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An Analysis of the Educational Effectiveness of Seven School Districts in Western Douglas County

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF SEVEN SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY

A Field Project

Presented to the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Specialist in Education

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by

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Field Project Acceptance

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States has never operated under a national system of education. Instead, all fifty states operate by a system of local school districts, intermediate units and state departments of education. Ultimate control of education rests with the state constitution and the state legislature. Most states have adopted a policy creating local school districts throughout the state and then delegating responsibility for their operation to local boards of education.

Local school boards have been charged with the responsibility of operating good schools. At the same time, they have been confronted with situations aggravated by the insistent inflation problem that affects the financing of these schools.

Each school district must evaluate its own individual needs. A district must determine how it intends to provide for the variety of individual differences which are prevalent in the confines of a school setting. Each school district must be appraised continuously in terms of its effectiveness toward meeting the needs in the immediate locality it serves. Eventually, a district must face the task of determining whether it has, or could have, the human and financial resources available to get the job done.

It was intended that this study would provide insight into the educational effectiveness of seven school districts in western Douglas County. It included some cost comparisons, information about curriculum

offerings, population trends and a realistic assessment of basic educational programs used to prepare the youth of western Douglas County for post high school opportunity.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was to determine the educational effectiveness of seven school districts in western Douglas County and whether they might better serve the area educationally if organized into a single administrative unit.

Importance of the study. With inflationary costs of living reducing the real value of the tax dollar, and emerging philosophies of education which place more and more emphasis on vocational type training, it was considered appropriate to conduct a thorough and comprehensive educational study of the entire western Douglas County area. Enrollment studies in the Elkhorn, Waterloo and Valley school systems indicated strong predictions concerning population explosions that could quite possibly occur in this area and yet no effort had been made to explore the educational ramifications should such predictions become a reality.

The educational status of each school district in the western Douglas County area had not been studied since 1960 when Mr. Carrol E. DeBouer, then elementary principal in Valley, committed himself to a similar task. Many things change in the course of a fourteen year period and it was considered important to once again bring to the surface the educational facts of each school district for reexamination.

II. PROCEDURES USED

The procedures used to develop this study involved a review of available literature for the purpose of determining the composition and status of school district structure in the state of Nebraska as compared to the nation. The literature was also reviewed for the purpose of learning whether there were advantages or disadvantages in the expansion of a school district's boundaries.

Enrollments were studied in the various school districts to determine whether the populations were on the incline or the decline. Curriculum offerings were compared among the various districts as well as the examination of the existing school facilities where education must take place.

It was also considered important to study the possibility of a more equitable distribution of the tax load for the improvement of an overall program for all students and all concerned taxpaying citizens.

Limitations of the study. The limitations of this study involved a known reluctance, based on previous attempts, for area residents to accept any possibility for change. Local citizens in most of the seven districts have never looked with great favor on efforts to expand the boundaries of school districts.

Therefore, this study attempted to present factual information about the existing educational practices in the seven school districts. The evaluation of these conditions was not to be considered as suggestions or compromises leading to any viable change. The urgency for any type of reorganization must be determined eventually by the will of all the people who live and pay taxes in the seven school districts.

No actual survey of the people with regard to attitudes and opinions toward consolidation of the school districts was conducted. As a result, the study does not allow for predictions as to whether this consideration could ever be a reality.

III. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Administrative unit. An administrative unit was referred to in this study as being that geographical unit comprising all the considered area under a single system of school administration. It consists of one local taxing unit for school financing and it is controlled by one board of education with the superintendent of schools being the executive officer.

School districts. School districts as defined by Nebraska statute refers to the territory under the jurisdication of a single school board. As used in this study, it was intended to mean the seven school districts as they were organized at the time this study was being conducted.

Reorganization of school districts. Reorganization of school districts in this study relates to the process of amalgamating or consolidating existing districts, erasing existing district boundaries by vote of the local people, and forming one administrative unit with one tax base from which to finance the educational programs in a more equitable manner. Also, it was to provide educational services on a more comprehensive basis in order to serve the youth of the district more equitably.

Western Douglas County. School districts designated as numbers eight, eleven, fifteen, twenty-three, twenty-four, thirty-three, and forty-one were the areas studied in this report. These seven school districts in western Douglas County were located primarily between the Elkhorn River on the east and the Platte River on the west. They are bordered by Dodge and Washington Counties on the north and Sarpy County on the South.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Vast amounts of material in the form of brochures, position papers, doctoral dissertations, professional magazines and books have been devoted to the subject of school district organization. This material was gleaned for the purpose of obtaining a basic knowledge of the historical, legal and logical background on school district sequential development.

The review of literature in this study was generally confined to school district organizational developments in the state of Nebraska with some comparison to national statistics and national developments. Other issues covered included comparative financial facts, curriculum criteria, minimum enrollment standards and expansion of school district boundaries in the form of reorganization.

It was intended that the review of literature would provide factual material which would significantly substantiate the research conducted in chapter three concerning the seven school districts in western Douglas County. No attempt was made to suggest procedures on how to go about any actual change in the present operating status. It was hoped, however, that this study might serve as an aid in providing information to those who might someday choose to consider possibilities for making changes in the present school district structure in the western Douglas County area.

I. LITERATURE RELATED TO THE STATUS OF LOCAL DISTRICTS IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

Throughout the history of Nebraska, it has been noted by educators that: (1) Nebraska has too many school districts; (2) the excessive number and small size of the districts contribute to inadequacy of educational opportunities; and (3) the school district structure makes for an inequitable distribution of taxes. These circumstances remain as true today as they have at any other time throughout the history of the state.[1]

With reference to number of school districts, it was discovered that in 1953 there were 6,050 districts in the state of Nebraska. In 1963 the number of districts was 2,962 and in 1973 the number was 1,277. In each of the ten year periods checked, Nebraska led the nation in total number of public school districts.[2]

Obviously, the figures indicated a decline in the total number of districts in Nebraska as was the case in the nation. While Nebraska reduced its number of school districts by approximately one-third over a twenty year period, other states were doing the same with some states doing it through legislative mandates.

In 1973 there were 16,706 districts in the United States compared to the 1,277 listed for Nebraska. The total number for Nebraska

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[1]William R. Schroeder, Roger Farrar and Roger Hanson, Great Plains School District Organization Project, Report For Nebraska (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Department of Education, 1968), p. 13.

[2]Cecil E. Stanley, A Statistical Report of School Districts In Nebraska (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Department of Education, 1973), p. 1.

represented almost eight percent of the total that existed for the entire nation.[3]

These 1,277 school districts in Nebraska had a public school enrollment of 324,527 students.[4] By comparison, the total public school enrollment in the nation during the same year was 45,460,000 students in the 50 states or less than one percent of America's total public school enrollment.[5] From these statistics, it appeared that Nebraska was inconsistant with other states of the nation with respect to the number of school districts necessary to provide educational programs for the state's enrollment.

Breaking down Nebraska's total number of school districts, it was found that of the 1,277 there were 953 classified as Class I or K-8 districts. In the 953, there were 46 contracting, 7 not operating and 900 in actual operation.[6]

Analysis of the student enrollment in the Class I school districts indicated that there were 22,737 students attending these districts. This represented slightly over six percent of the total student enrollment in Nebraska public schools when, by comparison, Class I schools make up almost seventy-five percent of the state's total

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[3]Roger H. Hanson, Statistics and Facts About Nebraska Schools, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Department of Education, February, 1974), p. 6.

[4]W. Vance Grant and C. George Lind, Digest of Educational Statistics, 1973 Edition (Washington, D.C.: National Center of Educational Statistics, Office of Education, 1973), p. 6.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Roger H. Hanson, loc cit.

number of school districts.[7]

A county by county summary of all Class I school districts indicated that 568 were one-teacher schools, 7 had only one student, 16 schools enrolled only two students, 15 districts enrolled three students, and a total of 109 schools enrolled five or less.[8] In all, the Class I districts had students that were attending centers ranging in enrollment size from one up to as many as 943 students. The greatest number of schools enrolled students from about six to ten per school.[9]

Because a school district exists, there was seemingly no real relationship to the number of students that must be served within its boundaries. It was found to have always proven difficult to define boundaries of school districts when attempting to decide who should go where and how many students should attend to make up a certain attendance center.

> The history of the establishment of the school district structure would indicate that the number of districts established was related to population density and to topography. Some still argue the need for the great number of districts on the same basis; yet the pattern that has developed with reorganization would indicate that attitudes toward reorganization are a more significant factor affecting the number of districts in a certain area than are population or topography.[10]

Examination of the facts seemed to indicate that reorganization in Nebraska has not followed a particular pattern that can be related to population, road condition or topography. For example, it can be noted from Statistics and Facts About Nebraska Schools in the 1974 edition,

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[7] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[8] Ibid., p. 19.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Schroeder, Farrar and Hanson, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

that Banner, Blaine, Deuel, Dundy, Hamilton, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Logan, Loup, Webster, and Wheeler Counties have each reorganized into single districts; yet they are each mostly located in the sandhills region of the state with sparse populations, a relatively poor system of roads and large areas of space. Other counties in the same regions with similar circumstances have accomplished very little in the mention of school district reorganization. The same parallel could be drawn in the various other regions of Nebraska including Douglas County.[11]

II. LITERATURE RELATED TO COST ANALYSIS REGARDING LARGE COMPARED TO SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

There were many factors which could contribute to inequitable educational opportunities. Two of the more significant ones are: (1) the type of organization, and (2) the limited enrollments of the many small districts.[12] Dr. Rosalie Farley stated in a position paper on elementary education that in order to provide an optimum program for an elementary school, it must include a balanced, flexible, and articulated educational curriculum from kindergarten through grade twelve under the leadership of one superintendent, a local board of education, and an elementary principal.[13] Obviously, with this criteria in mind, there has been no way that any of the Class I school districts in Nebraska

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[11]Roger H. Hanson, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

[12]Schroeder, Farrar and Hanson, op. cit., p. 17.

[13]Dr. Rosalie Farley, "Elementary Education and School District Organization" (Lincoln, Nebraska: Four-State Project Office For Great Plains Report, 1967), p. 10 (Mimeographed).

could meet this standard even if they have a relatively large student enrollment.[14]

Schools must be developed to operate with more quality effeciency than they have in the past. Skyrocketing operational costs and changing needs of youth mean that new features and new dimensions must be added to the educational plan. There are more young to be educated and they remain in our schools longer as a general rule.[15]

This concern about the quality of education must focus on the local school district. Formation of policies which give direction to the educational program must be initiated at the local level.

> If the school district fails to provide the teachers and equipment needed, if its operational procedures lead to needless waste of financial resources and poor use of instructional equipment, if it offers too little too late to the youth it is expected to serve, if the geographical area served imposes insurmountable obstacles, then it is not contributing what it should and change should be initiated.[16]

The ultimate task of financing schools on a fair and equitable basis has probably not yet been defined or actually designed. However, as James B. Conant points out, communities that have constructed operating districts within the confines of a large or board tax base have a financial economy and operational efficiency that has proven

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[14] Schroeder, Farrar and Hanson, loc. cit.

[15] American Association of School Administration, School Administration In Newly Reorganized Districts (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1965), p. 8.

[16] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

superior to smaller school districts of a lesser taxing system.[17]

Recognizing Mr. Conant's position for a broad tax base, it should be illustrated, however, that few reorganized districts require less money than the total required by the former districts, and no well informed person today advocates reorganization on the grounds of actual savings of money.[18] As C. O. Fitzwater states, an adequate reorganized unit has a greater ability to provide at less cost the services provided by the old district it replaces. Further, he points out that where the total expenditures are increased, significant educational improvements result therefrom. Any school district reorganization almost always brings about major improvements, and those improvements, while usually resulting in increased expenditures, could not be accomplished efficiently and economically in the absence of reorganization.[19] The main financial advantages stated rather briefly are:

1. Pupil-teacher ratio can usually be increased when small schools are combined, which means if other costs are not increased, there will be a decrease in expenditure per pupil.

2. Waste in the use of school plants can be reduced. Such units as laboratories, shops, home economics rooms, and gymnasiums are not usually used to anything like practical capacity in small schools characteristic of small districts. It is wasteful for such facilities to be idle a large part of the time.

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[17]Dr. James B. Conant, "Conant Plan Stirs 500 At Compact," Education News, Vol. 3, No. 1 (July 8, 1968), p. 1.

[18]Calvin Grieder, Truman M. Pierce, and William E. Rosenstengel, Public School Administration, Second Edition (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1961), pp. 22-23.

[19]C. O. Fitzwater, Educational Change In Reorganized School Districts, U. S. Office of Education Bulletin 1953, No. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 23.

3. Transportation can be more efficiently managed, with better and more flexible routing of buses and less duplication of service.

4. Specialized services, such as guidance, health services, instruction in music and art, and food services can be more efficiently and economically provided.

5. The paramount financial consideration probably is the equalization of taxation for school support.[20]

Experience and research show clearly the necessity for us to have a balanced financial program of support for our schools, with funds from the federal, state, and local sources. Because the major share of support for public education has in most states, including Nebraska, come from local sources, and because local tax revenue continues to play an important role in financing education, it becomes imperative that Nebraska not permit administrative districts to be so organized that flagrant tax inequities exist. School district organization should be such that it contributes to the adequate and equitable financing of public education. It should be so organized that all taxpaying citizens share equally in the responsibility for paying and share equally in the benefits of receiving quality education for all students.[21]

Nebraska had an abundance of unfair examples in the inequitable distribution of taxable wealth in support of education. Many of these examples seemed to be a direct result of the organizational pattern of local school districts.

The problems of financial support for public education have been with us for a long time and can be described as threefold: (1) to fairly

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[20]Grieder, Pierce, and Rosenstengel, op. cit., p. 95.

[21]Schroeder, Farrar and Hanson, op. cit., p. 95.

and accurately determine the financial cost of the programs and services to be provided; (2) to fairly and accurately identify the changing sources of taxable wealth in our surrounding area; and (3) to fairly and equitably assess these sources for the support of the programs and services required to meet the approved educational needs.[22] Unfortunately, the greatest obstacle to good education in some communities seemed to be the willingness of the people to settle for less.

III. LITERATURE RELATED TO CURRICULUM OFFERINGS IN LARGE AS COMPARED TO SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The educational needs and desires of the children in our communities was at stake in every reorganizational procedure taking place in Nebraska. Concerted efforts and responsible action in some communities to provide better schools for their youth has been widespread. Discussions that have taken place in many of the school settings reflect problems and challenges in the issues being considered. In fact, only a beginning has been made in alleviating educational problems encountered throughout the state.[23]

As has been touched upon in previous sections of this study, the many reasons advanced by educators and laymen in support of changing the organization of school districts can all be grouped under two

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[22] Ibid.

[23] William R. Schroeder, Gerald Sughroue, and Fred Harvey, Why Better School District Organization Is Needed In Nebraska (Lincoln, Nebraska: Division of Instructional Services, 1967), p. 1.

categories: (1) financial advantages and (2) educational advantages.[24] Obviously, the two are inseperable in that reorganization into a larger unit provides greatest benefits in equal opportunity for all children while it eliminates the weak districts and simultaneously equalizes the burden of support.

There were many approaches to consider in discussing the educational criteria, but some of them either relate to extremely large school systems or did not seem to relate to the western Douglas County community. One suggestion that might be considered reasonable came from a past president of Harvard University, Dr. James B. Conant, who stated that minimum guidelines estimated in good judgment would be to have a secondary school large enough to account for a graduating senior class of no less than 100 students. Anything smaller than this would be too small to offer an acceptable curriculum.[25] There was also general agreement among students of educational administration that a school district should be large enough to employ 50 to 60 teachers and enroll from 1,200 to 1,500 students in grades kindergarten through the senior year.[26]

Some of the more pertinent educational benefits to be derived from a school system of this size may be as follows:

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[24]Grieder, Pierce, and Rosenstengel, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

[25]James B. Conant, The American High School Today (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959), pp. 25.26.

[26]American Association of School Administrators, The Point of Beginning: The Local School District (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1968), p. 5.

1. . . . teachers can be assigned to teach the subjects or the grades they are best prepared to teach. In the very small schools and districts this is difficult, if not impossible. The tendency is to neglect aspects of one's assignment with which one feels least at home.

2. Well organized districts can provide such valuable appurtenances of a good, modern school as visual aids, libraries, laboratories, well-kept school buildings, attractive and well-equipped playgrounds. Small districts with their small school, with relatively few exceptions, cannot do as well. Cost is too high in proportion to the use.

3. More especially at the secondary school level, the larger school or district can offer a more comprehensive program of studies and activities. In small high schools the choice that is often made favors the retention of the traditional academic subjects exclusively, withour regard to the needs and interests of the young people who will not attend college. The needs and capacities of these and in fact all the pupils can be recognized and provided for better in larger units.

4. The improvement of instruction can be prosecuted more successfully in larger districts with a larger enrollment.

5. Teaching children how to work and play with others can be accomplished more readily in larger schools. It can hardly be done in the limited society of their own brothers and sisters or close neighbors. Children need, as a part of growing up, the stimulation and challenge afforded by association with larger groups and those outside their immediate circle.

6. Larger districts, usually with larger schools, in general have longer terms, better attendance, more comprehensive curriculums, better qualified and better paid teachers, better administrative and supervisory services, more and better special services (such as guidance, psychological service, and health services), and better physical facilities than do districts with schools falling far below the recommended sizes.[27]

However inadequate this list may be, it nevertheless seems to reveal advantages favoring a larger administrative unit than what may be found in most K-8 districts. It has become essential, with the age of modern technology and the rapidly changing world, that educational

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[27]Grieder, Pierce, and Rosenstengel, loc. cit.

programs and services be of high quality and be provided for all youth as well as adults.

IV. LITERATURE RELATED TO GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS WHICH SCHOOL DISTRICTS MIGHT CONSIDER AS MINIMUM IN PLANNING FOR MAXIMUM EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ITS YOUTH AND ADULTS

Needs for better school districts and the advantages that better school districts can bring have never been self-evident or self-explanatory. Someone familiar with only the very superficial features of our way of life might assume that in a nation so markedly characterized by social change, the task of improving school districts would present no particular problem. On the contrary, it has never been a freewheeling process that can be imposed on people, nor can it be secured without thought, reason, planned leadership, or total understanding by the people affected. Such leadership and efficient planning must be prevalent throughout all stages of change--from the first suggestions of getting workable legislation to the time when such alternatives might become established conditions. It must be prevalent at all levels to include the state, county, local community and from people of all walks of life and from all levels of labor, business, and social stratification who are present in a community and stand to be affected by it.[28]

> All social systems and educational organizations are related to a common goal, the provision of educational programs and services. Organization of a school system for a state cannot in itself

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[28]American Association of School Administrators, School District Organization (Washington, D.C.: Report of the AASA Commission on School District Reorganization, 1958), p. 11.

> guarantee needed educational opportunity for all children and youth, but adequate organization is basic to the planning for and the identification and implementation of broad programs and services to meet the educational needs of every child, regardless of where he lives.[29]

Certain guidelines should be helpful to any community undertaking a cooperative appraisal of the effectiveness of school districts. They are as follows:

1. The appraisal should be initiated by the board of education.

2. The community at large should be invited to suggest appraisal participants in terms of criteria established by the board of education.

3. After the appraisal has begun, the doors should be left open to latecomers who have a sincere desire to assist.

4. The board of education should keep in close touch with the process of appraisal.

5. Members of the board of education and the administration should serve as consultants to the appraisal committee when requested.

6. Members of the appraisal committees should cooperate with school authorities to avoid interference with the ongoing educational program.

7. All appraisal committee members must be clear on procedures.

8. The duration of the job should be limited to the completion of the appraisal report.

9. The appraisal committee should submit the appraisal report to the board of education in terms of inadequacies and suggestions for removal of them.[30]

Once an appraisal of existing conditions has been made, a school district should have basic guidelines from its state department of

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[29] Schroeder, Farrar, and Hanson, op. cit., p. 91.

[30] AASA, Report of the AASA Commission on School District Reorganization, 1958, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

education or some similar authority in order to compare its findings with other acceptable conditions. A few suggestions one might consider as a source of comparison was found in the Great Plains Report. They appear as guidelines for scope and quality of educational opportunity, experiences, and services needed for implementing a desirable educational program for Nebraska schools.

1. All territory in the state of Nebraska should be organized into local unit-type school districts to provide a program of education extending from at least kindergarten through grade twelve. The organization should include a pupil population sufficiently large to make it possible to provide an educational program which meets--with quality, efficiency, and economy--the present and probable future educational needs of all elementary and secondary school children and youth in the district.

2. Each local administrative district should be organized to include a stable or growing population center in order to retain the pupil enrollment necessary to provide, with efficiency and economy, the scope and quality of educational program needed.

3. Each local school district should be large enough to efficiently justify a professional administrative staff of sufficient size, quality, and specialization to provide the leadership needed to establish and implement local educational policy.

4. Each administrative district should have sufficient enrollment and financial resources to make possible the establishment and maintenance of appropriate attendance centers where they are needed, taking into consideration factors such as: (1) population sparsity or density, (2) time/distance, and (3) socio-economic conditions.

5. School district organization should contribute to the adequate and equitable financing of public education, with funds to be received from federal, state, and local sources.

6. The supporting and complementary unit for the local school district in Nebraska should be the Educational Service Unit.

7. The state agency, in the fulfillment of its leadership function for education, must be organized to provide new and extended leadership services.[31]

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[31]Schroeder, Farrar and Hanson, op. cit., pp. 91-96.

Regardless of the type of activity, change in the form of anything new or different never occurs self-propelled even with the most capable leadership from either the state or local levels. The real generation of a project which may be deemed so important must come from the local citizenry.

1. Willingness to accept planning responsibility.

2. Avoiding premature judgment and hasty decisions.

3. Getting the facts about existing school conditions.

4. Getting an understanding of what soundly organized school districts are like.

5. Keeping public opinion in proper perspective.

6. Keeping in close touch with local school boards.

7. Alertness to local desires for stronger districts.[32]

Use of community planning committees and subsequent procedures has always included other important advantages:

1. It has provided a means whereby local community leaders can function effectively in helping to get adequate districts established.

2. It has been particularly valuable in securing widespread local participation in reorganization type planning.

3. It has been especially effective as a means of developing community understanding and support for better districts.

4. Its values also have in numerous instances carried over afterward into the operation of the new district.[33]

In the event that there should be some type of change in the organizational structure of a school district, there remains a

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[32]AASA, Report of the AASA Commission of School District Reorganization, 1958, op. cit., pp. 261-262.

[33]Ibid.

continuous need for ongoing public relations and a study of new horizons. School boards and school administrators must keep the people informed of new ideas in education. Unless the local people, communities, teachers and administrators constantly strive to work together for the maintenance and improvement of education, there may be other difficulties which could emerge and transcend even the greatest of problems experienced in the initiation of an entire reorganization project.[34]

The typical school district has been found to generally possess a populas made up of approximately ten percent in favor of educational promotion and improvement, eighty percent can be found riding the fence, and the other ten percent categorized as diametrically opposed to doing anything at all. Therefore, the burden lies with the favoring ten percent and the leadership provided by educators. This small segment must exert their every influence at all times in order to activate the majority. The real fruits of providing quality education may well be keyed to this factor and may be the vanguard in the development of school districts that can better serve the needs of communities.[35]

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

Chapter 3

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The purpose of this chapter was to analyze and interpret the data collected from local school districts, Douglas County and the State Department of Education. This was done through the investigation of school district records, the county superintendent's office and the State Department of Education office in Lincoln, Nebraska. Tables, maps and charts were employed to illustrate and describe the results of each area being surveyed.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In order to obtain a basis for comparison and more accurately evaluate the area of primary concern, the entire county was given a brief overview. The location of Douglas County was identified in relation to the state of Nebraska and the seven school districts being studied were described in their relationship to the rest of the county.

All school districts in Douglas County were identified for purposes of comparing enrollments, classification of school districts, grade levels included in the organizational structure and the total number that existed. There was also attention given to the increase or decrease in the total number of school districts in the county over a period of years from 1950 to 1974.

The investigation then focused on the pertinent matters relating to the seven school districts in the western portion of the county. It was considered important to study, evaluate and compare such factors as the existing conditions of buildings, enrollments, class size, number of teachers, administrators, and special services personnel, district evaluations, mill levies, bonded indebtedness and current practices in curriculum.

DOUGLAS COUNTY RELATIVE TO ITS LOCATION, SIZE, POPULATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

At the time of this study, Douglas County was the most populas of all counties in the state of Nebraska. According to Nebraska maps, it was described as being located on the eastern most border of the state with Iowa as its entire eastern neighbor separated only by the Missouri River. It was bordered on the north by Washington and Dodge Counties, on the south by Sarpy County and on the west by Saunders County separated by the Platte River (see Figure 1).

Douglas County had Omaha as its largest city and the county seat. It covered an area of 325 square miles in the Elkhorn and Platte River Valley and had a combined population of 389,455. It had fifteen school districts with eight town schools, six rural schools and one rural district was contracting with the Omaha Public Schools and Fort Calhoun Public Schools (see Table 1).[36] Two of the districts were organized K-8, six were organized K-6 and contracting for grades seven and eight. The remaining eight schools were town schools and all were

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[36]Nebraska Legislative Counsil, Nebraska Blue Book, 1972 (Lincoln, Nebraska: Joe Christensen, Inc., 1972), p. 778.

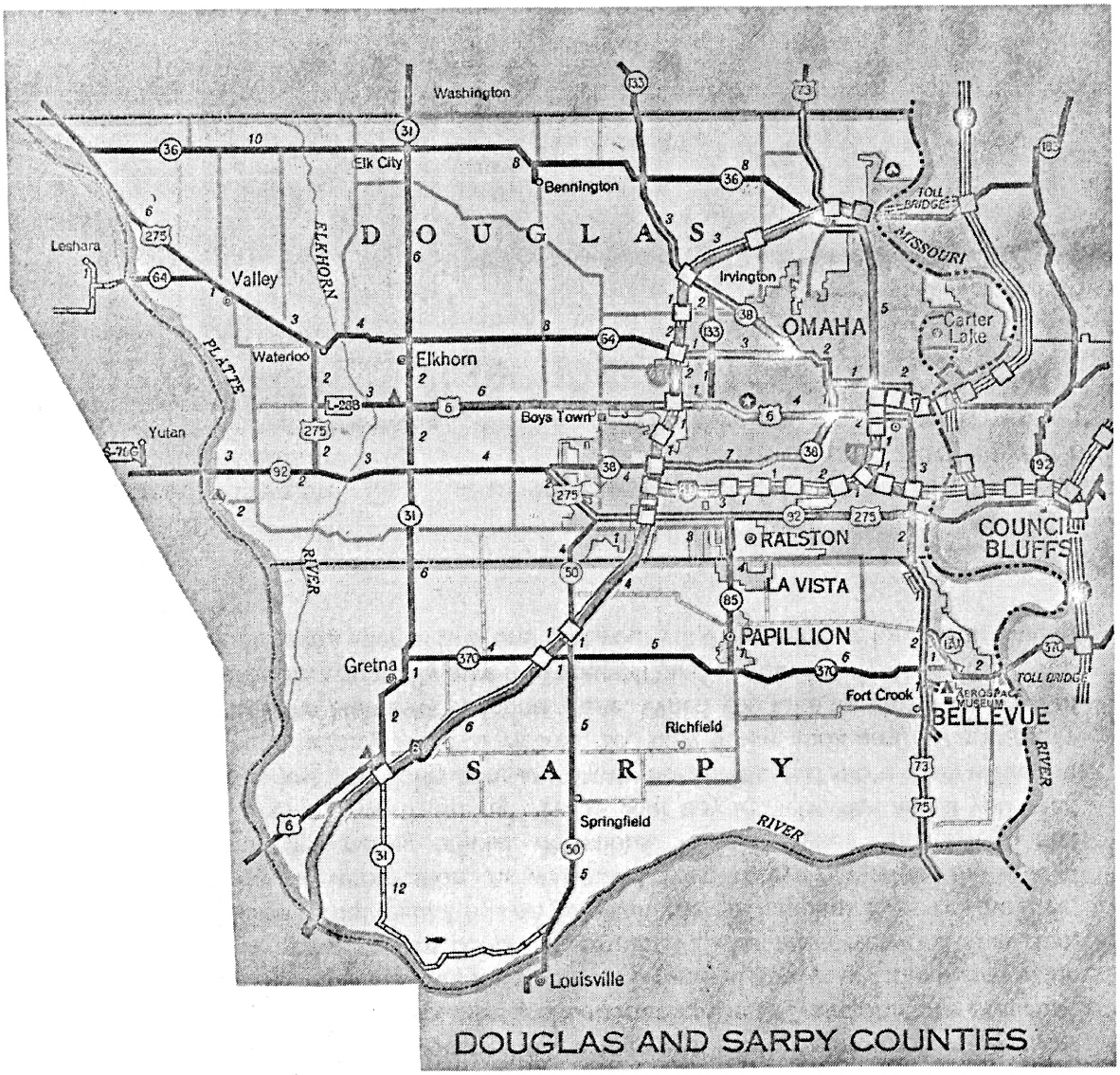

Figure 1

Omaha Metropolitan Area

Table 1

Status of School Districts in Douglas County in 1973-74

Name of School	District No.	Classification	Grades	Census (5-18)
Omaha	1	V	K-12	89,616
Elk City	8	I	K-8	50
Elkhorn	10	III	K-12	981
Waterloo	11	II	K-12	244
(None)	15	I	K-6	63
Millard	17	III	K-12	6,518
(None)	23	I	K-8	45
Two Rivers	24	I	K-6	89
Sunny Side	27	I	K-6	40
Fairview	32	I	Contracting	126
Valley	33	III	K-12	767
Fairview	41	I	K-6	42
Ralston	54	III	K-12	4,826
Bennington	59	III	K-12	440
Westside	66	III	K-12	12,087

NOTE: All schools listed as K-6 are responsible for grades seven and eight also but are contracting. The census figures shown reveal the total school age children living in the district regardless where they attend in grades 7-12.

were town schools and all were educating K-12 (see Figure 2).

With reference to state classification, there were seven in Class I, one in Class II, six in Class III and one in Class V. All school districts ranged in enrollment sizes from 89,616 in the Omaha Public School system to a low of 40 in the Sunny Side school district number twenty-seven (27).

Analysis of consolidation of school districts in the Douglas County area revealed that substantial progress was made in reducing the number during the fifties, and a relatively good percentage of progress again during the sixties. However, during the first four years of the seventies, there has been little accomplished (refer to Table 2). In 1950, there were 53 school districts in the county and in 1974 the number had been reduced to 15, which was a total reduction of approximately 72 percent over a twenty-four year period.

BASIC DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA STUDIED

This study focused attention on the seven school districts in western Douglas County including districts eight (8), eleven (11), fifteen (15), twenty-three (23), twenty-four (24), thirty-three (33), and forty-one (41). These seven school districts comprised an area of about seventy-five square miles.[37] They were bordered on the west by Sarpy County separated by the Platte River, Fremont School District number one, Dodge and Washington Counties on the north, the Elkhorn

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[37]Superintendent of Public Instruction, Douglas County Public School Educational Directory (Omaha, Nebraska: Issued by the Office of the County Superintendent, 1973-74), p. 29.

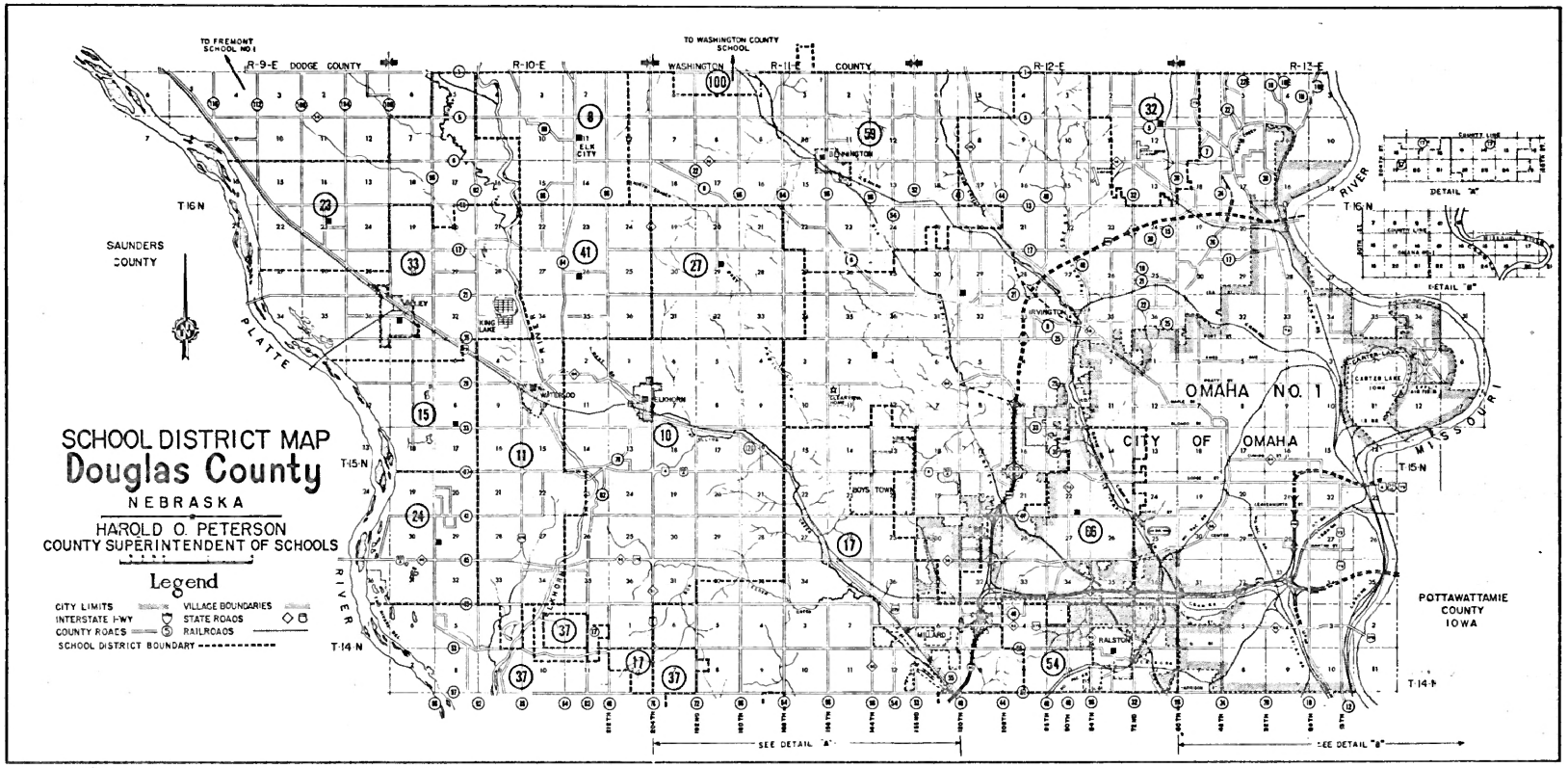

Figure 2

School District Map of Douglas County

Table 2

Analysis of School District Consolidation In Douglas County--1950-1974

Year	Number of School Districts	Change	Percent Change
1950	53		
1955	52	- 1	Decrease 2%
1960	27	-25	Decrease 48%
1965	23	- 6	Decrease 15%
1970	16	- 7	Decrease 30%
1974	15	- 1	Decrease 6%

NOTE: The number of school districts in Douglas County was reduced seventy-two percent from 53 to 15 between the years of 1950 to 1974.

River on the east with the exception of districts eight and forty-one which were east of the river but lateral to the area districts included in the study, and Gretna Public School District number thirty-seven making up the southern border (see Figure 3).

The total area of all seven school districts was located on a Nebraska map between the cities of metropolitan Omaha on the east and Fremont on the west (refer to Figure 1). Waterloo and Valley were the two largest towns located inside the seven district area with Elk City, King Lake, Ginger Cover, Ginger Woods and Riverside Lakes represented as concentrated housing developments. Highway 275 and the Union Pacific Railroad bisect the area being studied and both run through the towns of Valley and Waterloo.

Most of the labor contingent commuted to the close proximity of Omaha or Fremont for employment. Valmont Industries, located in school district twenty-three (23), Hartford Sand and Gravel Company and Lyman-Richey Sand and Gravel Corporation from school district fifteen (15), along with McCann Sand and Gravel Company in school district thirty-three (33), provided the most opportunity for livelihood locally. Small farms on the bottom land of the two rivers with other related commercial and agricultural interests such as Robinson Seed Company of Waterloo made up the balance of the area economic system.

The population of the Valley School District was estimated to be 2,965 in the year 1975 according to a study conducted by Dr. George Rachford and Dr. Charles Wilson of the University of Nebraska at Omaha.[38]

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[38]George Rachford and Charles Wilson, "School Building and Space Needs Development Plan," (Omaha, Nebraska: A Report to Valley Public Schools, 1972), pp. 5-7.

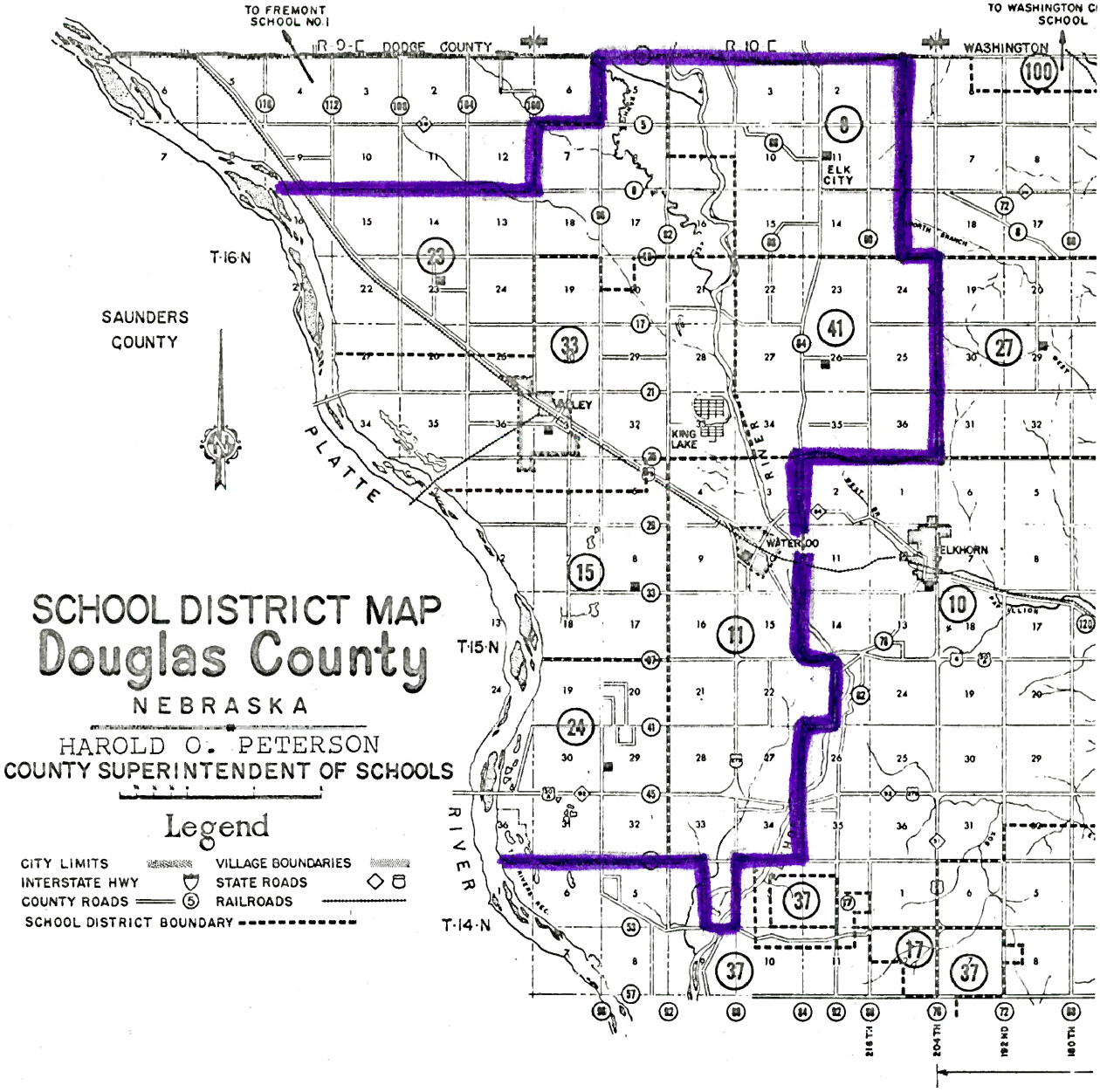

Figure 3

Seven School District Map 1973-74

Rachford conducted a similar study for the Waterloo Public Schools estimating their district census at 820 during the same year.[39] Both communities were predicted for growth during the years of 1975 to 1990. It was anticipated that the Valley district would increase census figures to 5,380 during the indicated fifteen year period.[40] At the same time, Waterloo was predicted for growth to 2,000 in district census figures.[41] The expected combined increase was almost fifty percent in the school districts of eleven (11) and thirty-three (33) alone. No information was available to predict population trends in any of the remaining five school districts involved in this particular study.

Pending a decision on construction date and exact location, both communities were predicted to be strongly affected by the anticipated Omaha-Fremont Freeway planned for construction a short distance north of both towns. In addition, continued growth of the Omaha Metropolitan Area moving in a west to northwest direction was expected to have an impact on the population trend in the western Douglas County area. Fluctuating economic conditions may retard or speed up the growth rate at which the area may develop.[42]

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[39]George Rachford, "Waterloo Public School Long Range Building Development Plan," (Omaha, Nebraska: A Report to the Waterloo Board of Education, 1974), p. 3.

[40]Rachford and Wilson, op. cit., p. 7.

[41]Rachford, op. cit., p. 3.

[42]Rachford and Wilson, op. cit., pp. 4-6.

THE SEVEN DISTRICT ENROLLMENT TREND

To identify a school enrollment pattern for the seven school districts, each school's annual report was studied. The information was collected from the office of the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools. It was interpreted and reported on a five year interval bases.

Each district was found to have reported increases during the twenty-four year period from 1950 to 1973-74, although in some of the rural districts it was very slight (see Table 3). Three of the five rural districts were contracting for educational services for grades seven and eight and showed a decrease in enrollment during the last two intervals.

The town districts of Valley and Waterloo realized the greatest change in enrollment with both schools experiencing a tremendous increase. Valley more than doubled from 373 to 760 students. Waterloo nearly tripled in size from 92 to 269 students during the same period of time. The two schools combined more than doubled in student population from 465 to 1,029 in a time span of just twenty-four years. According to Dr. Rachford, the two schools were predicted to double again in the next fifteen years from 1975 to 1990 reaching an estimated 3,000 students. This was relative to his high estimates, but adding in the remaining five rural districts, the prediction became more probable even if no significant growth occurred in the more remote areas of the combined seven districts.[43]

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[43]Rachford and Wilson, op. cit., p. 11.

Table 3

Analysis of the Seven District Total Enrollments
As Reported During Five Year Intervals
1950 to 1973-74

Dist. No.	1950-51	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66	1970-71	1973-74
8	13	21	20	29	42	32
11	92	147	171	242	265	269
15	17	18	31	32	27	27
23	17	14	18	25	28	29
24	47	38	49	60	42	40
33	373	425	489	549	705	760
41	12	18	17	29	24	14
Total	571	681	795	966	1133	1171

NOTE: Enrollment figures differ from district census (ages five to 18) due to some schools contracting for certain grades. Also, enrollment figures do not reflect the number of free high school tuition students to which rural school districts remain responsible for financing wherever the education for high school takes place.

In the school year of 1973-74, the grade by grade enrollment analysis revealed that class size in the individual schools ranged from zero to seventy-nine (refer to Table 4). The average per grade enrollment in rural schools was four, while Waterloo had twenty and Valley had fifty-seven. The seven district combined per grade student enrollment average was eighty-eight.

The grade by grade enrollment analysis during 1973-74 tended to substantiate enrollment predictions stated in the enrollment studies conducted in Valley and Waterloo school districts. In the Valley report it was stated that due to lower birth rates over the past few years, the growth rate in the school was not expected to be in the rapid proportion at the elementary level with that of the upper grades.[44] Waterloo was described as being under the same influence but, as was the case in both districts, would accelerate enrollment trends when the economic conditions stabilized.[45]

FINANCIAL GROWTH OF THE SEVEN SCHOOL DISTRICTS FROM 1950 THROUGH 1973-74

The office of the Douglas County Superintendent of schools was again consulted for the collection of data concerning growth patterns of the seven school districts during the twenty-four year period studied from 1950 to 1973-74. The offices of the Douglas County Treasurer and County Clerk were also asked to cooperate in the investigator's quest

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[44] Ibid., p. 34.

[45] Rachford, op. cit., p. 2.

Table 4

Grade By Grade Enrollment of Seven School Districts 1973-74

Dist. No.	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Sp.	Total
8	2	3	3	3	3	5	8	4	6		(Free High)				37
11	10	18	12	14	15	16	21	20	21	28	31	31	30	2	269
15	3	2	3	3	4	6	4	(Contract)			(Free High)				20
23	4	4	5	4	4	3	2	3	3		(Free High)				32
24	6	7	5	6	3	5	4	(Contract)			(Free High)				36
33	33	49	49	52	61	69	62	62	69	79	58	55	45	16	760
41	1	0	2	4	2	4	2	(Contract)			(Free High)				15
Total	59	83	79	86	92	108	103	88	99	107	89	86	76	18	1169

NOTE: Average per grade enrollment in rural districts 4
Average per grade enrollment in Waterloo 20
Average per grade enrollment in Valley 58
Average per grade enrollment combined 88

for information. It was again displayed on a basis of five year intervals.

All school districts were reported to have gained substantially in total valuations per district (see Tables 5 through 10). All districts except eight (8) and forty-one (41) at least doubled in valuation and those two were very close. District twenty-three (23) showed the most significant financial growth gaining almost five times its value from 1950 to the year of 1973-74. Valley and Waterloo were consistant with the total seven district growth by gaining approximately triple the evaluation shown in 1950.

Most notable in the financial status of each school district was in the evaluation per pupil discovered in district twenty-three (23). This district grew from an evaluation per pupil in 1950 of $24,345.74 to $94,362.33 in 1973-74 (refer to Table 5 and Table 10). The State Department of Education in Nebraska suggested that to have sufficient taxable resources assuring necessary educational services at a reasonable cost to the tax paying citizen, a school district should have $17,000 of per pupil valuation.[46] The per pupil evaluation in district twenty-three (23) was almost six times above the rate recommended minimum, while the combined seven district average was about $2,500 below the minimum level at $14,470.77 per student.

Other school districts with per pupil valuations above the Nebraska recommended minimum in 1973-74 were districts eight (8) with

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[46]Floyd A. Miller, Commissioner of Education in the State of Nebraska, Characteristics Of A Good School System, (n.d.), (Lincoln, Nebraska: State Capitol), p. 1.

Table 5

Financial Status of the Seven Districts in 1950

Dist. No.	Assessed Valuation Of Dist.	Total Mill Levy	*Census of District	Valuation Behind Each Student
8	$ 560,270.00	18.28	32	$17,508.44
11	1,012,575.00	23.20	92	11,006.25
15	374,130.00	20.08	33	11,337.27
23	827,755.00	14.68	34	24,345.74
24	513,355.00	25.58	86	5,969.24
33	1,799,145.00	21.80	317	5,675.54
41	585,355.00	15.28	20	29,267.75
Total	$5,627,585.00	19.84 Avg.	614	$9,238.74 Avg.

NOTE: *Census of a district was defined as the number of resident children in a school district between the ages of five to eighteen. This figure differs from enrollment due to contracting by some districts for specified grades and the free high tuition students in rural schools.

NOTE: All information shown on this table was collected from the office of the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools. Assessed valuation and mill levy in each district may vary slightly from the time original figures were sent to the County Superintendent each summer and the final figures determined by the Douglas County treasurer's office. However, to keep the study consistent, only those figures accountable to the county superintendent of schools were used.

Table 6

Financial Status of the Seven Districts in 1955

Dist. No.	Assessed Valuation Of Dist.	Total Mill Levy	*Census of District	Valuation Behind Each Student
8	$ 613,360.00	12.83	33	$18,586.67
11	1,243,953.00	34.42	136	9,146.71
15	516,937.00	15.33	37	13,971.27
23	920,260.00	13.60	30	30,675.33
24	555,455.00	19.56	60	9,257.58
33	2,474,331.00	38.85	409	6,049.71
41	597,880.00	16.21	24	24,911.67
Total	$6,922,176.00	21.57 Avg.	729	$ 9,495.44 Avg.

NOTE: *Census of a district was defined as the number of resident children in a school district between the ages of five to eighteen. This figure differs from enrollment due to contracting by some districts for specified grades and the free high school tuition students in rural schools.

NOTE: All information shown on this table was collected from the office of the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools. Assessed valuation and mill levy in each district may vary slightly from the time original figures were sent to the County Superintendent each summer and the final figures determined by the Douglas County treasurer's office. However, to keep the study consistent, only those figures accountable to the county superintendent of schools were used.

Table 7

Financial Status of the Seven Districts in 1960

Dist. No.	Assessed Valuation Of Dist.	Total Mill Levy	*Census of District	Valuation Behind Each Student
8	$ 556,966.00	16.54	35	$15,913.31
11	1,143,433.00	40.42	158	7,236.92
15	630,946.00	18.74	46	13,716.22
23	980,041.00	12.11	30	32,668.03
24	660,012.00	16.28	76	8,684.37
33	2,531,158.00	51.96	429	5,900.14
41	576,679.00	10.58	26	22,179.96
Total	$7,079,235.00	23.82 Avg.	800	$ 8,849.04 Avg.

NOTE: *Census of a district was defined as the number of resident children in a school district between the ages of five to eighteen. This figure differs from enrollment due to contracting by some districts for specified grades and the free high school tuition students in rural schools.

NOTE: All information shown on this table was collected from the office of the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools. Assessed valuation and mill levy in each district may vary slightly from the time original figures were sent to the County Superintendent each summer and the final figures determined by the Douglas County treasurer's office. However, to keep the study consistent, only those figures accountable to the county superintendent of schools were used.

Table 8

Financial Status of the Seven Districts in 1965

Dist. No.	Assessed Valuation Of Dist.	Total Mill Levy	*Census of District	Valuation Behind Each Student
8	$ 667,935.00	22.35	47	$14,211.38
11	1,919,395.00	46.55	254	7,556.67
15	657,275.00	23.23	58	11,332.33
23	998,120.00	17.19	37	26,705.95
24	904,495.00	28.66	92	9,831.47
33	3,132,425.00	63.98	507	6,178.35
41	829,670.00	14.29	35	23,704.86
Total	$9,099,315.00	30.89 Avg.	1030	$ 8,834.29 Avg.

NOTE: *Census of a district was defined as the number of resident children in a school district between the ages of five to eighteen. This figure differs from enrollment due to contracting by some districts for specified grades and the free high school tuition students in rural schools.

NOTE: All information shown on this table was collected from the office of the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools. Assessed valuation and mill levy in each district may vary slightly from the time original figures were sent to the County Superintendent each summer and the final figures determined by the Douglas County treasurer's office. However, to keep the study consistent, only those figures accountable to the county superintendent of schools were used.

Table 9

Financial Status of the Seven Districts in 1970

Dist. No.	Assessed Valuation Of Dist.	Total Mill Levy	*Census of District	Valuation Behind Each Student
8	$ 900,511.00	21.20	41	$21,963.68
11	2,421,980.00	84.44	207	11,700.39
15	1,240,017.00	26.08	60	20,666.95
23	3,461,277.00	14.37	45	76,917.27
24	1,223,085.00	20.70	82	14,915.67
33	5,096,444.00	83.22	688	7,407.62
41	1,037,296.00	22.60	45	23,051.02
Total	$15,380,610.00	38.94 Avg.	1168	$13,168.33 Avg.

NOTE: *Census of a district was defined as the number of resident children in a school district between the ages of five to eighteen. This figure differs from enrollment due to contracting by some districts for specified grades and the free high school tuition students in rural schools.

NOTE: All information shown on this table was collected from the office of the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools. Assessed valuation and mill levy in each district may vary slightly from the time original figures were sent to the County Superintendent each summer and the final figures determined by the Douglas County treasurer's office. However, to keep the study consistent, only those figures accountable to the county superintendent of schools were used.

Table 10

Financial Status of the Seven Districts in 1973-74

Dist. No.	Assessed Valuation Of Dist.	Total Mill Levy	*Census of District	Valuation Behind Each Student
8	$1,033,700.00	26.50	50	$20,674.00
11	3,238,950.00	69.94	244	13,274.39
15	1,925,270.00	25.63	63	30,559.84
23	4,246,305.00	22.58	45	94,362.33
24	1,419,290.00	31.04	89	15,947.08
33	5,875,595.00	83.30	767	7,660.49
41	1,072,885.00	32.99	42	25,544.88
Total	$18,811,995.00	40.43 Avg.	1300	$14,470.77 Avg.

NOTE: *Census of a district was defined as the number of resident children in a school district between the ages of five to eighteen. This figure differs from enrollment due to contracting by some districts for specified grades and the free high school tuition students in rural schools.

NOTE: All information shown on this table was collected from the office of the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools. Assessed valuation and mill levy in each district may vary slightly from the time original figures were sent to the County Superintendent each summer and the final figures determined by the Douglas County treasurer's office. However, to keep the study consistent, only those figures accountable to the county superintendent of schools were used.

$20,000, district fifteen (15) in excess of $30,000 and district forty-one (41) with a little over $25,000. Growth in the remaining districts showed steady increases but the pace was not as consistent.

It was interesting to note the disclosure of the total assessed valuation growth compared to total gain in student enrollment in each school district (see Table 11). From 1950 to 1973-74, the total assessed valuation tripled from $5,672,585 to $18,811,995 in all seven school districts combined. During the same time span, the total student enrollment was doubling from 614 to 1300. At the same time, evaluation per student in the combined seven school districts raised from $9,238.74 to $14,470.77. This was an average per student increase of more than $5,000 in the combined seven districts.

Assessed valuation projected growth was estimated to double from an excess of $5,000,000 in 1972-73 to an excess of $11,000,000 by 1982 in the Valley School District.[47] Some of the same growth was predicted from a 1972-73 figure of $2,842,000 to a probable $5,400,000 by 1981-82 for the Waterloo School District.[48]

With both districts predicted to double in assessed valuation by 1982, the combined evaluation would be in the $16,400,000 range with the two town districts alone. No information was available to predict the future financial growth patterns of the rural districts. However, it could be determined from information contained in Table 8 and Table 10 that with similar inflationary trends alone there would be realized

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[47]Rachford and Wilson, loc. cit., p. 23.

[48]Rachford, loc. cit., p. 14.

Table 11

Combined Financial Analysis of the Seven School Districts
Totaled at Five Year Intervals 1950 to 1973-74

Year	Combined Assessed Evaluation	Average Total Mill Levy	Combined District Enrollment	Combined Valuation Behind Each Student
1950	$ 5,672,585.00	19.84	614	$ 9,238.74
1955	6,922,176.00	21.57	729	9,495.44
1960	7,079,235.00	23.82	800	8,849.04
1965	9,099,315.00	30.89	1030	8,834.29
1970	15,380,610.00	38.94	1168	13,168.33
73-74	18,811,995.00	40.43	1300	14,470.77

NOTE: Comparative facts about the financial and enrollment pattern during the twenty-four year period from 1950 to 1974.

(1) Combined assessed valuation has tripled in total amount and has grown an average of approximately $541,000 per year.

(2) The average total mill levy has doubled and has risen about .83 mills per year.

(3) The combined seven district enrollment has doubled rising about twenty-eight students per year.

(4) The combined valuation behind each student has risen in excess of $5,000 averaging about $216.00 per year of increase.

some raise in the valuation of the rural districts regardless of industrial or commercial growth or development of residential areas.

Approximating financial growth of the five rural districts shwon from 1956 through 1973-75, and projecting the same growth to 1982, there would be $5,642,000 increase in valuation. The total valuation of the five rural districts would then be estimated at around the $15,000,000 range. Combined with the two town districts, the total valuation of the seven school districts by the year of 1982 would be in excess of $30,000,000. This was almost double the total seven district valuation in the year of 1973-74.

Economic conditions of the years between 1974 and 1982 had to be taken into consideration. Again, the Omaha-Fremont Freeway, commerical and industrial growth as well as development of residential areas all had to hold much in the way of variables which could accelerate or impede the progress in the entire area. Nevertheless, all factors being considered and all things being equal with past patterns, the area was being developed and did stand to be the recipient of much growth by its close proximity to the Omaha Metropolitan Area.

No one could accurately predict the exact growth of the area by 1982 or even what the attitudes of area residents might be toward combining school districts for the purpose of financial advantages for all tax paying citizens. The information collected did provide insight as to the educational value of being able to better finance quantity as well as quality in a more comprehensive curriculum for all students above and beyond existing conditions.

A SURVEY OF CURRICULUM, PERSONNEL, AND BUILDINGS COMPARED WITH RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FROM THE NEBRASKA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The purpose of this section in the study was to compare existing conditions and practices regarding curriculum, staff personnel, and school buildings with guidelines and recommendations published by the Nebraska State Deaprtment of Education. This allowed an opportunity to measure the efficiency or inefficiency of the seven districts in their management of these particular areas of operation. The collection of local data was completed through visitation of the schools, talking with school personnel and with the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools.

Curriculum analysis revealed that due to the relatively small enrollment in all of the seven schools, very traditional types of curriculum offerings prevailed. Valley and Waterloo offered very limited vocational subjects at the high school level. None of the districts offered an exploratory program in vocational curriculum at the junior high level or the elementary school. There was no career emphasis or career philosophy blended with the traditional curriculum at any grade level. The Valley system was working toward development of a blend of career education but none existed at the time of this survey.

All schools were offering minimal amounts of the traditional mathematics, language arts, science, social studies and health. Each student had an opportunity for exposure in each of the academic areas. However, very limited special curriculum was offered for the gifted and only the Valley system was providing for students in the area of special education and remedial reading.

The philosophy of making available a balanced academic and vocational curriculum offering did not exist. There were not enough students and not enough financial resources to afford a comprehensive educational program, defined earlier in the study by James B. Conant, because the per pupil cost made it prohibitive.

A well balanced, comprehensive type program for a good school system must:

1. be based on community need;

2. be broad enough to provide an offering of courses that will afford students the opportunity to prepare for the career of their choice;

3. include within its district boundaries a sufficient number of pupils so that it can have a program of educational opportunities broad enough to meet the individual needs of all pupils;

4. include within its district boundaries a natural community, or a group of interrelated communities or neighborhoods, and so arranged that pupils do not cross district boundaries in order to attend the school they should logically attend;

5. provide favorable teacher-pupil ratios of not less than one to fifteen and not more than one to thirty;

6. provide a sufficient number of pupils to justify the expenditures and to insure substantial enrollments at all levels and in all classes;

7. have patrons and friends of the school system who desire and work for a quality school program for children and who are willing to provide sufficient financial support to do so.[49]

It must get involved in the development of a well balanced vocational and academic set of curriculum offerings. Essentials needed

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[49]Floyd Miller, op. cit., p. 2.

for a well balanced educational program on a kindergarten through twelfth grade bases were:

1. a physical education program for both sexes;
2. art programs;
3. music--vocal and instrumental;
4. guidance services;
5. testing programs;
6. programs in the curriculum for the gifted;
7. remedial courses;
8. health services;
9. access to an adequate library;
10. educational television;
11. extra curricular activities;
12. a solid program of curriculum evaluation.[50]

With reference to personnel, it was discovered that the teaching staff of each school in the seven districts was relatively small. Enrollments being small forced teachers into broad teaching areas which sometimes forced assignments in both their major and minor fields of preparation.

None of the schools employed staff supervisors or department heads. All the responsibility for supervision of faculty rested with the various school principals in Valley and Waterloo while the teachers in the five rural schools were subject only to supervisory evaluation by

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[50]William R. Schroeder, Roger Farrar, and Roger Hanson, Report Card--Great Plains Study--State of Nebraska (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Department of Education, 1968), p. 6.

the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools who rarely visited.

All seven districts seemed to be reasonably successful in employing certified staff members for regular teaching assignments. Very limited staffing was found for the special service areas such as remedial reading, special education, guidance, library, music, art, and a school nurse.

Valley and Waterloo were providing limited programs in the special areas, but very little was available in any of the rural schools. Rural districts had no guidance counselors, no school secretaries, no school nurse, no regular custodians, no elementary principal and no special or remedial personnel. They had no bus service and no hot lunch programs.

Some suggestions that might prove helpful for a district when considering a full staff for the needs of all pupils in a school should be:

1. that they employ fully certified and qualified staff members for the services they are to perform;

2. that they are assigned to their major field of preparation and interest;

3. that they understand children and youth and are responsive to their needs;

4. that they coordinate and cooperate their efforts with those of other personnel;

5. that they participate and cooperate in the planning of well executed in-service programs;

6. that they keep their competencies up-to-date;

7. that they participate actively in professional organizations;

8. that they follow a professional code of ethics;

9. that the school have a good system of staff evaluation for all staff members.[51]

The building evaluation in each of the districts revealed that Valley and Waterloo were both small in comparison to what was necessary to house comprehensive programs of education. Waterloo had new facilities and Valley had a fairly modern elementary building and a new junior-senior high school under construction.

Most of the rural buildings were of an older type of construction with recent renovation providing modern lighting, gas heat, carpeting, hot and cold water, and indoor restroom facilities. Each building seemed equipped and supplied for a comfortable educational environment.

All the rural buildings were wooden structures built around 1910, except for district eight (8) which was brick and had been built around 1935. The rural school buildings contained from one classroom in district forty-one (41), to four rooms in districts eight (8) and forty-one (41). The building in district twenty-four (24) had three rooms and district fifteen (15) had two rooms. Each of the rural districts operated from and owned only one single building. There were no hot lunches served and no hot lunch facilities. The concept of a central library was very inadequate in all rural schools.

None of the seven school districts operated a specially designed building for grades kindergarten through the sixth grade. None operated a specially designed junior high for grades seven, eight and nine with a specially trained staff and exploratory courses of study that were well coordinated with the curriculum in the kindergarten through sixth grades

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[51]Floyd Miller, op. cit., p. 6.

as well as tenth through twelfth grade levels. Also, none of the districts operated a separate senior high with a well balanced three-track curriculum offering in general education, vocational education and college preparation all coordinated kindergarten through twelfth grade.

All buildings in a well coordinated and well structured plant:

1. are well planned and properly constructed on sites adequate to meet educational needs of the total district;

2. have taken into consideration the location of children throughout the district so that a sufficient number of attendance centers are provided;

3. are clean, safe, attractive and economically maintained by an efficient custodial staff;

4. have proper lighting, temperature control, ventilation, and efficient sound treatment appropriate to each area being served;

5. have departments, service areas and classrooms equipped with modern furniture and apparatus appropriate to the activity of each room;

6. reflect an extensive planning period prior to new construction along with a set of educational specifications which prescribe the program to be offered;

7. have been planned and constructed with flexibility in mind so that many different uses can be made of areas, now and in the future;

8. have rooms and departments which have taken into consideration educational television and all other mediums in the broad audio-visual field, present and future;

9. are open and available to students and patrons before and after the school day;

10. have a well coordinated and well planned adult education program available in the evening.[52]

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[52] Ibid., p. 6.

It has been said that comprehensive educational involvement becomes increasingly important in order that students might live reasonably confident and profitable lives. People should be educated so as to become thinking and competing men and women capable of making democracy work at home, in the local community, their state and in America.

To do so, they must acquire a broad knowledge and understanding of themselves, their culture, their way of life and the life of others. They must develop a personal value system and learn to think logically in order to overcome physical and mental blocks or defects which may confront them throughout life.[53]

Only a planned educational system could provide this training and must assume the responsibility that accompanies it. Only local school districts have the authority to mandate such achievement. Until local school districts arrive at viable compromises leading to more comprehensive educational decisions that develop well balanced comprehensive educational programs, communities cannot have schools which perform to the maximum of their potential for the good of all children. It has never been a status quo situation.

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[53]Schroeder, Farrar, and Hanson, Report Card, op. cit., p. 6.

Chapter 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has been focused primarily upon seven school districts in western Douglas County in an effort to collect data concerning the advantages or disadvantages of operating as one administrative unit. A review of available literature was surveyed in order to substantiate the data collected in the actual study of the seven school districts.

I. SUMMARY

In Chapter 1 the problem was presented, purposes were stated, and terms were defined. It was cited in this chapter that this particular study would be confined to a review of available literature and a collection of data from seven school districts in western Douglas County.

The survey of literature in Chapter 2 described the historical development and existing status of school district structure in the state of Nebraska as compared to the trends of the nation. It also detailed minimum standards for efficient school district operation in a modern, technological and constantly changing society.

Chapter 3 involved an analysis of the population trends, financial background, curriculum, personnel and building conditions in each of the seven school districts.

II. CONCLUSIONS

This study yielded evidence which appeared to support the following conclusions:

1. The number of school districts in the state of Nebraska in 1973 represented eight percent of the nation's total while enrollment represented only one percent of the national total.

2. Class I school districts were educating six percent of the school age children in Nebraska's public schools during 1973, while they made up almost seventy-five percent of the total number of school districts in the state during the same year.

3. School district reorganization in Nebraska has not followed a definite pattern that can be related to population, road conditions and topography. The pattern in Nebraska was found to be related more to attitudes toward reorganization. This seemed to be a more significant factor than any other single reason.

4. Optimum educational programs must include a balanced, flexible, comprehensive and articulated curriculum from kindergarten through the twelfth grade under the leadership of one superintendent, a principal in the elementary, junior high and secondary school, and it must operate under one local board of education.

5. Communities must have operating school districts composed of a large and broader tax base so as to have the financial economy and operational efficiency necessary to properly educate all the children.

6. No well informed person today advocated reorganization on the grounds of an actual savings of money, but rather on the basis of

providing better and more educational services at a lesser cost per pupil.

7. The greatest obstacle in the provision of well planned and economically financed programs of quality education was the willingness of some people to settle for less.

8. In the exercise of good judgment, regarding guidelines one should follow estimating minimum enrollment for an appropriate size school, consideration should be given to kindergarten through grade twelve having 1200 to 1500 students with at least 100 in the graduating senior class.

9. The typical school district has been found to generally possess a population made up of approximately ten percent in favor of educational promotion and improvement, eighty percent riding the fence, and the other ten percent categorized as being diametrically opposed to doing anything at all.

10. From 1950 through 1973-74, there was a total of seventy-two percent reduction in the total number of school districts in Douglas County from fifty-three to fifteen.

11. Combined school district population was predicted to double from 3785 in Valley and Waterloo to 7380 by 1990.

12. The Valley and Waterloo school district enrollment was expected to triple during the years between 1975 and 1990 from an estimated 1029 to 3000. This estimate did not include any of the surrounding rural districts.

13. The combined seven district per grade enrollment in the 1973-74 school year was eighty-eight.

14. All seven school districts gained substantially in valuation during the years between 1950 to 1973-74. All districts at least doubled in valuation with the exception of districts eight (8) and forty-one (41), and both of these were very close.

15. District twenty-three realized the most significant growth gaining almost five times its value from 1950 to 1973-74.

16. Valley and Waterloo were consistent with the total combined seven district increase by tripling the evaluation figure shown in 1950 compared with 1973-74.

17. Most notable in the financial status was in the growth of evaluation behind each pupil in district twenty-three (23). This district grew from an evaluation per pupil in 1950 from $24,345.74 to $94,362.33. The Nebraska State Department of Education recommends a minimum of $17,000 of district valuation supporting each student.

18. Of the seven school districts studied besides district twenty-three (23), district eight (8) with $20,000, district fifteen (15) with an excess of $30,000 and district forty-one (41) with over $25,000 all exceeded the state recommended minimum of $17,000 valuation behind each student.

19. The combined seven district valuation tripled from $5,672,585 in 1950 to $18,811,995 in 1973-74. During this same period of time, the seven district enrollment doubled from 614 to 1300.

20. In the twenty-four year period from 1950 to 1973-74, the seven district combined evaluation supporting each student raised from $9,238.74 to $14,470.77.

21. Valley projected financial growth in school district valuation from $5,000,000 in 1972-73 to $11,000,000 by 1982.

22. Waterloo projected financial growth in school district valuation from $2,842,000 in 1972-73 to a probable of $5,400,000 by 1982.

23. Valley and Waterloo combined could have a projected $16,400,000 in school district evaluation by 1982.

24. The combined seven school districts could have a $30,000,000 in total evaluation by 1982 with a school age population of about 2000. This would be an average per pupil evaluation of approximately $15,000.

25. Balanced academic and vocational curriculum offering did not exist in any of the seven school districts. There were not enough students and not enough financial resources available to afford a comprehensive educational program with all the districts separated.

26. Enrollments being small, all schools were forced to assign some teachers into broad teaching areas involving both their major and minor fields. In some cases this caused insecurity.

27. None of the schools were large enough to employ staff supervisors or department heads. Thus, the responsibility for staff evaluation and curriculum development was left totally to the principals. The rural schools did not have a principal, so this responsibility was handled by the Douglas County Superintendent of Schools and the local teachers or it was not done at all.

28. None of the school districts operated a set of buildings housing a separate and specially designed kindergarten through sixth

grade elementary school, or a separate and specially designed junior high school with grades seven, eight, and nine, and none of the districts operated a separate and specially designed senior high for grades ten through twelve.

29. Local school districts must arrive at a viable compromise leading to more comprehensive educational decisions.

30. The seven school districts do not have sufficient enrollments in their separate environments to offer an economical and feasibly sound program of instruction. There must be some kind of effort extended in the direction of reorganization in order to keep pace with changing trends in Douglas County and modern technology throughout the world.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

It was a sincere hope at the beginning of this study, that the facts might be so graphically expressed in this report to drive home some urgent necessities that must be faced by western Douglas County communities. Solutions can be found, and good ones, if they are based on facts, our best logic, and our willingness to work together unselfishly in the best interest of the children and youth in the area.

Comprehensive planning at both the local and state level has become essential. We need the kind of planning that considers the present, the immediate years ahead, and according to our best judgment, for what lies ahead in the decades to come. On this basis, we will have the best chance of building for the future of our children's lives.

The accomplishment will be in the excellence of educational opportunity in a comprehensive school program.

Education has always been the foundation and the unifying force of our democratic way of life. It has been the mainspring of our economic and social progress and the highest expression of achievement in our society that enriches human life. In short, it has been the most profitable investment society can make and the richest reward it can confer.

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