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An Analysis of the Educational Rationale Supporting School District Reorganization

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL RATIONALE SUPPORTING
SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

Presented to the

Graduate Faculty
University of Nebraska
at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Gene L. Burton

August 1978

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FIELD PROJECT ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the Graduate Faculty, University of
Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree Specialist in Education, University of Nebraska
at Omaha.

Supervisory Committee

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July 17, 1978
Date

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, DEFINITION OF TERMS, AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Educators across the United States traditionally view the vast number of existing school districts as extremely inefficient and undesirable. Statistical data indicate that the total number of school districts in a state has no significant correlation with a state's total geographic area or population (6, 10). The absence of a significant correlation is most obvious when studying data relative to Nebraska's total geographic area, population, and number of existing public school districts.

Nebraska ranks fifteenth in total land area while the 1970 Census Report ranks the state as the fortieth most densely populated state in the United States of America (10:456-190). Logically, Nebraska should have fewer school districts than the more densely populated states. However, this is not the case. Nebraska led the nation in 1977 with 1138 public school districts (6).

Nebraskans are realizing that their ability to support quality educational programs is related to the assessed

valuation per pupil from real property within the districts. In addition, the same citizenry realize that the assessed valuation per student is related to the geographic size and industrial potential of each school district.

Each school district, in considering the possibility of industry moving into the district, knows that it cannot expect industrial expansion or development unless the desired qualities of access to transportation, markets, labor and energy resources are present. Unfortunately, a majority of the school districts within Nebraska do not possess the desired qualities necessary to bring about industrial expansion and consequently an increase in taxable valuation of the district.

As a result of a local school district's inability to enlarge its tax base, or to receive more financial support from sources such as state aid, the districts are seeking alternatives to increase the total taxable valuation behind each student, and to increase operational efficiency. The alternative explored most often by the local school district has been the consolidation of two or more districts into one enlarged administrative unit.

The reorganization, or consolidation, of school districts into an enlarged administrative unit has been advocated by educators, but does not appear to be readily accepted by the citizens of the state. Rejection by the people of this

alternative has stimulated boards of education, professional educators, and educational consultants to build a positive case centered on the benefits resulting from reorganization.

Existing literature provides a convincing theoretical base for the reorganization of two or more school districts. However, little data exist which illustrates that reorganization into an enlarged administrative unit does, in practice, provide the educational outcomes indicated by the literature.

It is intended that this study would provide a rank ordering of the advantages of reorganization as perceived by patrons of consolidated districts. It is also intended that this study would provide insight into perceptions of the effectiveness of enlarged districts in fulfilling the stated advantages of reorganization.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Problem

The problem of this study was the establishment of a ranking for a predetermined list of advantages accruing to school districts as a result of consolidation, and further to determine the perceptions of selected patrons of consolidated school districts relative to the extent to which an enlarged administrative unit provides the educational advantages identified and supported by the literature.

Importance of the Study

Inflation and legislative directives are reducing the purchasing power of the educational tax dollar. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to determine to what extent an enlarged administrative unit is able to more efficiently utilize the educational tax dollar. Furthermore, it is considered vital that the citizenry have a point of reference for determining if the problems created offset the efficiency of operation and the enlarged valuation per student gained through reorganization.

As the real value of the dollar continues to decrease, and school districts become more aware of the needs of their students, more school districts will need to draw on the inferences of this study to make rational decisions regarding district reorganization. Yet, another important result from this study may be future legislation from the Nebraska Unicameral concerning mandatory school district reorganization.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Reorganization

Reorganization in this study is the process of forming an enlarged administrative unit by consolidating two or more Class II and/or Class III school districts. As a

result, the policy making bodies of the consolidating districts are dissolved and a new board of education is appointed by the County Reorganization Committee.

Administrative Unit

Administrative unit in this study refers to the geographical area which is governed by one board of education, financed by one school mill levy, and administered by one executive officer called the superintendent of schools.

Attendance Unit

Attendance unit in this study refers to a subdivision of a school district. It comprises the geographic area and the population served by one school building.

Consolidation

Consolidation in this study is the process of forming an enlarged administrative unit by merging two or more Class II and/or Class III school districts. As a result, the policy making bodies of the merging districts are dissolved and a new board of education is appointed by the County Reorganization Committee.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study must be viewed with the following limitations in mind:

1. The sample population represent only reorganized districts resulting from the consolidation of two or more Class II and/or Class III school districts.
2. The study is limited to reorganization efforts which occurred in the State of Nebraska.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

During the Twentieth Century 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 reorganization. This literature was surveyed for the purpose of identifying the predominate rationale, advanced by educators and researchers, for creating enlarged administrative units.

The literature reviewed consistently advanced the premise that school district organization evolved as a structure to facilitate the educational process. For example, the Great Plains School District Organization Project states that school district organization is the structure for providing the programs and services to meet defined and accepted educational needs at the desired level of quality, with efficiency in the utilization of human and material resources, and with economical expenditure of the taxpayer's dollar (9:51).

Traditionally, the organization of school districts has been related to the location and movement of people.

As the population moved westward, school districts were organized to accommodate the people; regardless of where they settled.

As society advanced technologically a decline in the social and economic structure of rural communities was noticeable. The decline of rural social and economic structures has necessitated a change in school district organization. Without such a change in organization the educational needs of the district cannot be efficiently or effectively met.

The literature seems to group the rationale for school district restructuring into three broad but interrelated categories of financial, instructional, and administrative advantages. The literature has suggested that specific advantages will accrue financially while allowing for the development of a more effectively administered instructional program which meets the needs of the people of the administrative unit (7:80).

LITERATURE RELATED TO FINANCIAL ADVANTAGES OF SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

William R. Schroeder states that school district organization should contribute to the adequate and equitable financing of public education, with funds from federal, state, and local sources (9:95). Unfortunately, the

history of school district organization has been such that the wealth is not distributed equally in all existing districts. Schroöder sights an abundance of examples of unfair and inequitable distribution of wealth in support of education in the State of Nebraska (9:95).

The late Dr. James B. Conant, past president of Harvard University, points out that communities which have developed operating districts within the confines of a large or broad tax base have a financial economy and operational effectiveness that has proven to be superior to smaller administrative units which have restricted taxing systems (2:1). C. O. Fitzwater disputes the contention that an enlarged administrative unit provides a better educational program at a lesser cost. He believes that an adequately reorganized district has a greater ability to provide, at less cost, the same educational program as provided by the former administrative unit. Fitzwater further points out that enlarged administrative units allow increased per pupil expenditures, which result in the provision of educational opportunities which meet the changing needs of the youth in the district. These same needs could not be met effectively and efficiently in the absence of school district reorganization (4:23).

Calvin Grieder seems to adequately summarize the financial advantages as seen by a large majority of the

authors. He reports the major financial advantages of school district reorganization to be:

1. Pupil-teacher ration can be increased, which means if other costs are not increased, there will be a decrease in per pupil expenditures.
2. The tax burden can be equalized, that is the financial resources which support each student may become more equitable.
3. Waste in the utilization and construction of school plants can be reduced.
4. Specialized services, such as guidance, health services, instruction in music and art, and food services can be provided at a lower per pupil cost.
5. Transportation can be more efficiently managed, with better and more flexible routing of buses and less duplication of services (5:95).

LITERATURE RELATED TO INSTRUCTIONAL ADVANTAGES OF SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

Equitable educational opportunity must be provided for all children and youth in the country. Educational opportunity is equitable when it makes possible the fulfillment of each individual's interests and needs.

Students are seldom, if ever, alike. They have many different educational needs. Some have physical or emotional handicaps and need special attention. Some are highly gifted while others are retarded and require special training. But all are important, and the needs of each must be met.

School district organization has as its sole purpose the provision of material and human resources which will fulfill each individual's interests and needs, and the needs of society efficiently and effectively. School district organization, utilized while the nation was basically rural, does not now provide the necessary resources to satisfy the needs of the country and its youth (7:80).

Dr. James Conant recommends that an administrative unit must have a graduating class of 100 or more students (3:25-26). Other students of school administration indicate that there should be a minimum student population of 1500 students in kindergarten through grade twelve and a certificated staff which includes at least forty teachers (1:5).

District structure of this size does not guarantee that the material and human resources will be available to meet the needs of the youth and country, but it does increase the probability that these resources will be available and utilized.

Calvin Grieder indicates the following instructional advantages will result from school district reorganization which forms a sufficiently large administrative unit:

1. Increased opportunities for the educational development of students as measured by such items as library books, teaching aids, and special teachers in art and music.
2. The breadth of the curriculum increases as the enrollment increases; thus, educational opportunity increases.
3. Recruitment and retention of a more qualified staff and the utilization of this staff in their areas of specialization.
4. Offers better specialized services such as physical health, mental health, testing and counseling program, and supervisors in special subject areas.
5. Provides articulation and co-ordination of the entire educational program from the kindergarten through grade twelve.
6. Allows for better inservice opportunities for the professional staff; thus allowing for better instruction (5:21).

LITERATURE RELATED TO ADMINISTRATIVE ADVANTAGES OF SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

School district organization should contribute to effective and efficient business management of the administrative unit. Effectiveness is expressed in terms of the adequacy of the educational program, while efficiency is expressed in terms of getting the most for the tax dollar spent (8:202).

Manatt and Netusil concluded from their cost determination and analysis of central administration in South Dakota, Iowa, and Missouri, for the school year of

1965-66, that school districts with less than 3000 students are not organizationally efficient when considering administrative cost. They further concluded that the small school districts which lack sufficient size are not able to provide the following administrative advantages:

1. A reduction of the percentage budgeted for central administrative services.
2. The employment of a more qualified chief administrator; thus, the greater potential for the implementation of management procedures which will enhance educational opportunities.
3. The availability of resources and the greater potential to provide special service and supervisory personnel; thus, enhancing the educational opportunity (8:202-203).

ELSEGIS (Elementary and Secondary General Information Study) of 1956 also indicates that the percentage of the general budget for administrative services tends to decrease as the size of the school district increases. For example, the study showed the percentage of the budget for administration in school districts of less than 300 students to be 8.8 percent, while the percentage of the budget for administrative services in school districts of 2500 to 4999 was 5.2 percent.

Robert L. Whitt states, "the primary purpose of educational business management service is to provide support to the educational functions of a school. Few business activities should take place within the attendance

unit. Business management activities should take place at a higher level with service the essential role within the attendance unit (8:208)."

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

This field project uses a descriptive method of research. Descriptive research methods are used to obtain information about existing conditions. Specifically, this field project employs a survey methodology to describe the status quo of a ranking ordering and rating of ten stated advantages which the literature indicates may accrue to school districts as a result of reorganization.

The ten stated advantages submitted to the sample population were identified by this writer from his review of related literature. Each stated advantage which might accrue as a result of consolidation will be rank ordered and rated by the sample population to determine the relative importance placed on the advantage before consolidation and the extent the advantage has been perceived to be realized after consolidation.

Sample

Twenty six school districts in the State of Nebraska were selected as districts which could help identify the population to survey in this project. Each of the school districts selected for this study is a district which was

formed by the consolidation of at least two Class II and/or Class III schools. The twenty six schools were identified from a listing of Nebraska schools in the Eightieth Nebraska Educational Directory, 1977.

The superintendent of each selected school district was sent a letter of introduction which included an explanation of the intent of this field project (see page 17). Each superintendent was requested to select five patrons who were living in the present school district area prior to reorganization who would be able and willing to respond to a questionnaire relative to the consolidation which took place to form their present school district.

Eighteen of the twenty six superintendents, or 69.2 percent, returned the stamped post card. Fifteen of the superintendents provided the names of five patrons each, one provided the names of four patrons, and two indicated that they could not provide names of district patrons for survey purposes. In total the superintendents identified seventy nine patrons to be the sample population for this field project.

Instrumentation

The sample population of seventy nine patrons was sent a questionnaire, along with a cover letter which introduced both this writer and research project

March 6, 1978

Mr. Jerry Maurer, Superintendent
Wheatland Public Schools
Madrid, Nebraska 69150

Dear Mr. Maurer:

I am Gene L. Burton, Administrative Assistant, for Valley Public Schools, Valley, Nebraska. I am also a candidate for the Specialist in Education Degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I am doing a research project under the direction of Dr. Kirk E. Naylor, Professor of Educational Administration.

Under Dr. Naylor's direction I hope to discern a rank ordering of ten predetermined advantages which are reported to accrue to a school district as a result of school district reorganization. I also hope to determine the extent to which these same predetermined advantages are perceived realized by the patrons of the consolidated district.

As a superintendent of a consolidated district you may be of help by identifying five patrons in your district who are capable and willing to respond to a questionnaire concerning the rationale most often advanced for school district reorganization. Please identify patrons who were living in the area of your present school district prior to the consolidation effort. If at all possible ignore the position that the patron took during the consolidation period.

I have enclosed a stamped self-addressed post card for your convenience. Please record the names and addresses of five patrons and return the card to me within the next week.

Thank you for your help. If you would like results of this study please indicate your request on the stamped self-addressed post card.

Sincerely,

Gene L. Burton

(see pages 19, 20, and 21). The questionnaire contained two separate parts. The sample population was requested to rank order, on a scale of one (high) through ten (low), ten stated advantages which the literature indicates may accrue to a school district as a result of school consolidation. Secondly, the sample population was requested to rate the extent to which each stated advantage was realized from consolidation.

Forty four of the seventy nine patrons in the sample population represented consolidated districts having a student population of 450 or more. Thirty five of the patrons represented consolidated districts having a student population of 449 or less.

The questionnaires were color coded. A green questionnaire was sent to all members of the sample population who represented consolidated districts with a population of 450 students or more. Members of the same population who represented consolidated districts with a population of 449 students or less were sent a yellow questionnaire.

Each member of the sample population was provided a self-addressed stamped envelope with the intent that the percentage return of the survey would be increased.

Valley Public Schools
401 South Pine Street
Valley, Nebraska 68064

March 29, 1978

Dear Patron of a Consolidated School District:

I am Gene L. Burton, Administrative Assistant, Valley Public Schools, Valley, Nebraska. I am also a candidate for the Specialist in Education Degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I am doing a research project under Dr. Kirk E. Naylor, Professor of Educational Administration.

As a patron of a consolidated school district you are in a position to help me with my research project. I am attempting to rank order the anticipated advantages which were present when consolidation occurred. I am also attempting to determine the extent to which the rank ordered advantages were actually realized.

The attached questionnaire, with your responses, will provide me the data I need to complete my project. I deeply appreciate your cooperation. I hope you will take the time to complete the questionnaire and return it to me within a few days. Please do not sign or identify yourself.

I have enclosed a self-addressed envelope for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Gene L. Burton

SURVEY OF ADVANTAGES REPORTED TO RESULT
FROM SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

Below is a list of advantages which the literature states may result from school district reorganization. In the left hand column please rank order this list. Place a one (1) by that advantage which was most important to you as you considered the formation of your present district. Place a two (2) by the next most important advantage. Please continue until you have ranked all the advantages listed.

In the right hand column please circle the number which indicates the extent to which this advantage has been realized. 4 = Completely realized, 3 = Partially realized, 2 = No opinion, 1 = Not realized.

<u>Rank Order</u>	<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Extent Realized</u>			
_____	Consolidation will decrease the per pupil cost	1	2	3	4
_____	Consolidation will equalize the tax burden	1	2	3	4
_____	Consolidation will increase special services, such as guidance, health, and instruction in music and art.	1	2	3	4
_____	Consolidation will better utilize school facilities.	1	2	3	4
_____	Consolidation will enable student transportation to be efficiently arranged.	1	2	3	4
_____	Consolidation will enable the curriculum offerings to be expanded.	1	2	3	4
_____	Consolidation will enable a district to hire a more qualified teaching staff.	1	2	3	4

<u>Rank Order</u>	<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Extent</u>	<u>Realized</u>
_____	Consolidation will allow for articulation and coordination of the educational program; Kindergarten through Grade Twelve.	1	2 3 4
_____	Consolidation will enable a school district to employ a more competent and qualified Superintendent.	1	2 3 4
_____	Consolidation will enable a school district to spend a smaller percentage of the budget for administration.	1	2 3 4

Data Analysis

All data from the questionnaire were analyzed to show the rank ordering and rating of each of the ten stated advantages which the literature indicates may accrue as a result of reorganization. Tables were designed to show the rank ordering and rating of the total sample population, that portion of the sample population from consolidated districts with 450 students or more, and that portion of the sample population from consolidated districts with 449 students or less.

Each table will show the frequency of response and mean score for the rank ordering and rating of each of the ten stated advantages which may accrue as a result of school district reorganization. The data collected from the entire sample population, that portion representative of districts with 450 students or more, and that portion representative of districts with 449 students or less will be displayed to show the differences in rank ordering and rating of each of the populations.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This project was initiated to establish a rank ordering of a predetermined list of advantages accruing to school districts as a result of consolidation, and further to determine the perceptions of selected patrons of consolidated school districts relative to the extent to which an enlarged administrative unit provides the educational advantages identified and supported by the literature. A rank ordering of the predetermined advantages and a rating of the perceptions to which these advantages were felt realized are presented for the following populations:

1. Patrons of sixteen consolidated K-12 school districts.
2. Patrons of nine of the sixteen consolidated K-12 school districts indicating student populations of 450 or more.
3. Patrons of seven of the sixteen consolidated K-12 school districts indicating student populations of 449 or less.

Seventy nine questionnaires were mailed to patrons of sixteen consolidated K-12 school districts. Forty five of the questionnaires were mailed to patrons in consolidated districts with 450 or more students, while thirty four were sent to patrons of consolidated K-12 districts with 449 students or less.

Sixty two or 78.5 percent of the questionnaires were returned. Thirty nine of the questionnaires were from patrons of school districts with student populations of 450 or more, while twenty two were from patrons of school districts with student populations of 449 or less.

Nine of the questionnaires returned by representatives of school districts with 450 students or more were rejected for this study. Three of the questionnaires from representatives consolidated districts with 449 students or less were incorrectly completed and were rejected.

Questionnaires were judged incomplete if the respondents did not rank order and rate each of the ten predetermined advantages. Eleven of the rejected questionnaires were not properly rank ordered, while one was rejected because the advantages were not rated as to the extent of realization after the consolidation effort.

RANK ORDERING AND PERCEPTION RATING OF PREDETERMINED
ADVANTAGES ACCRUING FROM CONSOLIDATION BY FORTY NINE
PATRONS OF CONSOLIDATED K-12 DISTRICTS

Table 1, page 25, illustrates the frequency in which the respondents rank ordered each of the predetermined advantages accruing to school districts as a result of consolidation. In addition, a mean is presented for each of the predetermined advantages. A composite ranking ordering

Table 1

Rank Ordering of Predetermined Advantages Accruing from Consolidation
by Forty Nine Patrons of Consolidated Districts (N=49)

Advantages	Frequency of Ranking										Mean	Composite Ranking
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Decrease per pupil cost	5	5	5	4	2	10	6	3	4	5	5.46	6
Equalize tax burden	5	3	6	2	7	8	6	3	6	3	5.55	7
Increase special services	5	9	13	7	9	0	4	1	0	1	3.73	3
Efficient use of facilities	0	3	8	8	10	10	4	6	0	0	5.06	4
Transportation efficiency	1	0	0	1	2	4	4	7	9	21	8.44	10
Expanded curriculum offerings	19	11	8	5	3	1	0	1	0	1	2.34	1
Employment of more qualified instructional staff	6	16	6	9	3	2	1	4	2	0	3.59	2
Articulation of the K-12 educational programs	4	0	3	13	6	7	7	4	4	1	5.38	5
Employment of more competent superintendent	1	1	2	2	2	6	7	6	10	11	7.36	8
Decreased budget percentage for administrative services	0	0	1	1	3	3	10	12	13	6	7.81	9

is presented based on the mean for each predetermined advantage.

The frequency of the same responses and the diversification of response rank ordering for each advantage is illustrated in Table 1. The advantages of decreased per pupil cost, equalization of tax burden, and employment of a more competent superintendent are ranked in all of the ordering positions. The utilization of all rank ordering positions for any one advantage is supportive of the attitudinal differences which exist whenever consolidation of schools is considered.

The predetermined advantage of expansion of curriculum offerings has a mean of 2.34 and a composite ranking of one. A composite ranking of one is assigned to that advantage which the respondents feel is the most important advantage accruing to a school district as a result of school reorganization.

Efficient arrangement of transportation has a mean of 8.26 and a composite ranking of ten. Twenty one of the forty nine respondents ranked this advantage as being the least important of the ten accruing as a result of consolidation.

Expanded curriculum offerings, employment of a more qualified instructional staff, and an increase in special services have means of 2.34, 3.59, and 3.73 respectively.

The response frequency of the ranking for each of these advantages shows that 67.3 percent or more of the respondents ordered each advantage in a rank position one thru three.

Table 2, page 28, illustrates the perceived realization for each predetermined advantage accruing as a result of school reorganization. Each advantage has been rated using a four point rating scale which indicates the extent of realization of each advantage after consolidation.

Expansion of curriculum offerings, employment of a more qualified instructional staff, increased special services, and efficient use of facilities have means of 3.40, 3.16, 3.22, and 3.20 respectively. A mean rating of three or more is a strong indication that the advantage was perceived to be partially realized after consolidation occurred.

Decreased per pupil cost, equalization of the tax burden, efficient arrangement of transportation, employment of a more competent and qualified superintendent, and a decrease in the percent of the general operating budget for administrative services each have a mean score below three. These six advantages have mean scores between 2.32 and 2.85. A mean score between one and three is indicative that patrons of consolidated schools do not perceive that the advantage is realized or they have no opinion regarding the extent to which the advantage was realized as a result of school reorganization.

Table 2

Perception Rating of Predetermined Advantages Accruing from Consolidation
by Forty Nine Patrons of Consolidated Districts (N=49)

Advantages	Frequency of Rating				Mean
	1	2	3	4	
Decrease per pupil cost	8	5	23	13	2.83
Equalize tax burden	5	4	30	10	2.91
Increase special services	4	3	20	22	3.22
Efficient use of facilities	3	4	22	20	3.20
Transportation efficiency	13	14	15	7	2.32
Expanded curriculum offerings	2	3	15	29	3.40
Employment of more qualified instructional staff	4	3	23	19	3.16
Articulation of the K-12 educational programs	5	10	21	13	2.85
Employment of more competent superintendent	6	7	24	12	2.85
Decreased budget percentage for administrative services	7	12	19	11	2.69

A comparison of the composite ranking in Table 1 and the perception ratings in Table 2 illustrate that those advantages ranked as most important were also perceived by the respondents to be more fully realized. Expanded curriculum offerings, a more qualified instructional staff, increased special services, and efficient use of facilities are rank ordered one through four respectively. These same advantages have mean ratings of 3.16 or more, suggesting that patrons of consolidated schools feel they received those advantages, at least partially, which they ranked as being the most important advantages accruing to schools as a result of reorganization.

RANK ORDERING AND PERCEPTION RATING OF PREDETERMINED
ADVANTAGES ACCRUING TO CONSOLIDATED DISTRICTS OF
450 STUDENTS OR MORE

Table 3, page 30, illustrates the frequency in which the patrons from consolidated districts of 450 or more students rank ordered each of the predetermined advantages which accrue to a school district as a result of reorganization. The rank ordering of these advantages is determined from the responses of thirty patrons of consolidated districts with a student population of 450 or more.

Expanded curriculum offerings is ranked as the most important advantage resulting from reorganization. Twenty one of the respondents felt that this advantage is of

Table 3

Rank Ordering of Predetermined Advantages Accruing to
Consolidated Districts of 450 Students or More (N=30)

Advantages	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	Composite Ranking
Decrease per pupil cost	5	5	4	2	0	4	3	0	3	4	4.90	5
Equalize tax burden	3	2	6	1	2	5	3	2	3	3	5.50	6
Increase special services	4	5	7	2	7	0	3	1	0	1	3.96	2
Efficient use of facilities	0	2	6	8	6	3	1	4	0	0	4.70	4
Transportation efficiency	0	0	0	1	2	3	4	4	6	10	8.20	10
Expanded curriculum offerings	10	6	5	4	2	1	0	1	0	1	2.90	1
Employment of more qualified instructional staff	3	9	3	5	2	2	0	4	2	0	4.06	3
Articulation of the K-12 educational programs	2	0	0	7	4	4	6	4	3	0	5.83	7
Employment of more competent superintendent	1	1	1	1	1	6	2	3	6	8	7.43	8
Decreased budget percentage for administrative services	0	0	1	1	3	1	8	6	7	3	7.50	9

sufficient importance to be ranked as the first, second or third most important predetermined advantage accruing from school district reorganization. Ten of these twenty one respondents ranked this advantage as the most important advantage gained from consolidation.

Twenty of the patrons ranked efficient arrangement of transportation as being the eighth, ninth, or tenth most important predetermined advantage. This advantage has a mean of 8.20 and composite ranking of ten.

Patrons of consolidated districts with populations of 450 students or more indicated through their responses that attitudinal preference existed in each consolidation effort. Employment of a more competent superintendent, articulation and coordination of the K-12 curriculum, efficient arrangement of transportation and efficient utilization of facilities are the only advantages which were ranked by the respondents in less than eight of the rank order positions.

The difference between the means of the most important advantage and the least important advantage is 5.30. A mean difference of 5.30 is indicative that the responses varied and the frequency for each response is not sufficient to indicate consensus support for any of the ten rank order positions for each of the predetermined advantages.

Table 4, page 33, illustrates the perceived realization for each of the stated advantages which may accrue to a consolidated school district. The mean rating for each advantage is 2.23 or greater. However, only the advantages of increased special services, efficient use of facilities, expanded curriculum offerings, and employment of a more qualified staff have mean ratings of three or more.

Efficient arrangement of transportation is the only advantage which was rated by more than fifty percent of the respondents as not being realized or as having no opinion regarding the advantage. Nine respondents rated this advantage as not realized, while nine others indicated no opinion regarding this advantage.

Expanded curriculum offerings and employment of a more qualified instructional staff both have twenty five respondents who rated the advantages as either partially realized or completely realized. However, expanded curriculum offerings has a mean of 3.30, while the employment of a more qualified instructional staff has a mean of 3.13. The difference in the means is attributed to the frequency totals for the categories of partially realized and completely realized.

Expanded curriculum offerings had sixteen responses supportive of complete realization of this advantage, while

Table 4

Perception Rating of Predetermined Advantages Accruing to
Consolidated Districts of 450 Students or More (N=30)

Advantages	Frequency of Rating				Mean
	1	2	3	4	
Decrease per pupil cost	5	3	12	10	2.90
Equalize tax burden	3	3	18	6	2.90
Increase special services	4	3	10	13	3.06
Efficient use of facilities	2	3	13	12	3.16
Transportation efficiency	9	9	8	4	2.23
Expanded curriculum offerings	2	3	9	16	3.30
Employment of more qualified instructional staff	3	2	13	12	3.13
Articulation of the K-12 educational programs	4	8	10	7	2.66
Employment of more competent superintendent	6	4	12	8	2.73
Decreased budget percentage for administrative services	5	9	10	6	2.56

only twelve of the responses for employment of a more qualified staff indicated complete realization.

RANK ORDERING AND PERCEPTION RATING OF PREDETERMINED
ADVANTAGES ACCRUING TO CONSOLIDATED DISTRICTS OF
449 STUDENTS OR LESS

Table 5, page 35, illustrates the composite ranking and frequency of ranking for patrons of consolidated districts of 449 students or less. The composite ranking is based on the frequency of the responses from the nineteen patrons who represented consolidated districts with less than 449 students.

Expanded curriculum offerings is ranked as the most important predetermined advantage. Nine of the respondents ranked this advantage as the number one advantage, five ranked it as the second most important advantage, and three ranked it as the third most important advantage accruing from school district reorganization.

The employment of a more qualified instructional staff is perceived as the second major advantage resulting from school district consolidation. Seven respondents ranked this advantage as the second most important advantage resulting from consolidation. Three respondents each ranked it as either the most important advantage or the third most important advantage accruing as a result of district reorganization.

Table 5

Rank Ordering of Predetermined Advantages Accruing to
Consolidated Districts of 449 Students or Less (N=19)

Advantages	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	Composite Ranking
Decrease per pupil cost	0	0	1	2	2	6	3	3	1	1	6.36	7
Equalize tax burden	2	1	0	1	5	3	3	1	3	0	5.63	5
Increase special services	1	4	6	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	3.36	3
Efficient use of facilities	0	1	2	0	4	6	3	2	0	0	5.63	5
Transportation efficiency	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	3	11	8.84	10
Expanded curriculum offerings	9	5	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1.94	1
Employment of more qualified instructional staff	3	7	3	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	2.84	2
Articulation of the K-12 educational programs	2	0	3	6	2	3	1	0	1	1	4.68	4
Employment of more competent superintendent	1	0	1	1	1	0	5	3	4	3	7.26	8
Decreased budget percentage for administrative services	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	6	6	3	8.31	9

Expanded curriculum offerings, employment of a more qualified instructional staff, increased special services, articulation of the educational programs K-12, and equalization of the tax burden received composite rankings of one through five respectively. Each of these advantages have their highest frequency of response in rank order positions which coincide with their assigned composite ranking. For example, increased special services has a composite ranking of three while the greatest number of responses for this advantage occur in the third rank order position. This advantage has six responses indicating that it is the third most important advantage which accrues from school district reorganization.

Equalization of the tax burden and efficient use of facilities each has a mean of 5.63 and a composite ranking of five. However, efficient use of facilities shows its highest frequency of responses in the sixth rank order position. There are five respondents who indicated that equalization of the tax burden is the fifth most important advantage resulting from district consolidation. The respondents generally ranked the advantage of efficient use of facilities in higher rank order positions. This advantage has twelve response placed above the fifth rank order position while equalization of the tax burden has only nine.

Efficient arrangement of transportation has a mean of 8.84 and composite ranking of ten. Eleven of the responses are recorded in the tenth rank order position. Three responses are recorded for both the eighth and ninth ranking positions.

The advantage of decreasing the percent of the general budget for administrative services has a mean of 7.26 and composite ranking of nine. Six of the responses are recorded in the eighth and ninth rank order positions.

Table 6, page 38, illustrates the perceived realization for each of the predetermined advantages. The mean rating for each advantage is 2.47 or greater. However, only the advantages of expanded curriculum offerings, employment of a more qualified instructional staff, increased special services, articulation of the K-12 educational programs, and the employment of a more competent superintendent have a mean of three or greater.

Thirteen of the responses for the expansion of curriculum offerings are recorded under the rating which indicates complete realization of the advantage. Six other responses indicate that this advantage has been partially realized.

The advantage of increased special services has a response frequency of ten for partially realized and nine for completely realized.

Table 6

Perception Rating of Predetermined Advantages Accruing to
Consolidated Districts of 449 Students or Less (N=19)

Advantages	Frequency of Rating				Mean
	1	2	3	4	
Decrease per pupil cost	3	2	11	3	2.73
Equalize tax burden	2	1	12	4	2.94
Increase special services	0	0	10	9	3.44
Efficient use of facilities	1	1	9	8	3.26
Transportation efficiency	4	5	7	3	2.47
Expanded curriculum offerings	0	0	6	13	3.68
Employment of more qualified instructional staff	1	1	10	7	3.21
Articulation of the K-12 educational programs	1	1	11	6	3.15
Employment of more competent superintendent	0	3	12	4	3.05
Decreased budget percentage for administrative services	2	3	9	5	2.78

Efficient arrangement of transportation has a mean of 2.47. Four of the responses were recorded as not realized while five respondents indicate they have no opinion regarding the extent to which transportation arrangements are more efficient as a result of consolidation.

COMPOSITE RANK ORDERINGS AND PERCEPTION RATINGS OF
PREDETERMINED ADVANTAGES ACCRUING TO SELECTED
CONSOLIDATED DISTRICTS, CONSOLIDATED DISTRICTS
WITH 450 STUDENTS OR MORE, AND CONSOLIDATED
DISTRICTS WITH 449 STUDENTS OR LESS

Table 7, page 40, shows the composite rank orderings of predetermined advantages accruing to select consolidated districts, consolidated districts with 450 students or more, and consolidated districts with 449 students or less. The composite ranking for each of these categories shows the greatest consistency existing among the predetermined advantages in the first, eighth, ninth, and tenth rank order positions.

Expansion of curriculum offerings, employment of a more competent superintendent, decreased percentage of the budget for administrative services, and efficient arrangement of transportation were assigned the same rank order positions for all categories of consolidated districts. Expansion of curriculum offerings was ranked the most important advantage accruing as a result of reorganization

Table 7

Composite Rank Orderings of Predetermined Advantages Accruing to Selected Consolidated Districts, Consolidated Districts with 450 Students or More, and Consolidated Districts with 449 Students or Less

Advantages	Rank Ordering for		
	All Districts	450 or More	449 or Less
Decrease per pupil cost	6	5	7
Equalize tax burden	7	6	5
Increase special services	3	2	3
Efficient use of facilities	4	4	5
Transportation efficiency	10	10	10
Expanded curriculum offerings	1	1	1
Employment of more qualified instructional staff	2	3	2
Articulation of the K-12 educational programs	5	7	4
Employment of more competent superintendent	8	8	8
Decreased budget percentage for administration services	9	9	9

by all categories of consolidated districts. Employment of a more competent superintendent, decreased percentage of the budget for administrative services, and efficient arrangement of transportation were rank ordered eighth, ninth, and tenth respectively.

The advantages of employment of a more qualified instructional staff and increased special services were rank ordered in all categories of consolidated districts as either the second or third most important advantage accruing from consolidation. Employment of a more qualified instructional staff was rank ordered as the second most important advantage in the composite ranking by all consolidated districts, and consolidated districts with 449 students or less.

The predetermined advantages of decreased per pupil cost and equalization of the tax burden were rank ordered as the fifth, sixth, and seventh most important advantages in the three different composite rankings. Consolidated districts of 449 students or less felt that equalization of the tax burden was the fifth most important advantage which accrues from consolidation, while districts with 450 students or more felt that this advantage was the sixth most important advantage. Oddly, equalization of the tax burden was assigned the seventh rank order position by the patrons of all consolidated districts.

Decreased per pupil cost was rank ordered fifth and sixth respectively in the composite rankings by consolidated districts of 450 students or more and consolidated districts with 449 students or less. All consolidated districts indicated a composite ranking of six for this advantage.

Articulation of the K-12 educational program has the greatest range in the composite rankings of the advantages. This advantage has a range of four between the lowest rank order position. Districts with 449 students or less assign this advantage a composite ranking of four, while districts with 450 students or more have assigned a composite ranking of seven.

Table 8, page 43, shows the mean perception ratings of predetermined advantages accruing to select consolidated districts, consolidated districts with 450 students or more, and consolidated districts with 449 students or less. The mean ratings for all consolidated districts, and consolidated districts with 450 students or more illustrate consistency as to the degree each advantage is perceived realized. Mean ratings for consolidated districts of 449 students or less are greater for all of the advantages except the advantage of decreased per pupil cost.

Table 8

Perception Ratings of Predetermined Advantages Accruing to Selected Consolidated Districts, Consolidated Districts with 450 Students or More, and Consolidated Districts with 449 Students or Less

Advantages	Mean Ratings for		
	All Districts	450 or More	449 or Less
Decrease per pupil cost	2.83	2.90	2.73
Equalize tax burden	2.91	2.90	2.94
Increase special services	3.22	3.06	3.47
Efficient use of facilities	3.20	3.14	3.26
Transportation efficiency	2.32	2.23	2.47
Expanded curriculum offerings	3.40	3.30	3.68
Employment of more qualified instructional staff	3.16	3.13	3.21
Articulation of K-12 educational programs	2.85	2.66	3.15
Employment of more competent superintendent	2.85	2.73	3.05
Decreased budget percentage for administrative services	2.69	2.56	2.78

The advantages of expanded curriculum offerings, increased special services, efficient use of facilities, and employment of a more qualified instructional staff are the only advantages which have mean ratings of three or greater in all of the consolidated district categories. Expanded curriculum offerings consistently had the highest mean in all categories, while efficient arrangement of transportation had the lowest mean in all categories. Expanded curriculum offerings had means of 3.30, 3.40, and 3.68 respectively for consolidated districts with 450 students or more, all consolidated districts, and consolidated districts with 449 students or less. Efficient arrangement of transportation had mean ratings of 2.23, 2.32, and 2.47 respectively for consolidated districts with 450 students or more, all consolidated districts, and consolidated district with 449 students or less.

Consolidated districts with 449 students or less show that six of the predetermined advantages have mean ratings of three or greater. Patrons in this category of consolidated districts felt that the advantages of articulation of the K-12 educational programs and employment of a more competent superintendent were partially realized. All consolidated districts and consolidated districts with 450 students or more show mean ratings for these two advantages below three. Articulation of the K-12 educational programs

received the third lowest mean ratings from consolidated districts with 450 students or more, while employment of a more competent superintendent received the fourth lowest mean rating. All consolidated districts show mean ratings of 2.85 for both of these advantages. In addition, both of these advantages received the fourth lowest mean rating from all consolidated districts.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine rank orderings and perception ratings for a predetermined list of advantages accruing to sixteen Nebraska school districts as a result of consolidation. Nine of the sixteen districts each enrolled 450 students or more, and seven of the districts each enrolled 449 students or less.

This study yielded evidence which appears to support the following conclusions in reference to the predetermined advantages advanced by the literature:

1. Patrons of the consolidated districts feel that expansion of the curriculum offerings; thus increased educational opportunities, is the most important predetermined advantage accruing as a result of consolidation, regardless of district size.

2. Patrons of the consolidated districts do not feel that administrative considerations are important advantages accruing to school districts as a result of reorganization.

3. Patrons of the consolidated districts with 449 students or less perceive that all of the predetermined advantages are more fully realized as result of school district reorganization.

4. Patrons of the consolidated districts feel those advantages more closely related to student benefit; such as, expanded curriculum, increased special services, and employment of a more qualified instructional staff are the most important advantages accruing to a district as a result of reorganization.

5. Patrons of the consolidated districts feel efficient arrangement of transportation is the least desirable advantage accruing to a district as a result of reorganization.

6. Patrons of the consolidated districts feel that decreased per pupil expenditures and equalization of the tax burden are predetermined advantages of secondary importance as a result of school consolidation.

7. Patrons of the consolidated districts feel that those advantages closely related to student benefits; such as, expanded curriculum offerings, increased special services, and employment of a more qualified instructional staff are perceived to be more fully realized after consolidation than the other stated advantages.

8. Patrons of the consolidated districts feel that the least desirable predetermined advantages accruing to a school district as a result of reorganization are also the advantages perceived as not being realized after consolidation has occurred.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this investigation as analyzed in this paper indicate that a rank ordering of the predetermined advantages which may accrue to a school district as a result of reorganization is a dilemma and is in need of clarification. On the basis of the results of this investigation the following recommendations are made:

1. School administrators and boards of education should advance the advantages of expanded curriculum offerings, increased special services, and employment of a more qualified instructional staff as the major rationale for district reorganization.

2. School administrators and boards of education studying the feasibility of consolidation should address the issue of transportation prior to stating that efficiency will be a result of consolidation.

3. School administrators and boards of education of consolidated districts must evaluate and formulate plans to continually improve all advantages which were advanced as

accruing as a result of organization.

4. School administrators and boards of education must be able to draw from the experiences of past consolidation efforts to present concrete data which support and/or dispute the advantages and disadvantages as reported by the literature.

5. Students of educational research should continue to explore the topic of school district reorganization to provide educators in the field, boards of education, and patrons the data necessary to make rationale decisions regarding district reorganization.

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