
2. Building needs/housing of students

3. Bus needs/equipment
4. Busing/bus routes
5. Curriculum/course offerings
6. Extra-curricular offerings
7. Special class offerings
8. Programs/courses to be eliminated
9. Personnel needs
10. Changes in quality of instruction/teacher credentials
11. Teacher preparations/class load
12. Class sizes
13. Instructional pace
14. Equipment needs
15. Materials needs
16. State mandates
17. Other needs

The Economic Issues

The literature suggests the following monetary items to be considered:

1. Taxes/tax rates
2. Level of local support--revenue
3. Level of state support--revenue
4. Level of federal support--revenue
5. Other sources of support--revenue
6. Reserves available

7. Budget
8. Education fund costs
9. Building costs
10. Transportation costs
11. Certified personnel costs
12. Non-certified personnel costs
13. Equalized assessed valuation
14. Average daily attendance
15. Potential/projected savings
16. Other economic issues

The Social Issues

The social issues and concerns of a school consolidation which should be addressed were shown in the literature to be as follows:

1. Changes in the number of children who will be riding a bus
2. Time spent riding buses
3. Loss of control by parents
4. Parental contact with teachers
5. Interaction of parents/teachers/students
6. Changes affecting the role of PTA
7. Changes in social interaction/social events
8. Cooperation between home and school
9. Opportunities for leadership development
10. The school's continued role as a change agent
11. Changes in activities and programs

12. Extracurricular opportunities
13. Competition among students
14. Other social issues

The Community Issues

The literature shows that the following issues and concerns will probably arise as community issues:

1. Number of voters in the community
2. Number of voters with children in school
3. Employment provided by the school
4. Employee payroll
5. Money spent in the town by school employees
6. Purchases made in town by the school district
7. Survival of the community/businesses
8. Services provided by the school to the community
9. School's link to outside resources
10. Cost of reproducing lost services/resources provided by the school
11. Immigration/emigration due to school closing
12. Changes in property values
13. Prospects of new jobs/more children
14. Other community issues

Recommendations

The Technical Issues

All school districts are concerned with the items listed under this heading on a daily basis. Most of these listed will appear in the formal consolidation study as they are the items that the school district must have and control in order to operate the schools.

The reader should realize that each item listed will probably involve many details depending on the particular situation and desired information of those using the list. For example, special class offerings, number 7, would reveal information if the user defines this category to mean programs for the handicapped. The outcome would be different if the definition is programs for the gifted and talented. It is important and necessary that each item be defined to detail exactly what the user hopes to discover.

The caution here is that the user realize that each item on all of the lists will probably need further definition and expansion to include more details as required and should not be viewed as just one item.

Items on the list are also interrelated with the information found under one topic sometimes needed to evaluate another topic. Building needs would be difficult to answer without defining the purpose of the building and then using information to be found under other categories such as student enrollment.

The Economic Issues

The economic items were, perhaps, the least detailed in the review of the literature. It was as if the simple mentioning of money was enough to give the reader all necessary details. This may be due to the fact that most consolidation discussions deal with the money issues, to a great extent, and it may not be necessary for the layman to study this topic.

This author has taken some liberty in listing some issues which could be inferred from the literature. It is the author's opinion that participants in the study should involve themselves in the money issue because the literature suggests the economic efficiency of the new school district is given as a main reason for consolidations.

Those using this list should expand it as necessary for their purposes and should compare the present school districts to the proposed school district to see what money could be saved, in what areas it could be saved, and what changes need to be made to insure that real savings will occur.

The Social and Community Issues

The items listed in these two lists were given by the review as issues and concerns which have emerged in past consolidations and which some researchers believe need to be considered by those conducting a consolidation study.

Many of the items reveal what could be considered to be genuine fears of a parent. Others show that business and community leaders may have some fears which concern more personal economic interests.

As the reader looks at these lists, it should be evident that very little appears that would be considered a new item of concern. Yet these are items which recur and are usually never answered to the satisfaction of those affected by the consolidation.

Social and community issues are difficult to measure and this may be the most important reason why these issues emerge again and again. While some items will be easier to define and obtain information for the outcome, for most of the items which involve personal feelings and attitudes, it is recommended that the user try to gather information using a survey approach.

More study is needed concerning these issues and how to get valid, reliable answers to the issues raised. This author hopes that the presentation of the items in these lists will prompt those given the responsibility for consolidation studies an incentive to include at least some of the items in the final reports; and that others in charge of public discussion will use the items to be prepared to answer them as fully as possible when they are brought up by the public.

Conclusions

The history of school consolidation in the United States can be summarized with the fact that there are fewer school districts in the nation today than there were in the past. The move to consolidate school districts is still evident today and will probably continue to be evident in the future.

Those studying school consolidation have usually used only financial and academic arguments for their conclusions. There appears to be no real consideration given by those conducting the studies to the effects that the closing of a local school district has upon the community or the people that the school district serves.

In order for a consolidation study to be effective, all affected parties must feel involved in the decision-making process through the gathering of relevant data and the process of public input.

After a review of the literature, this author concludes that while many studies list issues that emerge during consolidations, most of the articles tend to lean in favor of author bias; and most of the articles are written with either a pro- or anti-consolidation stance or a tendency to be in favor of either a small or a large school. Many of the articles for large schools stress the economic and efficiency issues, while most of those supporting small schools speak of community good.

The author believes that more research needs to be done to follow communities after the consolidation has occurred. Little evidence exists to show whether or not academic progress improves or if the economic and efficiency claims meet the expectations. Whether or not communities survive because of their schools is another topic that is addressed very little in the literature. Longevity studies are needed.

The list of issues found by reviewing various works and studies has been presented to give the participants in a consolidation process a tool to use in their own study. Using the list, with modifications for local circumstances, those involved will address what has been seen by others to be recurring issues during the consolidation process. While everyone may not agree with the final decision when it is reached, hopefully, by being active, informed participants, most of the community members affected will support the decision.

The list presented in this paper is a starting point. It should help those in the midst of a consolidation study to begin their own study. Hopefully, the list will grow with many additions and simplifications by others to become a tool that is more useful in many varied situations.

This researcher concludes that all participants in a consolidation study should look at this list to find the issues that need to be addressed in their study. It is

left to the user to define each item to answer his/her particular needs. The list can be used to guide the search for information and could serve as a rough agenda for public meetings.

The list is not the only tool to be used in the consolidation study and may be useful only to those who are confused about where to start. Some may find the reviews presented in Chapter Two helpful in understanding what is happening and that it probably has happened before. It is recommended that those interested read other works to form their own opinions and course of action.

The value of this list will probably be judged during the consolidation study to see whether the issues presented are valid and serve any purpose whatsoever. The judgment is reserved for those who will be involved in a future consolidation process.

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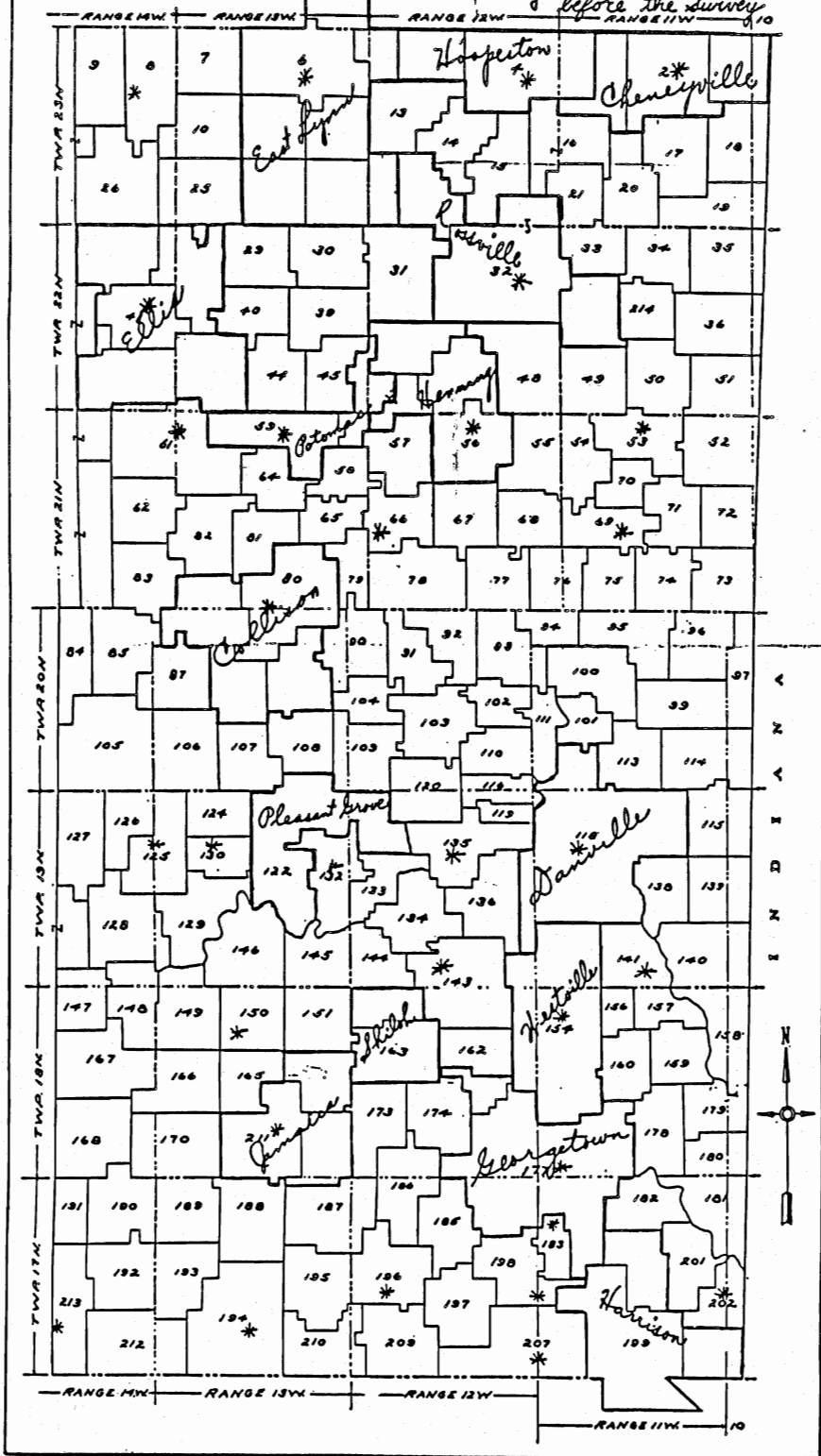
APPENDIX A
MAPS OF VERMILION COUNTY, 1933 AND 1985,
SCHOOL DISTRICTS

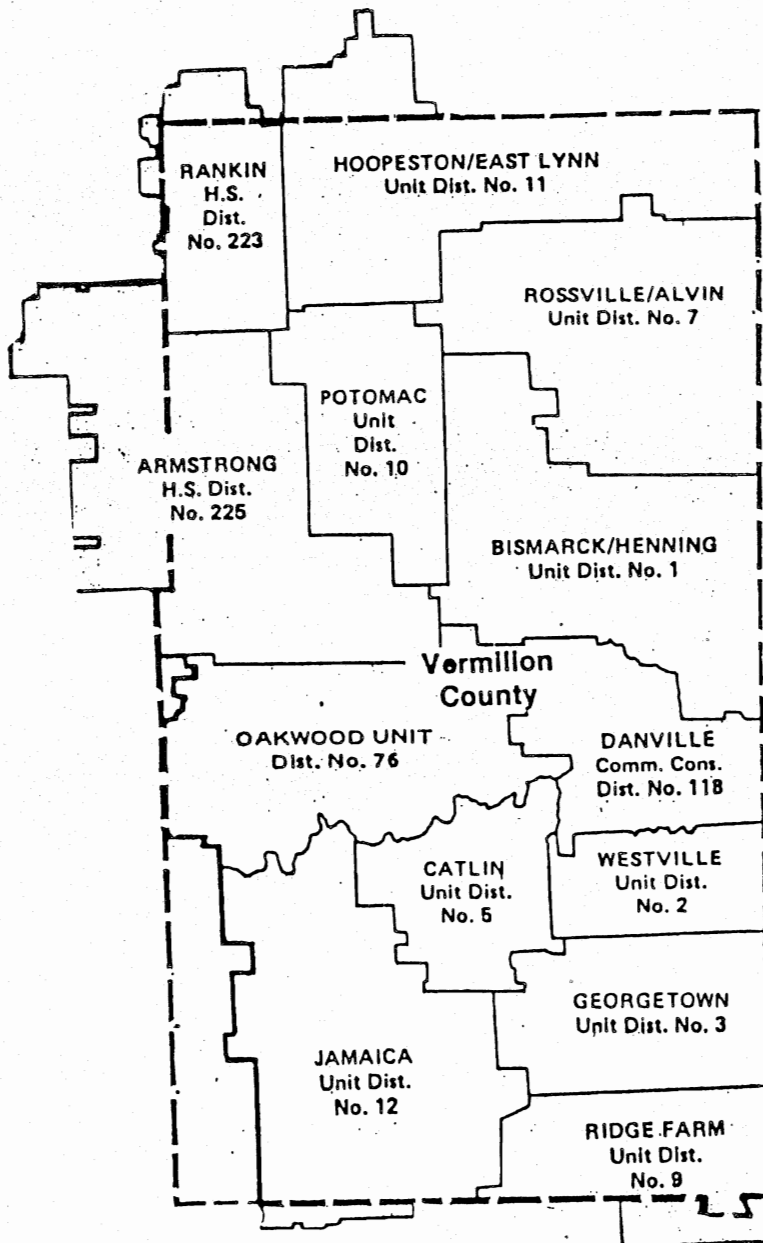
VERMILION COUNTY, ILLINOIS
SCHOOL MAP

STATUTE MILES
1 2 3 4 5 6

L.A. TUOGLE
COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
JANUARY 1923

heavy lines are consolidated districts before the survey





APPENDIX B

ISBE SUMMARY OF SENATE BILL 730



The Legislature and the Schools

Governmental Relations
Legislative Bulletin

Walter W. Naumer, Jr., Chairman
Illinois State Board of Education

Ted Sanders
State Superintendent of Education

July 10, 1985

Volume XI, Number 19

THE REFORM PACKAGE

The General Assembly has sent to Governor Thompson a comprehensive school reform package. This issue highlights that package which is contained in Senate Bill 730.

1. Joint House/Senate Committee on Education Reform

Creates a Joint House/Senate Committee on Education Reform consisting of 12 legislators, for the purpose of reviewing the implementation of education reform and determining the advisability of proposed changes in state law as such laws relate to education reform.

2. School District Reorganization

Creates a new Act to provide for the reorganization of school districts. Provides that within 60 days of the effective date of SB 730, there shall be created in each of the 57 current educational service regions a committee for the reorganization of school districts.

Provides that no later than June 30, 1986, each reorganization committee shall submit to the State Board of Education a plan for the reorganization of appropriate school districts within the educational service region.

Provides that each plan for reorganization of school districts shall ensure that every school district shall meet the minimum criteria unless a justifiable exception is stated: unit districts, an enrollment of 1,500 pupils; elementary districts, an enrollment of 1,000 pupils; and high school districts, an enrollment of 500 pupils.

Provides that upon approval of a reorganization plan by the State Board of Education, the plan shall be submitted to the voters of the territory which constitute the proposed district. Upon approval of a reorganization plan by a majority of voters in each of the affected districts voting on the issue, such plan shall be implemented.

If a majority of voters in each of the affected districts voting on the issue fail to approve a reorganization plan, then the State Board of Education, in consultation with the reorganization committee, may amend the plan and then resubmit the plan to the voters. If the revised plan is approved by a majority of voters in each of the affected districts, then the plan shall be implemented.

3. Mathematics and Science Academy

Provides for the establishment of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. Provides that the academy shall be a residential institution located in the Fox River Valley. Provides that the academy shall be a residential institution and shall be funded by state appropriations, private contributions and endowments. Provides that admission to the academy shall be determined by competitive examination.

4. Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Authorizes the Department of Alcohol and Drug Abuse to establish alcohol and substance abuse education and prevention programs in all educational service regions.

5. Birth-Age Three Handicapped Programs

Authorizes the State Board of Education (SBE) to enter into contracts with public or not-for-profit private organizations to establish model pilot programs which provide services to handicapped children up to the age of three years.

6. Teacher Vocational Education Program

Authorizes the SBE to place public vocational education teachers in private sector jobs for continuing education. Authorizes the SBE to award grants of up to \$2,000 per individual vocational education teacher who is placed in a short-term private sector position during that period of time not embraced within the regular school year. Requires the private firm to contribute at least 30% of the state grant award.

7. Reading Improvement Programs

Authorizes the SBE to fund a School District Reading Improvement Program to provide reading specialists, teacher aides and other personnel to improve reading and study skills of children in public schools. Provides that such funds shall be distributed to schools on the following basis: 70% of monies shall be awarded on the prior year's best three months average daily attendance and 30% shall be distributed on the number of economically disadvantaged pupils.

8. Administrators' Academy

Provides that the SBE shall cause to be established an Administrators' Academy to train administrators to evaluate personnel.

9. Center for Excellence in Teaching

Creates a Center for Excellence in Teaching at the SBE to conduct a pilot study of career compensation programs in five to seven school districts. Such programs shall provide

- compensation for extraordinary teaching, innovation, leadership or additional responsibilities and may include extended teacher contracts, career ladders or performance based pay.
10. Staff Development Programs

Requires school districts to conduct staff development programs. Provides that following SBE approval, the SBE shall provide funds to school districts to aid in conducting such staff development programs.
 11. Summer School

Authorizes the SBE to provide summer school grants for the purpose of enabling gifted children and students in need of remedial education to attend summer school. Such grant moneys shall be used for the purpose of employing certificated personnel and to furnish necessary transportation and textbooks.
 12. Regional Network of Educational Service Centers

Authorizes the SBE to establish a regional network of educational service centers to coordinate and combine existing services including the following education programs: gifted, computer technology and mathematics, science and reading resources. Also authorizes such regional educational service centers to provide new services to schools.
 13. Student Learning Objectives

Requires the SBE to require each school district to set student learning objectives which meet or exceed state established goals.
 14. Student Testing

Requires school districts to test the proficiency of all pupils enrolled in grades 3, 6, 8 and 10 in reading, mathematics and language arts.
 15. No Social Promotion

States that it shall be the policy of the state to discourage promotion from grade to grade for purely social reasons. Provides that pupils who, by teacher judgement and student test results, demonstrate a proficiency level comparable to pupil performance one grade or more below current placement shall be provided with a remediation plan. Such remediation plans may include summer school, extended school day, tutorial sessions, retention in grade, etc.
 16. Arts Program

Authorizes the SBE to provide grants to school boards for the purpose of developing comprehensive arts programs in grades K-6 in music, art, etc.
 17. Student Dropout Programs

Authorizes the SBE to establish projects to offer modified instructional programs designated to prevent students from dropping out of school and to serve as a part-time or full-time option
 18. Better Schools Accountability

Requires each school district to report to parents, taxpayers, the Governor and the General Assembly a school report card assessing the performance of its schools and students measured against statewide and local standards.
 19. School Age

Changes the age dates relating to enrollment in school. Provides that children must be five years of age by November 1 in 1986; by October 1 in 1987; and September 1 in 1988; and thereafter below entering kindergarten.
 20. Pupil Discipline

Requires each school district to establish a parent teacher advisory committee to develop with the school board a written policy on pupil discipline.
 21. School Principal's Role

Requires school boards to specify in their formal job description for principals that his/her primary responsibility is in the improvement of instruction and that a majority of the principal's time shall be spent on curriculum and staff development.
 22. Criminal Background Investigations

Requires school boards to conduct criminal background investigations on all applicants to be selected for employment to ascertain if the applicant has been convicted of any sex offenses or narcotics offenses (limited to felonies). Provides that the applicant shall only be required to submit his/her name, birth date and social security number. Prohibits a school board to employ a person convicted of such offenses (limited to felonies).
 23. Unit Tax Equity

Provides that upon petition for school consolidation, the proposed tax rates for the newly created school district for operations, building and maintenance purposes may be at a rate of .50% (rather than .375%).

Provides that such newly created school districts' tax rate for pupil transportation purposes shall be either: 1) .24%; or 2) the highest existing maximum tax rate for pupil transportation purposes of any school district included in the territory of the proposed districts. Currently, the tax rate for such purposes cannot exceed .12%.

Provides that such newly created school districts' tax rate for fire prevention and safety purposes shall be either: 1) .10% or 2) the highest existing maximum tax rate for fire prevention and safety purposes of any school district included in the territory of the proposed districts. Currently, the tax rate for such purposes cannot exceed .05%.

24. Special Education Personnel Reimbursement

Increases the annual state reimbursement rate for school district special education personnel from \$6,250 to \$8,000 in the 1985-86 school year, payable in FY 87 and thereafter. Also increases the state reimbursement for non-certified special education personnel from \$2,500 to \$2,800.

25. Limited English Speaking Children

Requires school boards with less than 20 children of limited English speaking ability to provide a locally determined program of language instruction.

26. Teacher Bar Exam

Requires the SBE to establish a test for basic skills applicable to all persons who, after July 1, 1988, make their initial application for a teaching certificate.

Provides that the test for teacher certification shall assess, in addition to basic skills, subject content knowledge in the applicant's specific subject field.

Exempts persons to whom any one of such certificates was issued on or before July 1, 1988.

27. Abolish Chicago Board of Examiners

Abolishes the Chicago Board of Examiners effective July 1, 1988. Provides that commencing July 1, 1988, all new teachers employed by the Chicago Board of Education should hold teaching certificates issued by the State Teacher Certification Board and shall be required to take the standardized test for minimal competency.

28. Administrators' Recertification

Provides that no administrative certificate shall be issued after June 30, 1987, unless the applicant has been required to demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge required to establish productive parent-school relationships, to establish a high quality school climate and promoting good classroom organization, and to provide instructional leadership;

Provides that administrative certificates shall be renewed every five years. Provides that recertification requirements shall ascertain the degree to which an administrator's knowledge of instructional practice and procedures has kept pace with new knowledge; maintained the basic level of competence required for initial certification; and ascertain their skill and knowledge regarding the improvement of teaching performance; and

Provides that for those administrators who do not perform satisfactorily upon the recertification requirements, there shall be a two year period of remediation. Provides that failure to successfully demonstrate administrative competency following remediation shall result in a loss of administrative certificates.

29. Teacher Evaluation

Requires school boards to establish and implement programs of certified employed evaluation approved by the SBE. Specifies criteria for that portion concerning teachers. Requires the SBE to train district administrators in evaluation techniques. Mandates dismissal of any teacher who fails upon an "unsatisfactory" evaluation to complete a one year remediation plan.

Provides that nothing in SB 730 shall be construed as preventing immediate dismissal of a teacher for deficiencies which are deemed irremediable. Also provides that failure to comply with the time dictates of the evaluation plans shall not invalidate the results of the remediation plan.

Eliminates the current requirement of a due process dismissal hearing unless requested by the teacher. Also reduces various time requirements in the due process hearing procedure.

Provides that any school district which has not evaluated all of its teachers by the end of the 1987-88 school year, or which fails to evaluate such teachers within every two years thereafter, the SBE shall enter upon the district premises and evaluate the teachers.

30. Primary Purpose of Schooling

Establishes the primary purpose of schooling as the language arts, mathematics, the biological physical and social sciences, the fine arts, and physical development and health. Requires each school district to give priority in the allocation of resources, including funds, time allocation and personnel to fulfilling the primary purpose of schooling.

31. Physical Education Requirements

Provides that a school board may excuse pupils enrolled in grades 11 and 12 from engaging in physical education courses who request to be excused for the following reasons: 1) to enroll in expanded academic classes designed for preparing pupils to meet college entrance requirements; 2) to enroll in courses required for high school graduation requirements; or 3) for ongoing participation in an interscholastic athletic program.

32. Consumer Education Proficiency

Permits pupils to be excused from the mandated consumer education coursework upon passing a consumer education proficiency test.

33. Driver Education Fee

Permits school boards to charge a fee (not to exceed \$50) to students who participate in the driver education course, unless a student is unable to pay, in which event the fee for such a student shall be waived.

34. Parental Transportation Reimbursement

Allows custodians of public and nonpublic pupils who do not live within 1/2 miles from the school of attendance or have access to transportation provided entirely at public expenses to apply for reimbursement of transportation expenses.

Provides for a dollar limit on the amount of such reimbursement to be the lesser of: a) actual transportation expenses; or b) \$50 per pupil for expenses incurred in FY 87; \$100 per pupil for expenses incurred in FY 87; and for FY 88 and thereafter the amount of such reimbursement shall not exceed the prior year's state reimbursement per pupil to public school districts.

35. Teacher Shortage Scholarships

Provides for teacher shortage scholarships to persons preparing to teach in areas of identified staff shortages. Following the completion of the scholarship recipient's program of study, the individual must accept employment within one year in a secondary school and teach for a period of at least three years. Individuals who fail to comply with this provision shall refund such scholarships.

36. Equal Opportunity Scholarships

Require the SBE to establish a scholarship program to enable eligible women and minorities to begin and complete graduate training in educational administration.

37. Chicago Advisory Council

Establishes a subdistrict advisory council to disapprove the subdistrict superintendent's use of the discretionary funds under the superintendent's control and shall have the power to disapprove the use and expenditure of moneys from the supervisory engineers' contingency fund.

Provides that such subdistrict advisory councils shall also make recommendations to the Chicago Board of Education concerning the setting of subdistrict priorities, the budget curriculum, personnel and developing school attendance and discipline policies.

Also establishes a school improvement council at each school in City of Chicago School District #299, composed of teachers and community residents. Provides that the school improvement council shall, prior to April 15, vote on the acceptance of any proposed school building budget submitted by the Chicago Board of Education. Provides that if such councils vote to reject the proposed budget, the Board of Education shall send a member of the board or a representative to the next meeting of the school improvement council to explain the proposed budget and what response the board has made to the community's objections.

Provides that the school improvement council shall approve all expenditures of the school's discretionary funds for textbooks and supplies.

38. School Aid Formula

Repeals the school aid formula as of August 1, 1987.



Illinois State Board of Education

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APPENDIX C
SUMMARY OF WHAT A SUPERINTENDENT SHOULD DO
IN A CONSOLIDATION

Calvin C. Jackson, Superintendent
Fairbury-Cropsey C.U.S. Dist. #3
601 North 7th Street
Fairbury, Illinois 61739

SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

1. When the Board discusses consolidation - how does the superintendent respond - lead or follow?
2. Conduct preliminary meetings between board presidents and superintendents. Determine type and extent of future meetings.
 - a. Small group meetings - one or two board members and administrators - orientation on each district - tour building - consider advantages and disadvantages of consolidation for each school district.
 - b. Joint board meeting for orientation and to consider advantages and disadvantages of consolidation for each school district.

INFORMATION NEEDED BY BOARDS

- a. Financial - each district and combined
 - Tax Rate
 - Taxes
 - Assessed Valuation
 - Bonds
 - Fund Balance
 - State Aid
 - Federal Aid
- b. Enrollment - each district and combined
 - By grade
 - Future projections
 - Trends
- c. Transportation - each district and combined
 - Number of bus routes
 - Number of school buses
 - Miles driven
 - Cost per mile
- d. Building Utilization
 - Number buildings
 - Location - capacity
 - Size of building site
- e. State incentives for consolidation
 - Supplementary state aid - no loss
 - Supplementary state aid based on teacher salaries

- Supplementary state aid based on fund deficits (Education, Building, Transportation, and Working Cash Funds)

- f. Options or methods to consolidate
 - Appoint Committee of Ten to file petition
 - Petition filed by boards of each district
 - Petition filed by 10 percent of legal voters of each district

BOARD DECISION

- a. Discontinue Process
- b. Pursue Consolidation

3. THE DETAILED STUDY OF CONSOLIDATION

- a. Feasibility Study Conducted by:
 - Superintendents
 - Consultants
- b. Should a Citizen Committee be appointed to assist with the study
- c. Advantages - disadvantages of consolidation
- d. Meetings of boards to insure understanding of all data

4. Involve Attorney in process to review all data and the law on consolidation.

5. Joint public hearing(s) held by boards to hear citizen comments on consolidation.

BOARD DECISION

- a. Discontinue Process
- b. Pursue Consolidation

6. Boards formally vote on consolidation - determine method to proceed with consolidation

- a. Appoint Committee of Ten to file petition
- b. Petition filed by boards of each district
- c. Petition filed by 10 percent of legal voters of each district

7. Preparation for hearing by Regional Superintendent

- a. Will proposed district have sufficient size (pupil enrollment) and financial resources (assessed valuation) to provide and maintain a recognized educational program for grades kindergarten through 12.

- b. Is proposed school district for the best interest of the schools of the area and the educational welfare of the pupils.
 - c. Is the territory for the proposed school district compact and contiguous for school purposes.
 - d. Testimony - Presentations
 - Geography
 - Enrollment
 - Buildings
 - Transportation
 - Curriculum
 - Equipment and Materials
 - Instruction
 - Extra Curricular
 - Finance
 - Positive presentation by citizens from each district
 - Chairman's Summary of Testimony
8. Decision by Regional Superintendent
9. Decision by State Superintendent
10. Preparation for the consolidation election.
- Steering Committee
- Get Out the Vote Committee
 - Finance Committee
 - Speaker's Bureau
 - Media Committee
 - Other Committees
11. The Board of Education Election
- a. Who will run for the board.
 - b. What are the terms of office and how will they be determined.
12. Organization of the new Board of Education
- a. Relationship with current boards
 - b. What decisions need to be made prior to the new board taking office.