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Exploration of Alternative Methods of Providing Quality Educational Programs in Five Small Illinois Rural School Districts

Odus T. Cheek

Eastern Illinois University

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Exploration of Alternative Methods
of Providing Quality Educational Programs
in Five Small Illinois Rural School Districts

Odus T. Cheek

Eastern Illinois University

Abstract

This study explored alternative methods that might be used by five selected small Illinois rural school districts to provide quality educational programs. Many Illinois school districts are facing problems that are unique to today's educational setting. Declining enrollments and decreasing farm land assessments along with small increases in state aid have compounded the problems of school districts. School board members must be aware of the condition of the school districts and what warning signs show impending problems. This study explored the enrollment projections, financial conditions and the instructional setting of five Shelby County Illinois school districts. Then options available to these districts to retain and enhance quality educational programs were explored. Conclusions were made with regard to the condition of these districts. With the information in the study and with careful evaluation, the members of the boards of education of these five school districts should be able to make more informed and appropriate decisions as to the direction each school district should take in the future.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

If the primary purpose of educational institutions is to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, then to achieve this purpose, educators should always strive to produce improvement in the quality of educational programs. They must also extend the scope of programs to meet the individual student's needs in an ever-changing society.

Education is primarily a function of the state governments in the United States (Hunt, 1987). While the federal government has, at times, exerted influence upon the public educational system, it has generally left the educational process in the hands of the state. The states have often delegated many of their powers to local school boards, giving the citizens the belief that education is a local, rather than state function. Indeed, local school boards do control most of the daily operations of schools in the United States.

Enrollments in the nation's schools grew steadily from 1900 through 1950. As a result of the "baby boom" following World War II, enrollments increased dramatically during the 1950's and 1960's (Hunt, 1987). The problems facing local school districts during this period were problems of growth and expansion within an expanding economy that promoted widespread support for education. These were the years of

"easy money and widespread support for education." However, conditions began to change during the 1970's.

The elementary public school enrollment reached a peak of 1,684,132 students during the 1970-71 school year. Secondary enrollments peaked at 722,247 students during the 1975-76 school year. School enrollments in the State of Illinois declined from the peak of 2,354,529 in 1973 to 1,811,446 during the 1988 school year. Enrollment is expected to decline through 1990, increase for a few years, and then resume its decline to a low of approximately 1,671,950 in the year 2000 (Karol Chaska personal communication, 1989).

It would seem that the challenges faced by public schools today are greater than at any other time in American history. Decreasing enrollments and diminishing funds, compounded with reduced purchasing power due to inflated costs are the problems that face educators today. In Illinois, state aid to education is dependent upon weighted daily attendance. Therefore, a decline in enrollment is typically followed by a decrease in state aid to education.

In recent years, the Illinois state legislature has not fully funded the state aid formula. The Illinois educational reform program of 1985, House Bill 730, added many programs that must be funded without new sources of revenue from the state legislature. The farmland assessment law passed by the Illinois State Legislature has caused many

districts to face a decline in local revenues. When these factors are combined with declining enrollments and the continuing decline in state revenue, the financial plight of local school districts becomes even more obvious.

Statement of the Problem

The predicament in which many small Illinois rural school districts find themselves appears to have been unanticipated. Due to the fact that more money has not become available, Illinois public school districts have begun to explore alternatives. This study was designed to determine the options available to school districts facing financial difficulties.

Recently, the news media has presented a sketchy picture of what various school districts have done in their attempts to reduce budgets. Stories of reductions in staff, closing of facilities, and reductions in, or elimination of, entire programs are not uncommon. Although it does appear that some Illinois public school districts are in serious trouble, or are headed in that direction, the general public, as well as educators, do not know the extent of these difficulties. No definitive statement has been made outlining the nature of the total needs of the school districts and what the results should be with the implementation of recommended alternatives resulting from severe revenue reductions.

In the attempt to assist in the resolution of this

problem, several questions were addressed in this study, including: What are the conditions that led to the need for alternative programs? Are the schools included in the study facing similar problems, or is this a problem that is only unique to one district? Is there a solution that would benefit one, two, or three of these communities? The most important conclusion should be a decision as to whether the students in each of these school districts could be offered improved educational benefits by the implementation of alternative programs.

Limitations of the Study

1. The five rural school districts may not be representative of all rural school districts.
2. The schools were chosen because of their location. They were not selected on a random basis.
3. The school districts in this study do not all have similar problems.
4. The study did not seek public opinion as to attitude toward consolidation.

This field experience will be limited to five small rural school districts in Shelby County, Illinois. In this study, Shelbyville Unit District #4, Tower Hill Districts #10 and #185, and Cowden-Herrick Districts #11 and #188 will be examined.

Of these five districts, four are dual districts, i.e. separate elementary (K-8) and high school (9-12) districts.

Cowden-Herrick Community Consolidated Grade School District #11 and Cowden-Herrick High School #188 are dual districts that have co terminous boundaries and share a superintendent. Each district hires a principal to serve its buildings. Tower Hill Elementary District #10 and Tower Hill High School District #188 share a superintendent and a principal as administrators for the two districts. Shelbyville School District #4 is a unit district. Therefore, the limitations of this study will fall into two major categories. The first is the small size of the sample. Only the five above-mentioned districts were selected. These districts have adjoining boundaries and face similar problems, so therefore could share a common need for a solution that could involve the neighboring districts.

Operational Definitions

1. Consolidation--To unite two or more school districts into one district.
2. Consolidated school district--refers to any district resulting from the combining of two or more entire elementary, high school, or unit school districts (Article 11B Illinois School Code, 1987).
3. Cooperative educational program--refers to two or more districts providing exemplary course offerings together.
4. Educational programs--the total learning

experiences under the auspices of the school. This includes academic and vocational subjects and also co-curricular programs.

5. Co-curricular programs--those programs sponsored by the school for the benefit of the students that occur adjacent to, but separate from, the regular curricular offerings.

6. Annexation--the process whereby a school district joins itself with one or more contiguous districts. The original district ceases to exist.

7. Detachment--the process by which a portion of a school district detaches from one school district to annex to another school district.

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature and Research

The purpose of this chapter is to review the research and literature which pertains to the types of reductions which public schools have executed in recent years.

Specifically, the following areas have been examined: (1) birthrates, enrollment projections, and teacher supply; (2) problems resulting from declining enrollments; and (3) trends in financial patterns for rural districts.

The era of increasing enrollments in public schools has temporarily come to an end. This is true both in Illinois and nationwide. As was stated in Chapter I, elementary enrollments in Illinois reached a peak of 1,684,132 students during the 1970-71 school year, and secondary enrollments peaked at 722,247 students during the 1975-76 school year (Karol Chaska, 1989). It was also reported earlier that public school enrollments in Illinois are projected to decline by over 20 percent in a period of 15 years (Illinois Office of Education, 1975).

A similar decline in public school enrollments is projected at the national level. The U.S. Bureau of Census developed a new series of population projections in 1972 to reflect the declining level of births (Series D, E, and F) (American Association of School Administrators, 1974). Series D assumed there would be 2.5 births per family, Series E assumed 2.1 births, and Series F predicted 1.8

births (American Association of School Administrators, 1974). Presently, Series E continues to be the most accurate.

What are the ramifications for elementary and secondary schools? If the Series E projections remain on target, elementary school enrollment will continue on a downward trend. The 1988 publication "Illinois School Enrollment Now and in the Year 2000," indicates that school enrollments are expected to decline until 1990, then increase for a few years, and then decline until the year 2000. A six percent enrollment decline is projected from 1987 to 2000.

Of course, the nature of enrollment could change drastically if either the Series D (2.5 births) or Series F (1.8 births) projections of the U.S. Census Bureau prove to be more accurate. For example, the deviation between Series D (2.5 births) and Series F (1.8 births) could mean a difference of 12 million students enrolled in the nation's schools by the year 2000. Determining which, if any of the three series will be most accurate in the future, will not be a simple matter.

In spite of the problems involved in projecting enrollments, it is a reality which school districts must face. Today, projection techniques run the gamut from very informal means to those which make use of the most sophisticated computer technology. One such promising instrument is the Keough Indicator Survey Scale (KISS)

(Appendix A).

The survey has seven indicators related to enrollment. If four indicators are present, district officials should consider the development of a contingency plan to prepare for possible school closings and consolidations (See Appendix B for the questions in the Keough Survey.)

Methods of forecasting enrollments are numerous. Most are oriented toward live births and historical retention rates. Some are much more specific in the type of output they produce than Keough's scale. For example, the Markov chain model was described as one which:

Estimates the time students can expect to spend at each level of the system, given their present level, and the variance of these estimates, can also be obtained, as well as graduation and dropout probabilities for each level. The information may be easily revised to reflect current conditions. (Grace, Hanson, & Trommelen, 1975).

Although models for projecting enrollments were available to educators, little use was made of them until the phenomenon of declining enrollments was already present. Many educators were surprised by the reversal in enrollment trends. New talents will be required of administrators during a period of declining enrollments. The effective administrator will need to develop additional skills to evaluate the changes needed to produce viable programs. The successful administrator will be measured by his ability to cope with educational changes caused by declining

enrollments and financial conditions (Sargent, 1970).

The declining birthrate in the United States will eventually influence the composition of American society.

It was predicted that:

In contrast, a Trustee's Report on Social Security foresaw a decline in the next few years to an average of 1.7 children for each woman of child-bearing age from the current level of 1.9, and then a gradual climb to a rate of 2.1 children. Last year, the assumption was for an increase to 2.1 children without any further decline. The impact of this change is to further increase the ratio of retirees to workers in future years; it will climb from 30 for every 100 workers to about 50 for each 100 workers by the year 2000 (Sargent, 1976).

It might be conjectured that the higher the percentage of retirees in the population, the less likely that support for the schools will remain constant, or grow. This possible decrease of support may result from factors such as loss of vested interest in the schools, and inability to maintain the schools on a reduced or fixed income.

One group which has already been touched by declining enrollments is the nation's teaching force. Even though teachers have already lost jobs due to declining enrollments, more newly trained teachers enter the national job market each year. One government study indicated that the teacher supply did not diminish during the early years of the decrease in teacher demand (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1974-75).

The magnitude of the continuing excess of teachers will depend upon several factors in the future. According to the

government report previously cited:

Here are three basic sources of the demand for new teachers:

- 1) Changes in student enrollment
- 2) Changes in the ratio of teachers to pupils
- 3) Teacher turnover (the number of currently employed teachers leaving the profession)

According to that same government report, the two sources of teacher supply are:

- 1) beginning teachers; i.e., recent graduates eligible to teach for the first time
- 2) the reserve pool; i.e., persons qualified to teach but not currently teaching (Projections of Supply and Demand).

Teacher reductions, mentioned previously in the study, reflect a major problem associated with declining enrollments. Since over 70 percent of the public school budget in the United States is used to pay for instruction (School Budgets, 1975), teachers are often the first group examined when reductions become necessary. However, teacher reductions have not been the only problem associated with declining enrollments. State aid to education is linked to weighted average daily attendance in Illinois. The same is true in many other states. When enrollments drop in a particular school district, less state aid money is received by that district. As Busch (1975) commented:

Anyone not familiar with planning for school might

think that a decline in enrollment is good. The hectic adaptation and recruitment associated with rapid expansion is over, and the planners' and administrators' lives can become more tranquil.

Some of the problems of declining enrollments noted by Busch are that as the numbers decrease, budgets must be cut. After the budgets are cut, citizens tend to forget about balancing the budget but remember only the staff, programs, and activities that suffer.

There are currently two points of view regarding declining enrollments. One group of people believe that declining enrollments will necessarily result in a reduction of services provided by the schools. This view has been typified in the statement that:

Negotiations with administrators and school boards may result in accession to demands of teachers' groups. But the public, who in the long run decide how much money will be available, are not 'put over a barrel.' They are not bound to provide the fiscal support to meet negotiated settlements. The public is the well. It may be desirable to think about the implication of Can't Pump Water When You Ain't Got No Well (The move to 'equalize', 1975)!

In March of 1976, the Editor of the Phi Delta Kappan expressed a concern that for the first time Americans may achieve a lesser quality of education than was available to previous generations (Rodekohr & Rodekohr, 1976). Another writer conducted a study and found that increases in enrollments were accompanied by improved efficiency (Getschman, 1965).

However, other educators believe that efficiency of

operations can be improved during periods of declining enrollments. Rodekohr and Rodekohr (1976) found in a Colorado study that in districts with declining enrollments the drop out rates were lower, pupil-teacher ratios were lower, and achievement scores were higher than those that were achieving growth.

This same optimism in the opportunities of declining enrollments was echoed by Keough (1975), who believed that lower enrollments would produce an increase in educational quality and opportunities for students. Obviously, there are two diverse trains of thought concerning the challenge of declining enrollments.

Even those educators who believe declining enrollments can be managed to the benefit of students would not deny that serious planning is necessary. This planning has not often been evident, perhaps because:

School officials and parents are reluctant to admit that the community is aging, its children growing up and leaving, and that the schools that once symbolized a suburb's ideals are no longer so badly needed. Perhaps as a result of this reluctance, there has been little statewide planning related to the shrinking school age population, and administrators are similarly diffident about spreading the word (Peterson, 1974).

A special report contained in the June, 1975, edition of The American School Board Journal declared:

Emanating directly from this are increasing numbers of teachers whose services are no longer justified--together with growing legions of taxpayers who can neither understand nor justify the closing of schools that once were showcases in

their communities, possessed sentimental value because of their venerability, or were only a hop, skip, and jump from home for their children (Special Report, 1975).

Many problems, in addition to those already mentioned, can result from declining enrollments. Beyond the fact that teaching positions may be eliminated in many school districts, teacher quality and morale also may suffer. "Every school district needs new blood. But there isn't going to be much new blood pumped into districts when the job market is as tight as it is" (Nyquist, 1977).

Curriculum is another potential problem area. The curriculum offered in school districts faced with declining enrollments has often been scrutinized. Various interest groups believe they should have a voice in reductions which are contemplated. One report indicated that when considering a curriculum change the needs and wishes of the community should be considered (Staff, 1976). However, the desires of all facets of the community would be impossible to meet, and district patrons should understand that certain courses are required by law.

One possible suggestion for improved education in rural areas is the continual professional up-grading of teachers. One author suggested a system for continual in-service education for rural teachers and an improved financial rewards system to attract better teachers to rural schools (Tamblyn, 1975).

Another suggestion for improving teacher performance in

rural schools was offered by Swick and Driggers (1975). They outlined and described an in-service educational improvement program for rural schools. The basic points of their program are:

- (1) needs assessment within the school-community setting,
- (2) establishment of goals and objectives for the school-community setting,
- (3) identification of available services to meet the needs of the school-community,
- (4) organizing and developing available services for use in school-community setting,
- (5) an implementation plan, and
- (6) use of follow-up and continual evaluation to up-grade the in-service educational program.

In the same perspective, Heesacker (1970) pointed to the use of small classes for individualizing instruction in the small school; he also pointed to the use of shared services by a group of rural/small school districts to maximize the services for many children than simply a select few so afforded by wealthy districts together with other planning processes such as mutual curriculum development and shared in-service education programs.

For many years, a variety of experimental instructional techniques have been used by 'model' rural school districts and provide a direction for other schools to follow. For example, Bay and Black (1969) described an audio tape technique used on buses while students ride to school in the morning. Students can dial many topics such as lessons on seasons of the year and on history study.

Another innovative instructional program was cited in Newsweek fifteen years ago. A school in Granite City,

Illinois, which was utilizing a newspaper current events program for reading and social studies skill development, was described in the article. The uniqueness of the program was that it used a varied approach to teaching 'core' skills of science, mathematics, language, reading, and social studies (Learn All About It, 1974).

Heesacker (1970) also described how video-audio equipment can be used to bring events live to rural classrooms. For example, he cited how students in Stamford, New York were studying Eskimo culture and could directly see and hear Eskimos responding to many of their questions. Of course, as Heesacker pointed out, the Educational Television Network offers such services to many districts in the Midwestern part of the nation.

Another idea on broadening the curriculum offerings through the use of modular and flexible scheduling is described by Sturgis (1974). He pointed out how some rural districts use flexible and modular schedules to "free up" students for work experiences in the community. Others use such an arrangement so they can offer mini-courses on special subjects to gifted and remedial students.

While individualization of instruction in rural and small school classrooms is expensive, it also provides the best mode of improving the learning climate for children. Lamb (1975), in a very useful article, provided some suggestions for rural school teachers on how to

individualize their programs of study. Utilizing the same idea Thomas (1974) noted that quality instructional programs (such as individualized instruction) are costly but that finance studies of education show that quality programs increase the economic stability of the rural community.

An example of how quality programs in rural areas can be developed is described in the Texas Small Schools Project. Bitters (1975) explained that the small schools in Texas used a model that stressed the needs of pupils, providing services to help teachers meet these needs, and providing long range services to facilitate the educational program. It was found, Bitters pointed out, that schools could, by utilizing educational television, programmed instruction, correspondence courses, alternate year offerings, team teaching, and individualized instruction, improve their programs and still minimize the expense factor when they did so on a regional basis.

Edington (1970) supported the concept used in Texas. He pointed out that since rural schools have a small tax base they need to use regional approaches to meet the diverse needs of the students and the community. Indeed many districts have consolidated their financial and educational structures.

In summary, the findings of research and studies on the problems and prospects confronting rural schools indicate that there are alternatives to poor instruction, isolated

school-community situations, and under financed programs of instruction. These alternatives seem to revolve around continued programs for teacher improvement; use of a regional approach to maximize services for meeting student needs; experimentation with unique instructional approaches in the classroom; development and implementation of the community school concept; and, in some cases, consolidation of the financial, legal, and educational structure of many small districts into larger districts.

Declining enrollments alone have not brought about the difficulties with which Illinois public school districts have been contending for the past few years. Declining enrollments have acted as a catalyst, setting in motion a chain of events, precipitating the problems. Nearly all of the problems have a financial basis, since state aid to education is related to weighted average daily attendance in Illinois. Nearly fifteen years ago, this relationship was recognized by the Illinois Office of Education (1975), whose Task Force on Declining Enrollments stated:

When a sector of the economy reverses its trend from growth to decline, serious problems of adjustment should be expected. Elementary and secondary education, a major sector of the economy, is now faced with a declining demand for services due to a drop in the number of pupils. At the very least, decline will require a reallocation of resources within education and may mean some reduction of need for resources such as buildings. At the school district level, declining enrollments mean a difficult period of fiscal adjustment.

More specifically, the Task Force (Illinois Office of

Education, 1975) stated:

In regard to the impact of declining enrollments upon general state aid to local districts, the analysis undertaken indicates that on the average, and assuming no significant change in other factors, there will be an automatic reduction in revenue from general state aid with the loss of a pupil.

The Task Force (Illinois Office of Education, 1975) also discovered that (1) districts receiving a majority of their funds from state aid are the first affected by an enrollment decline and less than full-funding of the state aid formula; (2) school districts utilizing the Strayer-Haig Formula typically lose less state aid due to declining enrollments than do those using the Resource Equalizer Formula; and (3) high school districts lose less state aid per pupil lost than do elementary and unit districts.

For years these financial problems have caused many educators to question whether the property tax is the best basis for financing public schools in this country. The attempt of some states to further equalize educational opportunity has also focused public attention upon the validity of the property tax. Wynkoop (1975), discussing the attempts of one state to equalize school financing, stated that the majority of taxpayers feel that the real estate tax is unfair.

Benson (1972) has called the property tax the weakest of our taxes:

The property tax falls short when measured by all three of the main criteria by which we judge

goodness of tax instruments. This is what sets it apart. The federal personal income tax, though deficient on the criterion of economic neutrality, is a progressive levy and it is probably our best-administered tax. The general sales tax, mainstay of state government finance, is neither very progressive nor very regressive; its incidence is best described as proportional. But it wins high marks for economic neutrality. These three taxes--income, sales and property--are the three legs of a stool supporting our public sector operations, and the property tax is the weakest of the three.

This author suggested a replacement for the property tax in school financing:

It is possible, however, for one unit of government to 'use' a tax that is administered by another unit, provided the required amount of intergovernmental cooperation is obtained. Thus, a replacement for the school property levy could be a school surtax on the federal personal income tax return. Taking the nation as a whole, the rate of surtax would be approximately 21 percent if all school property taxation was abandoned and 13 percent if only the residential portion of the property tax was given up (Benson & Shannon, 1972).

Benson (1972) outlined in detail his plan for implementing the school surtax on personal income, but he admitted, "If it were easy to get schools off the property tax, surely it would have been done by now." In the April, 1975 edition of The American School Board Journal, the editor, commenting on school finances admitted that radical changes in the financing of public schools as in replacing the property tax with some other tax would create bureaucratic bungling and cause millions of dollars of waste that is needed by the schools (The Move to 'Equalize' Education Spending, 1975). In the view of most writers, a change from the property tax

as a basis for school financing is not imminent.

Most educators who have recently made suggestions about reducing expenses in local school districts have concentrated upon reducing personnel or reforming the tax structure. In Florida, a different approach was attempted in an effort to ease the financial burden of the public schools. Florida built a cost of living adjustment into the school finance formula. According to Fox (1975), the finance formula is based upon an adoption of the consumer price index. The Florida plan does not take into consideration the differences in the cost of living in different areas of the state. Assuming that such an index could be adapted to the structure of Illinois school finance, and assuming that the difficulties mentioned by Fox could be resolved, this concept could still be doomed to failure in Illinois in view of the fact that the state legislature has failed to fully fund the state aid formula in recent years.

Finally, a California school district has experimented with another means of reducing expenses, i.e., early retirement. In discussing a teacher who opted for early retirement under this plan, it was reported that for a third of the cost of a senior staff member, new blood can be introduced to the system (Gilding the Golden Years, 1975).

According to the Illinois School Board Journal (Sept.-Oct., 1988), in 1988-89, only 135 million of new money is

coming from the general assembly. Of this, 27 million is targeted for teacher retirement. This amount would be included in the \$880,000,000 increase in the educational budget since 1976. This is a 44.2 percent increase in monies for elementary and secondary schools in twelve years. What on earth has been done with all that money? How can education need more? State Superintendent Ted Sanders "told the rest of the story" at a recent Illinois Association of School Administrators Conference, 1987:

Since 1976 the state budget has grown from \$1.99 billion to \$2.87 billion. That is a significant amount of growth. However, when compared to "real dollars" adjusted for 1976, a more dramatic picture emerges. In fact the purchasing power has dropped from \$1.99 billion to \$1.35 billion.

That is a DECREASE of 32.2% or about 2.7% per year.

No wonder budgets tightened considerably during this period. It is the classic example of mandating for excellence while paying for mediocrity. While state support for education has been declining, local support has been increasing.

As we moved from Fiscal Year 1977 to 1978, the percent of support provided by local sources exceeded that from state, and the margin of difference has grown nearly every year since. In FY88, 52.7% of the bill was paid by local sources. The state share dropped to 39.35%.

The state level of support in 1976 constant dollars has decreased \$125 per pupil, or 14.1%. Local support has more than picked up the slack, increasing by \$192 per pupil, or 23.3%.

When the two are combined, the average growth over the 13 year period is about \$101 per pupil, or 5.5%. Obviously, the relative stability in total funding is due only to increased local funding.

This year according to Educator Press (Aitchison, 1988), we will see the third major attempt by the governor

and educators across the state to secure a minimum of a one percent increase in the state income tax. Governor Thompson has stated as much, and key educational leaders in the state are in agreement that this is needed by June 30, 1989. The question unanswered is two fold. (1) Can the members of the legislature be convinced to pass a tax increase to fund education? (2) If the increase is secured will the governor allocate the needed funds to elementary and secondary education or will the funds be divided in so many ways as to leave education in the same position as it is now--underfunded?

Consider this quotation from The Decline and Fall of School Finance Reform in Illinois published by the Center for the Study of Education Finance of Illinois State University (1986):

Our friends in sociology have a useful notion of "latent" and "manifest" functions. We think this is well illustrated in the 1985 (Illinois) reform package. There are some latent, perhaps even wholly unintended functions of that package. To take only one . . . What will be the effect of the "district report card" provisions and the students' performance evaluations? When all the smoke clears away . . . there will be no mystery as to which students are doing well, and which students are doing badly in Illinois schools. The students in the affluent districts are doing well, and the students in the poor districts are doing badly. Further, students in small and poor districts will do the least well, but that is admittedly more conjecture than present empirical fact. The important policy question that will emerge once all the testing and measuring is done is exactly the same as it is at present: What are you going to do about this situation? We have the temerity to suggest an answer to that question. It is the undoubted responsibility of the State of

Illinois to help the poor district, and perhaps even the small district, to turn out a better product. We may even eventually get a court to agree that it is a constitutional duty of the state to do exactly that. It may be questioned whether the authors of the reform package intended this outcome, but it is a real possibility (Sanders, 1986).

Chapter III

Design of the Study

Procedure of the Study

This study was organized around the descriptive analytic research procedure. The basic purpose of the study was to identify educational and financial conditions that exist in five small Illinois school districts and to provide possible solutions to current problems facing those districts.

No experimental or quasi-experimental research procedures were utilized in this study. In the study data was collected from various governmental entities and information was obtained from interviews with superintendents of schools. The data and information was used to complete a descriptive analysis that focused on the current problems facing school districts and an examination of alternative solutions to these problems. Information obtained from this study will be presented to the members of the boards of education of the five school districts so that future decisions can be made in a knowledgeable manner.

This study was conducted during the time period of January to November, 1988. It was limited to five school districts in central Illinois.

Sample Population

The five districts included in this study lie almost entirely in Shelby County, Illinois. The exception is that

25 square miles of Cowden-Herrick lies in northern Fayette County. The Shelby County area is basically one of farming. Employment opportunities are limited within the county. In the past five years, the major factory in Shelby County has increased employee numbers from 250 to approximately 1000. This increase in job opportunities within the county may cause a decrease in mobility of county residents because of the fact that they will no longer have to travel across the county line to secure employment. Many of the county residents find employment in the surrounding communities of Decatur, Sullivan, Effingham, and Mattoon.

Data Collection and Analysis

The source of information for this study was gathered from the Illinois State Board of Education and the Regional School Superintendent's Office as well as through the superintendents of the school districts. Additional information was compiled concerning population trends through the Shelby County Department of Public Health.

Data in this study was collected concerning three main areas--student enrollment, instructional program, and finance. The data was then organized to build a factual picture of present conditions upon which future decisions could be made by the boards of education involved.

Chapter IV

Results of the Study

Student Enrollment

This study considered the options of the following school districts:

Tower Hill Community Consolidated Grade School #10

Tower Hill Community High School #185

Cowden-Herrick Community Consolidated Grade School #11

Cowden-Herrick Community High School #188

Shelbyville Community Unit #4

The study covered enrollment trends, financial trends, demographics of the school districts, facility utilization and curriculum consideration.

The Tower Hill High School #185 and the Tower Hill Grade School #10 lie in a 55 square mile area that borders Shelbyville Unit #4 to the east and lie entirely in Shelby County, Illinois. The village of Tower Hill is eleven miles west of the city of Shelbyville and six miles east of the city of Pana in Christian County. The Tower Hill High School district has been in operation since 1898. The Tower Hill Grade School was organized in 1951 as a result of consolidation of small rural school districts in the community. The present high school was built in 1935 with a remodeling project in 1979. The grade school was built in 1951. The present gymnasium was a joint project of the two school districts in 1979.

The Tower Hill School districts are members of the Eastern Illinois Area of Special Education and house part of their students. They also send special education students to Shelbyville, Mattoon, and Taylorville on a tuition basis. The Tower Hill Grade School has 15 certified staff members while the high school has 10. The Tower Hill Grade School provides the cafeteria services for the two districts. Each district has a transportation service with each district operating two bus routes; however, both elementary and high school students are transported on each of these routes. There are 13 classified staff members that work in the two districts. The enrollment of the two districts in Tower Hill is composed of white, non-Hispanic students. There are no students enrolled at this time with non-English speaking backgrounds. Approximately 26% of the districts' enrollments comes from low income families.

The Shelbyville Community Unit School District #4 lies in a 142 square mile area in the heart of Shelby County, Illinois. The district was formed in 1948 immediately following the passage of the legislation making unit districts possible. It includes the city of Shelbyville along with the communities of Clarksburg, Lakewood, Henton, Middlesworth and Westervelt. All school buildings are within the city limits.

Shelbyville C.U.S.D. #4 operates four buildings. Main Street School is located near the heart of the business

district on one city block. It houses first , second and third grade students and primary level E.M.H. students. Fourth graders attend the Vine Street School. This building is old and is in need of many repairs to fulfill the requirements of the life safety code. Moulton School, which is on the same site as the high school, houses grades five through eight as well as pre-school special education students, kindergarten, and intermediate and junior high E.M.H. students. The high school houses grades nine through twelve and secondary E.M.H. students.

Shelbyville operates a fleet of buses that run regular student routes as well as three kindergarten routes and two special education routes to Mattoon and Charleston for low incidence special education services. The hot lunch program has its meals prepared at Moulton School and delivered by van to the grade schools. Shelbyville had in 87 certified staff in 1987. There are 50 classified personnel that work for the district.

The Cowden-Herrick Community Consolidated Elementary School District #11 and the Cowden-Herrick Community Consolidated High School District #188 were formed in 1970 by the results of a referendum. Each district is composed of 108 square miles all of which lie in the southwestern portion of Shelby County except for approximately 25 square miles of Fayette County. The high school district operates the transportation system for the two districts. They

operate 7 regular bus routes plus a shuttle bus system between Herrick and Cowden. They also deliver special education students to Shelbyville. They contract with Shelbyville to bus low incidence special education students that are transported to Mattoon and Charleston.

The grade school district #11 operates a hot lunch program for the two districts. The Herrick kitchen produces lunches for the Herrick elementary and junior high school students. The Cowden elementary building houses the cafeteria that produces lunches for grades one through six plus the high school. Each of the grade schools are about 50 years old, but a tremendous amount of life safety work has been done so the buildings are in fair to good condition. The high school building is a modern building that is in excellent condition.

In order to determine the needs of a school district one must have a knowledge of the numbers of the students to be served. In order to project the number of students to be served, several of factors must be considered including the following:

1. Past population trends in the county
2. Annual number of live births in the county
3. Past and current school enrollment by grade level

The historical and projected enrollments based upon careful analysis should be valid for a period of several years.

However, the following variables will affect these

projections:

1. student drop out rate
2. mobility of population
3. changes of age range and income levels of residents
4. transportation changes
5. community development
6. availability and cost of housing
7. employment opportunities
8. birth rates

Because of these variations, districts are encouraged to update these enrollment projections to determine if significant deviations are present. Districts should analyze the projections in light of any changes and determine, if possible, the causes of the deviations.

According to Table 1, the population of the State of Illinois grew between the years of 1960 and 1970 by 10.2%, but the percentage of increase declined by 2.8% by the year 1980. During the period of 1977 through 1987 the public school enrollment in the State of Illinois decreased by 579,378 students. This indicates a 24.4% decrease in the enrollment in the state (see Table 2).

Student population projections for the school districts included in the study were developed through the use of the past student survival ratios at each grade level. These ratios were obtained by comparing the number of students enrolled in a particular grade level during one year with

Table 1

	Population Data		
	For State of Illinois and Shelby County		
	1960	1970	1980
	Population/ Percent of Inc./Dec.	Population/ Percent of Inc./Dec.	Population/ Percent of Inc./Dec.
Illinois	10,081,158 +15.7%	11,110,285 +10.2%	11,426,518 +2.8%
Shelby County	23,404 -4.2%	22,589 -3.5%	23,923 +5.9%

Note: From Shelby County Public Health Department, 1988.

Table 2

A COMPARISON OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT CHANGE AMONG
THE STATES: 1971-72 to 1986-87
ENROLLMENT

STATE	1971-72	1986-87	CHANGE	%	CHANGE
Illinois	2,373,659	1,794,281	-579,378		-24.4%
Indiana	1,230,796	963,733	-267,063		-21.7%
Iowa	652,958	481,346	-171,612		-26.3%
Kentucky	720,309	642,778	-77,531		-10.8%
Missouri	1,023,374	800,606	-222,768		-21.8%
Wisconsin	999,921	767,650	-232,271		-23.2%

Note: From "Estimates of School Statistics" by National Education Association, 1986-87.

the number of students enrolled in the preceding grade level the year before. For example, if there were 100 students in grade 1 during a particular year and 110 students in grade 2 the following year, the grade level survival ratio for that year would be 1.10. If, however, there were only 90 students in grade 2 the following year, the grade level survival ratio for that year would be .90. The average of these ratios over a period of several years provides an indication of the effects of students transferring into and out of public schools in the district. Assuming that past trends were likely to continue, average student survival ratios were used to predict future district enrollments.

Projections of future kindergarten enrollments were made on the basis of past percentage survivals of kindergarten students in a district compared to live births in the county five years earlier. If, for example, there were 50 students enrolled in an district's kindergarten during 1985 and 500 live births in the county in 1980, the kindergarten survival percentage would be 10.00%. The averages of these percentages in the past were used to project future kindergarten enrollments (Blade, Janes, Merigis, and Smitley, 1986).

As indicated by Table 3, the population of Shelby County has decreased by 500 and is projected to decrease until 1995. Table 4 will show that there has been a decrease in births for Shelby County between the years of

Table 3

Population Data
Shelby County, Illinois

YEAR	POPULATION	PERCENTAGE INC. /DEC.
1960	23,404	-4.2%
1970	22,589	-3.5%
1980	23,923	+5.9%
1985	23,424	-2.0%
	PROJECTED	
1990	23,317	-1.0%
1995	23,305	-0.0%

Note: From Shelby County Public Health
Department, 1988.

Table 4
Number of Live Births
Shelby County

YEAR	NUMBER
1977	379
1978	339
1979	387
1980	353
1981	346
1982	314
1983	314
1984	342
1985	316
1986	269
1987	308

Note: From Shelby County Public Health Department, 1988.

1977 and 1986 of 23.7%. This is approximately the same percentage as the decrease in statewide enrollment.

Table 5 reveals that the enrollment of Tower Hill schools has decreased from 261 students in 1985 to 236 in 1988 with a projected enrollment of 211 in 1992. This is a 19% decrease, and by 1992 the K-8 enrollment is projected to decrease by 18%. Table 6 indicates that the total enrollment for Shelbyville C.U.S.D. #4 has decreased from a total of 1436 in 1984 to 1372 in 1987. This is a decrease of 64 students or 4% over a three year period. The projected enrollment in 1992 is 1278 which is a decrease of 94 students from the 1987 enrollment. This represents a 6.3% decrease in enrollment by 1992. However, it should be noted that the K-8 enrollment will decrease by 10% during the same period. This would indicate that there will probably be a continued decrease in the high school enrollment beyond the 1992 school year.

As indicated in Table 7, Cowden-Herrick Grade School District #11 declined in enrollment by 42 students between 1984-1988. This is an 11% decrease. The projected decrease between 1988 and 1992 is 4%. The Cowden-Herrick High School District #188 decreased by 8% between 1984-1988. The projected enrollment between 1988 and 1992 indicates that the high school enrollment will increase by 4%. This would indicate that the total enrollment of the two Cowden-Herrick districts is likely to remain fairly stable for the next few

Table 5

Student Enrollment										
Tower Hill Districts #10 and #185										
	Actual					Projected				
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	
K	23	21	14	16	12	15	14	12	13	
1	26	20	23	15	16	12	15	14	12	
2	17	15	19	19	14	16	12	15	14	
3	18	20	17	21	20	14	16	12	15	
4	22	20	18	17	19	20	14	16	12	
5	15	17	19	16	14	19	20	14	16	
6	26	26	16	16	17	14	19	20	14	
7	26	24	30	17	14	17	14	19	20	
8	19	17	27	16	17	14	17	14	19	
9	29	22	21	22	29	17	14	17	14	
10	26	23	19	20	23	29	17	14	17	
11	26	26	25	21	23	23	29	17	14	
12	25	20	19	22	18	23	23	29	17	
K-8	193	170	183	161	143	141	141	136	135	
9-12	96	91	84	85	93	92	91	82	76	
K-12	289	261	267	246	236	233	232	218	211	

Note: From "Fall Housing Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-1988.

Table 6

Student Enrollment											
Shelbyville C.U.S.D. #4											
	Actual					Projected					
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	
K !	111	96	129	81	83	89	97	93	77	77	
1 !	131	115	90	133	83	84	90	98	93	77	
2 !	124	122	113	84	134	80	81	87	95	90	
3 !	100	116	120	107	86	130	78	78	84	92	
4 !	127	111	114	123	111	89	135	81	81	88	
5 !	109	124	98	111	120	106	85	129	77	77	
6 !	89	107	121	97	111	118	104	84	127	76	
7 !	105	93	108	119	102	113	121	107	86	130	
8 !	121	108	89	110	121	103	114	122	107	86	
9 !	114	131	119	106	125	136	116	129	137	121	
10 !	99	104	124	109	104	117	128	109	121	129	
11 !	89	89	96	106	85	90	101	111	94	104	
12 !	118	78	83	86	100	78	82	93	101	86	
K-8!	1017	992	982	965	951	912	905	879	827	793	
912!	420	402	422	407	414	421	427	442	453	440	
K12!	1437	1394	1404	1372	1365	1333	1332	1321	1280	1233	
1977:	379		1980:	353		1983:	314		1986:	269	
1978:	339		1981:	345		1984:	342		1987:	269	
1979:	387		1982:	314		1985:	325				

Note: From "Fall Housing Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-1988.

Table 7

Student Enrollment										
Cowden-Herrick Districts #11 and #188										
	Actual						Projected			
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	!	1989	1990	1991	1992
K !	40	45	35	40	36	!	36	39	36	35
1 !	45	41	47	31	40	!	36	36	39	36
2 !	41	40	35	45	31	!	40	36	36	39
3 !	39	39	37	35	45	!	31	40	36	36
4 !	45	38	40	37	35	!	45	31	40	36
5 !	42	44	37	42	37	!	35	45	31	40
6 !	48	42	44	36	42	!	37	35	45	31
7 !	41	48	44	48	36	!	42	37	35	45
8 !	52	40	47	37	48	!	36	42	37	35
9 !	44	53	40	45	37	!	48	36	42	37
10 !	43	42	46	37	37	!	37	48	36	42
11 !	46	42	41	43	43	!	37	37	48	36
12 !	37	43	41	39	39	!	43	37	37	48
K-8!	392	377	366	351	350	!	338	341	335	333
912!	170	180	168	164	156	!	165	158	163	163
K12!	562	557	534	515	506	!	503	499	498	496

Note: From "Fall Housing Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-1988.

years.

Finance

The outlook for increased funding for schools in Illinois is not good. Although there was an increase of \$107 million in state monies for the 1987-88 school year, not all of this reached the schools. Glaub (1988) states that the general state aid program received only \$52.5 million, which represented a 3% increase in state aid. Categorical programs that offer reimbursement based upon categorical formulas were again funded at less than 100%. Most special education programs, as well as transportation and the free lunch program were funded at 1987 school year levels, which means that they were pro rated at slightly lower levels than actual entitlement. The only exception was the personnel reimbursement for special education which was boosted by \$20 million. Reimbursement for special education salaries was expected to be at 92.4% of "guaranteed" entitlement which was up from 82.4% during the last year.

What is the impact of the 1988 school year state funding? While the \$107 million represented a 4.4% increase in state funding, it was only 1.5% of the \$7 billion plus that it costs to keep the Illinois schools open. Federal reimbursement was up some \$60 million in 1987-88; most of the difference between 1.5% and the actual growth in school cost had to be made up from local property taxes or cuts in

spending.

Unfortunately, the outlook for property tax revenue is clouded, too, for some school districts. Revenue from farmland taxes will continue to go down. Revenue growth, or the lack of it, will likely continue to be a problem for the immediate future of small rural Illinois school districts.

On the mandate front, the good news is that the 1987 legislative session did not enact any new ones this year. The bad news is that they did not remove any and in fact killed a resolution to clamp a lid on mandates that were not funded. School boards will find an increasing number of reform mandates that are beginning to reach the implementation stage this year. With this information and not knowing what the legislature will do to increase revenue in the form of new taxes, it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict any valid projection of finances for the near future.

As stated in the introduction of this study the primary purpose of schools is to provide quality educational opportunities for all students. It also stated that educators should strive to improve the quality of educational programs. Financial resources must be available for districts to be able to provide such programs.

Table 8 indicates we see that the assessed valuation of the five districts of this study has declined each year since 1984. This is a trend that started in 1980 with the

Table 8

Assessed Valuation of Five Districts 1984-1987

	1984	1985	1986	1987
Cowden-Herrick 11	\$12,881,841	\$12,341,186	\$10,875,356	\$10,087,837
Cowden-Herrick 188	12,881,841	12,341,186	10,875,356	10,087,837
Shelbyville Unit 4	42,635,000	40,670,961	39,104,795	38,855,840
Tower Hill 10	7,456,227	6,726,685	6,266,149	5,333,386
Tower Hill 185	7,456,227	6,726,685	6,266,149	5,333,386

Note: Form "Annual Financial Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-1987.

new farmland assessment law. The projection by the supervisor of assessment of Shelby County is that this trend will continue for at least the next two years. With the farmland assessment formula depending upon the production over a five year average, there must be at least five years of good production before any appreciable change will occur in the farmland values.

Assessed evaluation of the five school districts had decreased by \$13,626,850 over the last four years. This represents a 13.8% decrease. Table 9 reveals that there has been an increase in state aid for the five districts. First, the amount of the increase in state aid is compared with the decrease in the local ability. Then, consider the increase of the expenditures in the education fund of the five districts as shown in Table 10. There is a trend that would indicate that if new money is not received from some sources, financial difficulty is evident for all districts. As indicated in Table 11, the educational tax rates for the districts in the study have remained steady and relatively low. This would indicate that there would be a possibility of placing a referendum for a tax increase on the ballot for voters to consider. In three of these districts, the total tax rate would indicate that a modest increase would not necessarily mean an extremely high rate as shown in Table 12. The fiscal responsibility shown by these districts might be a factor in obtaining citizen support of tax

Table 9

State Aid for Five Illinois Districts

	1984	1985	1986	1987
Cowden-Herrick 11	\$ 484,571	\$ 513,316	\$ 544,365	\$ 547,344
Cowden-Herrick 188	267,546	302,281	322,348	328,287
Shelbyville Unit 4	1,513,242	1,792,725	1,925,634	1,923,354
Tower Hill 10	279,561	283,742	300,287	292,975
Tower Hill 185	195,014	195,914	196,330	189,992

Note: From "Annual Financial Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-87.

Table 10

Education Fund

Receipts/Expenditures for Five Illinois School Districts

	Receipts			
	1984	1985	1986	1987
Cowden-Herrick 11	\$ 763,038	\$ 772,106	\$ 804,465	\$ 861,162
Cowden-Herrick 188	448,489	462,567	490,613	522,043
Shelbyville Unit 4	2,854,241	2,714,443	3,027,270	3,044,574
Tower Hill 10	358,625	452,296	424,286	279,117
Tower Hill 185	247,059	302,804	273,189	302,966
	Expenditures			
Cowden-Herrick 11	\$ 710,909	\$ 736,719	\$ 790,314	\$ 852,183
Cowden-Herrick 188	428,887	478,059	528,754	538,740
Shelbyville Unit 4	2,507,377	2,649,634	2,698,829	3,008,783
Tower Hill 10	370,467	391,706	404,499	417,117
Tower Hill 185	247,362	263,493	283,196	302,593

Note: From "Annual Financial Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-87.

Table 11

Five Illinois School Districts

Operating Tax Rate

	1984	1985	1986	1987
Tower Hill 10	\$1.5418	\$1.6339	\$1.6952	\$1.6339
Tower Hill 185	1.5418	1.6229	1.6952	1.6339
TOTAL	3.0836	3.2678	3.3904	3.2678
Cowden-Herrick 11	1.6432	1.6988	1.7089	1.7089
Cowden-Herrick 188	1.5431	1.5988	1.6294	1.6294
TOTAL	3.1863	3.2976	3.3383	3.3383
Shelbyville Unit 4	2.4816	2.5179	2.6283	2.6283

Note: From "Annual Financial Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-87.

Table 12

Five Illinois School Districts

	Total Tax Rate			
	1984	1985	1986	1987
Tower Hill 10	\$2.2266	\$2.3450	\$2.5024	\$2.4411
Tower Hill 185	2.1379	2.2570	2.4076	2.3463
TOTAL	4.3645	4.6020	4.9100	4.7874
Cowden-Herrick 11	1.8871	1.9456	1.9810	2.0412
Cowden-Herrick 188	1.5431	1.5988	1.6294	2.0412
TOTAL	3.4302	3.5444	3.6104	4.0824
Shelbyville Unit 4	2.4826	2.8069	2.8902	2.6283

Note: From "Annual Financial Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-87.

referendums. Table 12 also indicates that the total tax rate for Tower Hill District #10 and District #815 is increasing each year. This is caused by the decrease in assessed valuation and the funds needed to pay for a 1979 bond issue to build a gymnasium and remodel the high school. When the referendum was being discussed in 1979, the board of education indicated that district #10 and district #185 would need a 42 cent per 100 increase to pay for this bond issue. Referring to Table 13, it is shown that 71.24 cents per district is needed to pay this bond issue. Table 13 reveals a lack of local growth in assessment and that the percentage of bonding power that is obligated is decreasing at a relatively slow rate. The total tax rate for the Tower Hill community may make it extremely difficult to obtain citizen support for increasing taxes in the future. It should be noted that the last Tower Hill bond issue will not mature until 1999. Also noted should be that when decisions for paying the bond issue were made in 1979, the board of education anticipated a small growth in the assessment and set up the pay rate to increase as the assessment grew so that the rate could remain steady. If the assessment continues to decline as it has in the past ten years, then the rate will continue to balloon. As indicated above, in order to plan for a quality program in the future for the students in Tower Hill, the board of education must make correct decisions, some of which may not be popular to all

Table 13

Bonded Indebtedness of Five Illinois School Districts

	1984	1985	1986	1987
Cowden-Herrick 11	\$245,000	\$235,000	\$225,000	\$215,000
Cowden-Herrick 188	0	0	0	0
Shelbyville Unit 4	0	610,000	575,000	525,000
Tower Hill 10	345,000	325,000	305,000	285,000
Tower Hill 185	344,000	330,000	316,000	302,000

Percentage of Bond Indebtedness Obligated

Cowden-Herrick 11	27.56	28.00	29.98	30.92
Cowden-Herrick 188	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Shelbyville Unit 4	0.00	10.87	10.65	9.79
Tower Hill 10	74.33	75.16	69.53	75.50
Tower Hill 185	74.11	76.32	72.04	71.25

Note: From "Annual Financial Report" by the Illinois Office of Education, 1984-87.

constituents. The decision that the board of education made in 1979 to provide a quality educational setting will also be a factor in the decisions of the board of education for many years.

Instructional Program

What is the optimum school size? This is a question that has been studied for many years, and there has not been a definitive answer. In order to provide a quality education, small school districts must try to offer a variety of programs to meet the needs of their students. This is a cause of concern when it becomes necessary to hire staff that have prepared themselves to teach in more than one subject area. Decisions must be made to determine the balance between college bound curricula and remedial areas in the curricula.

These decisions are made easier in a large district that may have several sections of freshman English than in a small district that may only have 25 freshmen students. In this study, data was collected as to the number of courses that were offered by each high school and the number of students that were registered for each course.

Cowden-Herrick High School has 50 courses offered for its students as indicated in Table 14. In their fourth year English class, there were four students enrolled. The fourth year of math for college bound students had five students. Physics that is offered on an alternate year

Table 14

Curriculum Offerings and Numbers Enrolled

Cowden-Herrick

<u>English</u>		<u>Science</u>	
English I	50	Biology I	36
English II	32	Physical Science	21
English III	34	Biology II	13
Creative Writing	4	Chemistry	24
<u>Math</u>		<u>Business</u>	
Math I	27	General Business	24
Algebra I	15	Accounting II	22
Geometry	13	Consumer Education	16
Algebra II	17	Computer I	12
Math IV	5	Word Processing	0
Math II	18	Typing I	55
		Typing II	3
		Coop	12
<u>Social Studies</u>		<u>Foreign Language</u>	
Current Issues	0	French I	13
World History	20	French II	16
Civics	16		
Current Events	5		
American Problems/	9		
Street Law/	9		
U. S. History	46		
World Geography	23		

(table continues)

Agriculture

Ag. I 17

Ag. II 11

Ag. Construction 14

Small Engines/ 18

Welding/ 18

Ag. IV 8

P.E. 1, 2, 3, 4

Health/

Drivers Education/

Music

Chorus 23

Band 23

Art I 14

Art II 11

Home Economics

Home Ec. I 10

Home Ec. II 3

Home Ec. III 2

Adult Living/ 3

Parenting/ 3

basis had eight students. Cowden-Herrick offers six courses in math. The area of social studies has eight offerings. This is very good for a school with this number of students. Probably the area of the curricula with the stronger offerings with the higher number of students enrolled is business. This included two computer courses and word processing. The curriculum area that needs a boost might be English. Expanded offerings in literature might be helpful for college bound students.

Tower Hill High School has 56 course offerings as indicated in Table 15. The stronger area of the curriculum in terms of breadth is English. The English curriculum has 11 course offerings that provide a wide range to cover remedial students as well as a well balanced college bound curriculum. Probably the area of concern is business. With the exception of typing I, there are very few students enrolled in business courses. Additional course offerings in the occupational areas would be beneficial to the students.

As shown in Table 16, Shelbyville High School has a total of 68 course offerings. The occupational curricula has the most number of different courses for the students. Courses in agriculture are divided into agriculture management and agriculture production. There is a comprehensive industrial arts program in the schedule. The business area is divided into secretarial skills and office

Table 15

Curriculum Offerings and Numbers Enrolled
Tower Hill

<u>English</u>		<u>P. E. 1, 2, 3, 4</u>	
Basic English	13	Health/	31
English I	10	Driver's Ed.	26
English II	14		
Composition/	18	<u>Home Economics</u>	
American Lit./	18	Home Ec. 1	13
Term Paper/	10	Foods/	6
English Lit./	11	Clothing/	6
Novels	5	Family Living/	11
Gen. English I	5	Consumer Ed./	11
Gen. English II	8	Parenting/	2
		Living Environment/	2
 <u>Math</u>		 <u>Music</u>	
Gen. Math	10	Band	15
Algebra I	19	Chorus	17
Algebra II	10		
Geometry	17	<u>Art</u>	
Math IV	4	Art I	7
Consumer Math	13	Art II & III	4

(table continues)

Social Studies

Modern Social Problems	20
Psychology/	17
Sociology/	17
World History	9
Geography	4
American History	23

Science

Physical Science	13
Lab Science/	10
Biology	12
General Science	10
Physics	9
Chemistry (alt. yrs.)	

Foreign Language

Spanish I	9
Spanish II	3

Agriculture

Basic Ag.	11
Adv. Ag.	8
Eng. Mech./	4
Wiring/	3
Machine Maint./	3
Ag. Construction/	3

Business

Typing I	21
Typing II	1
Office Practice	1
Shorthand	0
Accounting (alt. yrs.)	
Intro. to Computers	10

Note: / indicates semester courses

Table 16

Curriculum Offerings and Numbers Enrolled

Shelbyville

<u>English</u>		<u>Science</u>	
English 1A	58	Life Science	21
English 1B	59	Zoology	76
English 2A	59	Botany	36
English 2B	51	Advanced Biology/	
English 3A	57	Intro. Physics	18
English 3B	33	Physics	52
English 4B	19		
Speech	21		
Expository Writing	24		
<u>Math</u>		<u>Business</u>	
Gen. Math	25	Gen. Business	20
Intro. Algebra	52	Accounting	22
Algebra I	73	Coop	15
Algebra II	64	Typing 1A & 1B	17
Geometry	71	Computer Programming	11
Advanced Math	30	Typing II	5
		Office Practice	5
		Recordkeeping	13
		Business Law	29
		Publication	16

(table continues)

Social Studies

Sociology	48
World History	98
U.S. History	54
Government	25
Economics	39

Foreign Language

Spanish I	50
Spanish II	40
Spanish III	10
Spanish IV	4

Agriculture

Crop Science	15
Farm Power	14
Machine Maint.	16
Electric Maint.	11
Farm Management	10
Adv. Ag.	18

P.E. 1, 2, 3, 4

Health/	
Driver's Ed.	

Home Economics

Child Care/	21
Foods/	30
Adv. Child Care	11
Adv. Foods	16
Adult Living/	26
Parenting/	26

Industrial Arts

Woods	10
Welding	22
Sheet Metals	18
Machine Maint.	17
Gen. Ind. Arts.	57
Drafting	10
Farm Home Consumer	14

Art

Art I	32
Art II	32
Humanities	28

Music

Chorus	49
Band	
Music Appreciation	

management. Home economics is devoted to child care and food preparation. This would be a desirable change in the curriculum.

The schedule indicates that each year two levels of English are offered until the senior year when speech and expository writing is offered for college bound students. A more comprehensive plan might include a wider range of electives to provide a creative curricula in this area.

If one accepts the broad definition of curriculum and instruction, curriculum would be considered to be the total learning experiences under the auspices and guidance of the school. This would include not only academic and vocational subjects, but also co-curricular activities. Co-curricular activities are defined as those identifiable programs, sponsored by the school for the benefit of the students, that occur adjacent to, but separate from regular curricular offerings.

Shelbyville offers 21 total extra curricular activities including girls basketball, volleyball, tennis and track. For the boys, football, wrestling, tennis, and golf would be extra offerings not presently available to the students of Tower Hill and Cowden-Herrick. Cross country would also be new to the students of Tower Hill. Even though there would be an increase in the number of extra curricular activities for the smaller schools, the percentage of Tower Hill or Cowden-Herrick students participating might decline. The

students that wish to participate in the small school have the opportunity no matter what their ability levels are. The students do not go through tryouts to make the team. The distance to and from practices and events might also make it more difficult for students and parents to participate at the level that they do at this time.

Options Available to the School Districts

With the knowledge of the positions of the districts studied, the next step in the field experience was to investigate the options available to the districts. During the 1984-85 legislative session, the Illinois Legislature passed a number of bills that would enhance the combining of school districts. There were incentives so that newly reorganized districts could start on a sound financial basis. These incentives provided additional revenue for three years, but did not add additional revenue beyond the third year.

Can the five districts continue to operate at the same level as they are now? Can they continue to provide a quality program with the declining enrollments and declining receipts with the expenditures continuing to grow? The district residents and/or their school boards face a choice from at least six options. Each of these options will now be considered:

Option #1: Continuity of Program

One option available to the five districts is to

continue as they are now and hope that the enrollments will level off and possibly have some growth. As shown before, the best estimate is that this will not happen in the next five years. With this option, the districts would assume an increase in the amount of state aid and full state funding of any mandates placed upon the school. If the trend continues as it has for the past 10 years, there would be deficit financing for the schools. Each district had a surplus in 1988 but information has been provided that shows that the expenses of school districts have exceeded the receipts and that the amount of the surplus is not as great as it has been in the past.

Option #2: Tax Referendum

A referendum could be placed before the citizens to increase the tax rate for the districts that are facing deficit financing. This might be a viable option for the Shelbyville and Cowden-Herrick districts, but not for Tower Hill. The total tax rate for Tower Hill is the highest in the county and the citizenry is not likely to support an increased tax rate.

Option #3: Cooperative Programs

Cooperative programs could be a way to provide comprehensive educational programs. Revenue charges assessed for students participating in co-operative programs could be prepared that would enhance cooperative rates. As shown before, each school has strengths in curriculum areas

as well as areas of concern. These programs would require an additional expenditure of transportation of students or staff. The disadvantage of cooperative programs is that schedules of each district are very difficult to change. This might be overcome by having classes early in the morning or late in the afternoon to accommodate students willing to register for enrichment courses.

Option #4: Annexation

Voluntary annexation is a procedure where one district would annex to another district. This process occurs faster than consolidation. Details of how the new district would operate could be worked out before the annexation between the boards of education of the districts involved. The action of the local boards must then seek the approval of the regional board of trustees. The teachers in the district which annexes to another district retain their tenure in the new district. However since Tower Hill and Cowden-Herrick are dual districts it would be necessary to establish annexation in all five districts. A unit district consists of a K-12 configuration with continuous boundaries. This would mean that one unit district would be formed if the Shelbyville unit district would be involved. The Tower Hill elementary district could annex to the Cowden-Herrick elementary district. The same could happen between the two high school districts. The advantages and disadvantages are similar to that of consolidation that will be discussed

later in this study.

Option #5: Tuitioning Out of Students

In discussing consolidation issues in the small district, perhaps the one subject that is utmost in the discussion is what will happen to the town without its school. Can the town retain its elementary school? The school in the rural areas is the central focus of the community. Many think that without the school that the community will deteriorate. Proponents of reorganization say that the reason that consolidations are needed is that the community has lost its vitality and can no longer provide the needed resources to maintain a school. Probably the changes that have been made in society dictate that in order to provide a viable education to the children of the community that changes must also be made in the school community. Not many people would argue that the one room school of yesteryear fulfilled a need, but few would suggest that those same schools would be sufficient today. Tuitioning students to a neighboring district might be a short term option. With this arrangement, one district would pay another district to educate its high school pupils. This would provide financial relief to the district by allowing students to be placed in larger classes. This should enhance class selection and more extensive choices of extra curricular activities. It could mean that the employees of the district may or may not be needed if the

district were to tuition out its students to another district. The receiving district would have the option of accepting or rejecting these employees. Staff would lose tenure and seniority rights. There is no requirement for an election and the district could be guaranteed the ability to retain its elementary school.

Option #6: Consolidation

When small school districts find themselves in financial trouble the state offers very few alternatives to encourage solutions that do not include consolidation. School district smallness is related to high pupil cost. If the five districts were to consider consolidation, there could be a larger variety of course offerings for all districts. The quality of education should improve or at least remain the same. The buildings of the respective school districts are in good shape with the exception of the Shelbyville Main Street School. The life safety survey indicates that there are \$630,000 of deficiencies that need to be addressed in that school. There could be a reduction in the total teacher cost as well as a savings in administrator salaries. The disadvantages for the Tower Hill and the Cowden-Herrick high school students might be an over-crowding of classes and less personal attention. Transportation cost would increase with high school students receiving more "windshield time."

In preparation for a proposed consolidation the

districts should take a look at the supplementary state aid provisions. The state aid for a new school district formula by combining property to one or more previously existing districts, shall be computed from the first year of existence and compared with the state aid for the previously existing districts. If the computation based on the previously existing districts is greater, a supplementary payment equal to the difference shall be made for the first three years of the existence of the new district. This supplementary state aid payment is separate from all other aid from the state.

The second incentive for a reorganized district is based upon teacher salaries. For three years after the formation of a new district the state will pay a state aid reimbursement equal to the difference between the sum of the salaries earned by each of the certified members of the new district while employed in one of the previously existing districts during the school year immediately preceding the new district formation and the sum of the salaries those certified members would have been paid during the year prior to the new district formation if placed on the highest salary of the previously existing district.

The third incentive deals with deficits in the education, building, and transportation funds. Since this study has shown that all districts have a positive fund balance this incentive will not be discussed. If the fund

balance should become negative, then the districts should investigate this option.

Chapter V

Summary, Findings, and Conclusions

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to develop a body of information concerning the five school districts for use by the members of the boards of education. This information should be used to establish a basis for a more informed discussion and involvement in the resolution of the issues.

Many school districts are facing serious financial conditions. Declining enrollments, declining farmland assessments, and reduced state support contribute to this dilemma. Rising salaries and rising prices continue at a pace much faster than receipts.

A review of research and literature was conducted to determine any trends or methods that could be used to determine how enrollments could be projected for the future. Financial conditions of small school districts were examined to determine trends. Because of the difficulties in determining how the state government will react to financial problems, it was determined that to effectively forecast the future of monies for schools is nearly impossible.

Findings

The districts involved in this study are experiencing similar problems to a varying degree. There has been a decrease in enrollment in each of the districts. The most serious of the projections is that although all districts in

the study will continue to decline in enrollment and that Tower Hill High School will decline to a projected 60 students within the next five years. This would drastically raise the cost per pupil in average daily attendance. The viability of providing a comprehensive program for this number of students could pose a problem. Because of the decrease in assessment and the amount needed to pay a building bond issue, the total tax rate of Tower Hill would be a tremendous burden upon the taxpayers if a referendum should be proposed for a tax increase for the operating expenses.

While the present curriculum of each of the schools may be satisfactory, the quality of educational programs would suffer if any courses were not offered. Consolidation of any of these schools would give the districts the ability to increase the number of course offerings for the students. This increase should enhance the quality of the educational program.

Conclusions

The districts involved in this study have a number of viable options. Using the correct options could insure that the educational opportunities for the students could be enhanced for years. Using the incorrect options might mean financial disaster and a downgrading of educational programs.

The Shelbyville Unit #4 school district probably has

the best position to survive by itself in the near future. However, as the study has indicated, there has been a drastic enrollment drop in Shelbyville during the past years and an indication that a slight decrease will continue over the next five years. The financial condition of the district has deteriorated and possible solutions may be needed to provide for fiscal responsibility to the community. Before any additional changes are made to increase the bonded indebtedness of the district, the board members should consider the possibility of alternatives of which one of these would be reorganization with neighboring district. The possibility of restructuring within their district and eliminating an outdated building could make possible consideration of outside alternatives more difficult.

The structure of the district might have a different look if consolidation with a neighboring school district that has adequate housing that might be used to relieve some overcrowding within the city. Some special education programs could be relocated and there could possibly be less need for additional classroom space without a bond issue. This could keep the bonded indebtedness at a low level and thus keep the tax rate low so if a tax referendum were needed, it might be more palatable to the community.

Cowden-Herrick districts #11 and #188 problems are also not considered as serious at the present as they may be in

the future. Constant attention should be paid to the financial position of the district. The expansion of the tax base that reorganization would bring could strengthen and prolong any financial difficulties that they may face if the state does not succeed in providing additional aid for the programs that are mandated.

One option that could help expand educational opportunities would be to develop cooperative programs with surrounding districts. The Regional Vocational Service Center could be a catalyst in providing expanded vocational services to the students. A health occupations course is being planned for the 1990 school year. Other occupational programs could be developed using this service.

Any negative change in financial position for the Tower Hill High School district could bring disaster for the system. An effective school board will be responsible to its constituents. In order to do the job in a responsible manner the members of the board of education must remain well-informed concerning the financial position of the district. They must also be informed as to the options available in order to make decisions that will provide the students of the district the best educational opportunities that are possible.

How long can the high school in Tower Hill remain open? With the information given, the indication would be that the enrollment will continue to decrease over the next several

years. With the state aid reimbursement formula tied to average daily attendance this would indicate that the state aid will decrease as the enrollment decreases.

The projected assessment for farmland is that a decline will continue for the next three years. This will mean a decrease in the local property tax for educational purposes. So with the these decreases the district will be into deficit financing in a short period of time. The board of education must determine just how much deficit financing is feasible before other options are explored.

The second option that was explored was a tax referendum. Consideration should be given to the total tax rate charged to the taxpayer. The citizens of Tower Hill school district are not likely to support an additional educational fund rate at this time because of the total rate. The high tax rate is the result of the building referendum issue passed in 1979. With this consideration, a tax referendum would not be one of the best options for Tower Hill Schools.

Cooperative programs should be explored to provide a broader educational curriculum as well as for monetary savings. Health occupations is an area that would be first in consideration. However this is a solution to the problem that is short term and not long term.

Another short term option is the tuitioning of students to another district. The Tower Hill High School District

could pay either Cowden-Herrick or Shelbyville to educate its students. There would not be any responsibility of the receiving district to hire any of the teachers from the Tower Hill High school. There would be an administrative savings in this option. The disadvantage would be the loss of control by the local board of education in determining the educational program. If the members of staff are forced to find new positions then it would be virtually impossible to reassemble them in the future.

The remaining two options will be considered together because they are very similar in scope. These options are annexation and consolidation. The Tower Hill High School could annex or consolidate to the Cowden-Herrick High School without the grade school being involved. This would guarantee the future of grade school in Tower Hill. If an annexation or consolidation should be found desirable with the Shelbyville school district both of the Tower Hill districts would have to agree to the annexation or consolidation. If any or all of these districts would consolidate, an increase in course offerings would occur. If Tower Hill should consolidate with Shelbyville, a minimum of 68 course offerings would be offered with possibilities of expansion. The increase in the tax base and the incentives from the state would result in a healthier financial atmosphere for at least three years.

Recommendations

At least every six months the board of education of each district involved, should review the financial and educational status of the district. If changes are evident, then, extensive discussion should be held concerning what course of action should follow.

Shelbyville could continue to operate as it is at the present despite declining enrollments and increasing expenses. However, if educational improvement and economic efficiency are to continue, the Shelbyville board of education should investigate ways to broaden the tax base and to reverse the trend of falling enrollment. The present Shelbyville High School could house 225 students more than are now enrolled. Consolidating with Tower Hill or Cowden-Herrick would enhance the financial position by broadening the tax base and increasing student enrollment at the same time. The larger tax base would provide flexibility in the budgeting process and would be in the best interest to the taxpayers.

Cowden-Herrick should conduct a study to determine what organizational pattern would best satisfy the educational needs of the students of the community. There are a number of districts that could join the Cowden-Herrick district that should be considered. This study should begin as early as possible so that any changes could be made before the financial conditions become worse. The size of the district

considered should be of sufficient student enrollment to increase the scope of curriculum through increased depth in subject areas.

The Tower Hill board of education should closely monitor the student enrollment of the district. If the projection of enrollment proves true, the financial condition will deteriorate. Tower Hill Schools could put a tax referendum before the people as a possible solution to the financial problem. This would be a short term solution. With the present assessed valuation, it would be difficult to generate the amount of funds needed. Consolidation with Shelbyville would result in improved educational programs for all students. This larger district would assure a quality education.

In conclusion, if the members of the boards of education of the five school districts proceed with an open mind and explore all options thoroughly, a quality educational program can be delivered to the students in these school districts. The districts could retain a reasonable tax rate with the flexibility necessary to meet student needs for quality educational programs and services well into the future.

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Appendix A

1. Fewer (or no) problems with elementary school classes that are beyond your district's maximum class size guidelines. Are the days when extra students forced your schools to create classes on the auditorium stage, in halls, cafeteria and gym just so many memories?
2. Evidence that elementary class size in your district is quietly slipping from 30 to 35 down to 23 or 20.
3. Statistics that show a consistent decline (over two or three years) in the number of students at certain grade levels within some elementary schools. Are there, for example, considerably fewer fourth graders than seventh graders in your district, with gradual decline in the classes between?
4. Indications that school officials are concerned about preschool census figures that usually are considered quite reliable. You may begin to hear about alternatives (computerizing the census process, conducting a mail census, telephone surveys) to traditional

census-taking methods. The list of alternatives gets longer as the indications of enrollment declines become more ominous.

5. Feedback from local realtors that reveals a marked decrease in the influx of families with preschool children and of young marrieds.
6. Requests from elementary school administrators who want to convert unused classrooms into resource centers and special help areas. Such requests often reflect the frustrations of administrators who have lived with crowded or overcrowded buildings and who now envision empty classrooms in their school buildings.
7. Clamoring for school relief because, the taxpayers say, decreasing numbers of students should warrant a lower school budget. Wrestling with this simplistic argument will provide you with yet another experience in boardmanship.

Note: From Keough Indicator Survey Scale (Keough, Jr., 1975).

Appendix B

1. Is your community close to a metropolitan area and did your community develop and grow as a result of population expansion in that metropolitan area?
2. Is your community one with expensive houses that continue to escalate in price disproportionately to general real estate values?
3. Does your community contain a high percentage of professional people or older people whose homes fulfill their lifetime needs and whose children are now in (or have been through) the local schools?
4. If your community has a highly reputed school system, will that good reputation draw in young families in spite of high-priced houses?
5. Does your community have a high level of mobility, with families moving in and out? (And who's moving in--families with children or retirees?)
6. Does your community contain pockets of middle-income housing that will attract

young couples and families with small children?

7. Is there still land available in your community for future residential development?
8. Have service organizations (YMCA, community clubs for children, religious groups) been maintaining an emphasis on programs for children of elementary school age? If not, is the decreasing emphasis because of diminishing numbers of children to be served?

Note: From Keough Indicator Survey Scale (Keough, Jr., 1975).