A Comparison of Perceptions Related to School District Consolidation

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A COMPARISON OF PERCEPTIONS RELATED TO SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION

by

Grace A. Peapples

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University Kalamazoo, Michigan August 1986
A COMPARISON OF PERCEPTIONS RELATED TO SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION

Grace A. Peapples, Ed.D.
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This study investigated the relationship between perceptions regarding school district reorganization and the role of persons in a school district. Perceptions were solicited from community members, teachers, administrators, and board of education members in five Michigan school districts. The objective of this study was to provide insights that would assist the development of a strategy resulting in cooperative and united efforts toward reorganization. The major issues were the neighborhood school concept, board member status, administrator/teacher concerns, and financial planning and curriculum.

A self-designed instrument sought perceptions on the major issues via eighteen sub variables. These surveys were delivered to superintendents and others responsible for distribution to teachers, administrators, and board members in the selected school districts. Surveys for community members were mailed. Of the 791 surveys thus distributed, 65.9 percent were returned. Resultant data were tabulated for each of the role incumbent categories and then compared
across the four groups.

The hypothesis was that there exists a relationship between perceptions regarding school district reorganization and the role of persons in a school district. It was concluded that support for this relationship was established for ten of the eighteen sub variables.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are occasions when an individual is awarded recognition for an achievement which actually is earned only through the support and understanding of many others. Such is the case with this dissertation.

I wish to thank Dr. Uldis Smidchens for serving as chairman of my dissertation committee, for his patience, and for his generous guidance. Thanks are due also Dr. Carol Sheffer and Dr. Zigmund Kryszak for consenting to serve on my committee and for their advice and understanding.

Jules Shrage generously gave of his time and programming skills to compute the data, and fellow classmates offered encouragement. The individual word processing instruction and assistance received from James Dwire greatly facilitated the completion of this final document. Co-workers, friends, and family members added their support and patience.

The Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA) was financially supportive by their reimbursement of the initial mailing cost of surveys for this study.

Without the cooperation of the superintendents, boards of education, personnel, and community members of the
school districts of Westwood, North Dearborn Heights, Inkster, Dearborn Heights #7, and Crestwood, this study would have been impossible.

For the assistance and support of the many people who contributed to this project, I am greatly indebted and offer my humble appreciation.

Grace A. Peapples
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ........................................... ii

**LIST OF TABLES** ................................................ vii

**CHAPTER**

  **I. BACKGROUND** ........................................ 1

  - Statement of the Problem ................... 2
  - Significance of the Study ................... 4
  - Limitations of the Study ................... 6
  - Organization of the Study ................... 7

  **II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE** ................... 9

  - History of Educational Reorganization ... 10
    - Population Review  ......................... 10
    - State Reorganization Efforts .......... 12
    - Local District Reorganization ...... 14
  - Perceptions and Political Ramifications .. 18
    - Community Members .................. 20
    - Board Members .................. 22
    - Administrators .................. 24
    - Teachers .................. 27
  - Description of Variables ................. 28
    - Neighborhood Schools ................. 29
    - Board Member Status ................. 30
    - Administrator/Teacher Concerns ....... 30
Table of Contents—Continued

Financial Planning and Curriculum .... 31
Summary .................................... 32

III. METHODOLOGY .......................... 33
Population and Sample ................... 33
Instrumentation ........................... 35
  Neighborhood Schools ................... 35
  Board Member Status ................... 36
  Administrator/Teacher Concerns ....... 36
  Financial Planning and Curriculum .... 37
Procedures .................................. 38
Data Analysis ................................ 40

IV. RESULTS ................................. 43
  Neighborhood Schools ................... 43
  Board Member Status ................... 50
  Administrator/Teacher Concerns ....... 51
  Financial Planning and Curriculum .... 57
Summary .................................... 60

V. DISCUSSION ............................... 61
Findings and Conclusions ............... 61
  Neighborhood Schools ................... 61
  Board Member Status ................... 66
  Administrator/Teacher Concerns ....... 67
  Financial Planning and Curriculum .... 71
Recommendations ........................... 72
Table of Contents—Continued

VI. APPENDICES  ........................................ 76
    A. Survey Instrument  ................................ 77
    B. Summary Letter to Superintendents  ............ 79
    C. Superintendent's Cover Letter .................. 81
    D. Initial Letter to Survey Sample ................ 83
    E. Follow-up Letter to School Personnel .......... 85
    F. Follow-up Letter to Board Members ............ 87

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................ 89
# LIST OF TABLES

1. Student Enrollment in Michigan Schools ........... 10
2. Perceptions of Loss of Communication Between Home and School (Item #4) ....... 44
3. Perceptions of Less Responsibility of School Personnel to the Community (Item #7) .... 45
4. Perceptions of Loss of Local Control (Item #1) .......... 46
5. Perceptions of Less Parent Involvement (Item #15) ........ 47
6. Perceptions of Loss of Status, for Community Members (Item #11) .... 48
7. Perceptions Regarding Closing of Schools (Item #18) .......... 48
8. Perceptions Regarding Bussing More Students (Item #5) ........ 49
9. Perceptions Regarding An Increase in Taxes (Item #16) .......... 50
10. Perceptions of Loss of Status for Board Members (Item #8) .......... 51
11. Perceptions Regarding Loss of Administrators (Item #2) .......... 52
12. Perceptions of Loss of Status for Administrators (Item #9) .......... 53
13. Perceptions Regarding Loss of Teachers (Item #3) .......... 54
14. Perceptions of Loss of Status for Teachers (Item #10) .......... 55
15. Perceptions of Confusion on Teacher Contracts (Item #6) .......... 56
List of Tables—Continued

16. Perceptions of Better Financial Planning (Item #17) ................................................57
17. Perceptions Regarding the Return of "Cut" Programs (Item #13) .............................58
18. Perceptions of a Stronger Curriculum in the High School (Item #12) ................... 59
19. Perceptions Regarding Relief from Extra Responsibilities (Item #14) ............... 60
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Effective organizational structure and broad educational opportunity have been prevailing issues in Michigan dating back to an act in 1817, nearly twenty years before statehood. In 1835 the Michigan Constitution was the first such document to establish the office of state superintendent of public schools. Other educational "firsts," such as compulsory education for all children between the ages of eight and fourteen, were sponsored by legislation in Michigan prior to 1871 (Thomas, 1968).

The extension of educational opportunity through secondary grades was encouraged as early as 1843 and was partially responsible for the reorganization of some districts. As a result of one of these reorganizations, the first Michigan public high school was established in Detroit in 1848 (Thomas, 1968).

The early history of school district organization reveals that Michigan school districts were developed according to local need and not preceded by any state-wide planning. Thus, most districts were small and tended to develop around population centers including villages and towns. They were designed to support an elementary school
of one room and one teacher. The need for expanded school districts and advanced educational opportunities was soon realized. The first state superintendent of public instruction, and most state superintendents thereafter, recommended reorganization of school districts in Michigan (Thomas, 1968).

The reorganization of school districts was recommended for a number of reasons. Early reorganizations occurred to accommodate the need for greater educational opportunities at the high school level. During the 1970s, the need for reorganization arose again due to declining enrollments and a resultant inefficiency of operations in small school districts. This inefficiency and subsequent financial restraints during the 1970s created situations which required numerous cutbacks in services and curricular diversity (Thomas, 1968).

Statement of the Problem

Recognizing the potential benefits for increased services to students as well as the financial efficiency to be gained from reorganization, some school districts have studied and planned consolidations, annexations, and/or property transfers. However, Public Act 451 (Legislative Service Bureau, 1977, p. 81) requires that a majority of the registered general electors present an affirmative vote on reorganization plans before implementation occurs.
Ideally many people are involved in the planning and decision-making roles in each school district. From the point of practice, four roles can usually be identified. These roles include voting citizens, teachers, administrators, and board of education members. The perceptions and subsequent actions of these role incumbents partially influence the status of school districts.

While studying these roles and the decision-making process in Arlington, Virginia, Cuban (1979) concluded "that consolidation questions could not be answered solely on either educational or cost-efficiency grounds." He believed that "conflicting values of board members, staff, and the community make decisions regarding consolidation 'a nontechnical judgement' " (p. 372).

Support for these value differences was found in Boyd's study (1979) in which it was discovered that, while professional educators placed more emphasis on the quality of educational programs, lay citizens and parents did not always agree. From August, 1983, to October, 1984, six Michigan school districts wrestled with these same value differences as they joined as a committee to explore the feasibility of school district reorganization. Represented on this committee were three of the four decision-making roles, identified above as those of teacher, administrator, board of education member, and voting citizen.

This research examined controversial issues that
surfaced in the reorganization attempts of these selected Michigan school districts and others. Additionally, perceptions related to these issues were explored for each of the four role incumbents, namely, voting citizens, teachers, administrators, and board of education members.

Examined in this study is the question: Are perceptions regarding issues in a school district reorganization related to the roles people assume in a school district?

Significance of the Study

As an institution, the educational system serves to perpetuate the values, skills, and behaviors of a civilized, knowledgeable nation. To maintain its viability, the educational system must operate within financial and personnel constraints. At the same time, it must strive to offer educational opportunities which meet the needs of a progressive and varied society to remain effective.

While Michigan's state superintendent, as well as many others who promote effective schools, "'hope' that reorganization can be accomplished by a cooperative and united effort, an effort that will take into consideration all points of view and input" (Grinstead, 1983, p. 29), the path to reorganization of school districts is not yet free of inhibitors. Adverse public opinion, teacher opposition, reluctance to change, and failure at the voting booths have thus far frustrated many reorganization attempts. At the
state level, the legal inhibitors to reorganization in Michigan are being investigated, and only recently has legislation to facilitate reorganization and transition been created (Michigan Department of Education, 1983, January, p. 6). At the school district level, however, there has been great reluctance to release control of the district in order to create more efficient school units.

As early as 1956, Campbell recognized the "need for all possible insight regarding the process" (p. 58) of reorganization. Kerlinger (1973) also noted, "School district reorganization is taking place all over the United States. Little reliable and valid information is available on the attitude of citizens toward this reorganization" (p. 421). Burlingame (1979) supported this need by stating, "We need to understand better both why promising economies of scale are so politically persuasive and why those who resist consolidation do so because of the political, not educational costs they may incur or the benefits they may gain" (pp. 327-328).

The identification of perceptions of people who are in the major decision-making and influential roles in a school community may assist in recognizing, and subsequently, in planning to overcome the inhibitors of the reorganization process. Through an understanding of the sympathies and feelings of people on both sides of this controversial issue, perhaps the "hope" of a "cooperative and united
effort" toward reorganization can become a reality. It is assumed that the difficulties experienced by the six Michigan districts of Cherry Hill, Crestwood, Dearborn Heights #7, Inkster, North Dearborn Heights, and Westwood are not unlike the difficulties experienced by other school districts around the country. Therefore the significance of this study is the assistance it may provide others in understanding the dynamics of reorganization.

Limitations of the Study

This study was purposely limited to the geographical area encompassing the five school districts of North Dearborn Heights, Crestwood, Dearborn Heights #7, Inkster, and Westwood in the state of Michigan. (Cherry Hill experienced annexation and transfer prior to this study.) These districts were selected due to their active involvement in a feasibility study regarding possible reorganization in and among the five districts.

The respondents to the survey in this study represented the decision-makers and other people who influenced the decision-makers in these school communities. Board members, administrators, teachers, and community members in these school districts created the policies and procedures by which the districts operated. Such opinions are considered to be reflective of this population only and may have no inferential value to other populations.
Two of the districts had sought consolidation opinions from their voting public and discussed merger/annexation plans among board members, administrators, and teachers. This affected the variable of the amount of information to which these decision-makers had been exposed regarding the purposes and outcomes of school district reorganization. Voters, board members, and school employees in the other school districts included in this study may have been less aware of the details in the reorganization issue.

Other variables, such as the different values and norms related to socio-economic status and racial composition, as noted by Boyd (1979), were not addressed in this study.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter I a brief historical background of reorganization in Michigan was given and the problem that people perceive school district reorganization differently has been discussed. Some limitations of the study were defined, and the significance of the study was discussed.

Chapter II contains a review of the literature which identifies past and present school district efforts at reorganization in the state of Michigan, the impact of dissenting opinions, and findings related to decision-making roles in school districts. This investigation of the differences of opinions among school district parti-
cipants with respect to school district reorganization can serve as the basis for additional research on these variables.

Following the literature review, the methodology in this study is outlined. Population and sample descriptions, as well as definitions, are identified. Also included in this section are details regarding instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

The results of the data are presented in Chapter IV, followed by conclusions and recommendations resulting from the study in Chapter V.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Provided in this chapter is the general background information on the phenomenon of school district reorganization in the state of Michigan. Also included is descriptive and research literature related to specific areas within this study, namely the history of school district reorganization, the issues and conflicts which surfaced, and the political ramifications and opinions of people involved in the decision-making roles.

An ERIC search, augmented by a manual search, revealed that the literature is replete with case studies of methods of managing declining enrollment with an emphasis on how to accomplish school closings within a school district. However, there is little research regarding the influence of the decision-making role incumbents during the reorganization process. Due to the apparent scarcity of empirical research on the latter, information was also gleaned from personal interviews as well as newspaper reports. The results of this review of literature begins with an historical overview.
History of Educational Reorganization

Nationally, bigger and better were the guidewords for educators of the 1950s and 1960s due to the baby boom of that era. The 1970s, however, required new and different guidewords, such as decline, consolidation, and smaller. Trained to solve the problems associated with growth, educators found that the era ushered in during the 1970s and continuing in the 1980s brought challenges which required different attitudes and skills (Schreiber, 1982).

Population Review

A review of the history of Michigan's experiences paralleled those of the national trends. Table I indicates that the student population for grades kindergarten through twelve increased from 1960 to its peak in 1971. From 1972 to the present, the population has steadily declined, returning Michigan's student population to the 1960 level.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>1,677,543</td>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>2,159,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>1,733,754</td>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>2,139,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>1,793,658</td>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>2,127,917</td>
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Table 1—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>1,856,895</td>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>2,081,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>1,917,890</td>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>2,025,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>1,968,403</td>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>1,966,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>2,033,982</td>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>1,911,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>2,079,704</td>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>1,861,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>2,122,915</td>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>1,795,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>2,164,386</td>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>1,742,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>2,178,746</td>
<td>1983-84</td>
<td>1,713,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>2,212,523</td>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>1,681,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>2,193,270</td>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>1,668,926</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Locally, educational services were provided by the school districts of Cherry Hill, Crestwood, Dearborn Heights #7, Inkster, North Dearborn Heights, and Westwood to a peak student population of approximately 29,000 during the years 1966-1968. Similar to the state pupil population, these school districts then steadily declined to slightly over 13,000 students by the fall of 1985 (Michigan Department of Education, 1985).

As these enrollments increased or declined, needs
relative to services, facilities, programs, personnel, and finances were impacted. The Thomas (1968) study points out, "Changes in enrollments have important fiscal implications" (p. 357). Boyd (1979) added:

In reality, demographic changes are not the only (perhaps not even the major) factors affecting operating costs. Other factors which are likely to be at least as important include changes in negotiated labor settlements, inflation rates, amounts of state-level and other aid, and local tax rates, not to mention changes in "inputs" such as class size, utilization of buildings, etc. These factors can all be changing while enrollments decline. (p.335)

Since the availability of funds directly impacts the services and number of personnel a district may afford, the solutions to the problem of shrinking enrollment have narrowed down to one choice for some districts: consolidation (Cuban, 1979).

State Reorganization Efforts

Prior to 1984, Michigan statute (Legislative Service Bureau, 1977, pp. 81-87), provided three methods for school district reorganization: (a) consolidation, which is the combining of two or more districts to form a single district, (b) annexation, which is the joining of one district with another, and (c) the transfer of territory, which is the detachment of a portion of one district and attachment to another district.

Consolidation, or reorganization, is not a new concept
to school districts in the State of Michigan. In 1912 the total, and peak, number of school districts in Michigan was 7,362. Not until the 1920s did the number of school districts drop below 7,000 (Thomas, 1968, p. 298). The recommendations of the 1942 Michigan Public Education Study Commission resulted in a reduction of 966 districts by the 1948-49 school year, leaving 5,031 districts in operation (Nelson, 1986).

By July, 1956, the number was reduced to 3,491 as a result of state legislation providing for the voluntary establishment of area study committees. Further legislation, Act 289 of the Public Acts of 1964, assigned responsibility for developing plans for improved school district organization to the county level (Thomas, 1968, p. 300).

In September, 1967, there were 743 local school districts operating (Thomas, 1968). Thomas found this to be "a commendable decrease, but many small inefficient school districts are still operating, and much can still be accomplished to correct the inadequacies" (p. 302).

Some accomplishments have occurred since 1968. In the fall of 1985, 566 school districts opened their doors to students (Nelson, 1986). While this appears as a major reduction over the seventy-plus year history of reorganization, as the decline in student enrollment continues, a number of small inefficient and financially struggling
districts still exist.

Local District Reorganization

Among these small districts are those in and surrounding the city of Dearborn Heights, Michigan. Although reorganization studies and recommendations had occurred over the years, especially since 1960, the school district configuration remained unchanged until 1972 when one school district was annexed by another. In September, 1982, the issue was addressed again by the Michigan State Department of Education. In a report titled, "Study of the School Districts in Dearborn Heights and the Surrounding Area" (Michigan Department of Education, 1983, January), the purpose of the study was defined.

That the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in view of enrollment decline and its impact on school district educational programs, encourage school districts within the Dearborn Heights and surrounding area to consider a study for reorganization with other school districts in the area, in light of future needs of the students in the community and nearby districts. (p. 2)

Of the eleven school districts in this initial study, only six continued joint discussions. Cherry Hill, Crestwood, Dearborn Heights #7, Inkster, North Dearborn Heights, and Westwood responded by forming a merger feasibility committee in August, 1983 (Olejarz, 1984, November 22, p. A1).

The efforts of this committee resulted in a collection and sharing of informational data. It appeared, however,
that political lines were drawn, as districts displayed preferential unions of districts. After fourteen months it was determined that "consolidation of the districts would be ineffective, citing potential financial, personnel, and curriculum dilemmas" (Olejarz, 1984, November 22, p. A1).

Outside the joint efforts of this committee, reorganization attempts were occurring. Citizen action had demonstrated a desire for change. In 1982, one subdivision of Cherry Hill petitioned the intermediate school district (a level of administration between the state and local school districts in Michigan's educational system) to transfer the Dearborn Heights section of their district to the Crestwood School District (Bachman, 1984, July 19, pp. A1, 4). Receiving a denial of their request, these citizens solicited legislative assistance.

Concurrently, the Michigan Department of Education's study (1983) identified restrictive legislation and other inhibitors to school district reorganization. These inhibitors included (a) existing laws restricting merger or annexation of only whole districts, (b) difficulty establishing intra-district committees for merger discussion and planning, (c) isolation and frustration of the citizenry, and (d) confusion regarding seniority and tenure during reorganization. Recommendations were made for changes in the laws (Makaluski, 1983, January 6, p. A1).

The Michigan legislature responded to citizens and the
State Board of Education. Three new laws designed to facilitate reorganization were formulated and passed in the spring of 1984. Included in these laws was Public Act 154 (House Bill 5397) which permitted division of local school districts by annexation and transfer, mutually agreed upon dates for reorganization by local boards of education, and provisions for assignment of employees and pupils. The School Bond Loan Act was amended by Public Act 155 (House Bill 5396) which provided a partial waiver of debt millage for up to five years for districts divided by annexation. Section 22 of the 1984 State Aid Act (House Bill 5323) provided incentive funds which assisted transitional costs of school district reorganization for three years (Cherry Hill, Wayne-Westland, Crestwood Boards of Education, July, 1984, p. 2).

Facilitated by this new legislation was the transfer of the Dearborn Heights portion of the Cherry Hill School District to Crestwood and the annexation of the balance of the district to another school district. Voting day on October 4, 1984, was a landmark day for school districts in Dearborn Heights.

The resounding voter approval given Cherry Hill's reorganization may have added impetus to the renewal of the merger/annexation efforts of North Dearborn Heights and Crestwood. Discussion regarding annexation dating back to 1964 and a 1978 joint study committee recommendation for
annexation had been unsuccessful due to existing state aid legislation and disagreement on utilization of proportions of staff (Smolinski & Varga, 1982, February 18, pp. A1-2). On May 11, 1982, members of the two boards of education met to further discuss the possibility of merger or annexation.

While this meeting brought no immediate resolution, the Crestwood Board of Education took initiative two months later to propose annexation of the North Dearborn Heights district. The support of North Dearborn Heights Board of Education was divided by the perceived aggressiveness of such action, but initially seemed to garner the support of North Dearborn Heights citizens. The fact that their taxes would be reduced nearly eight mills if an annexation occurred may have been influential (Holtz, 1982, July 15, pp. A1, 4).

Even though a new state law guaranteed a dual seniority list and a more equitable arrangement of North Dearborn Heights teachers, a campaign, well-financed with the assistance of the Michigan Education Association, was waged, and the annexation vote was defeated on March 7, 1983 (Cerullo, 1983, April 21, p. A1).

By November, 1984, more cooperative attitudes of board members in North Dearborn Heights and Crestwood were demonstrated. With approximately 800 students, the decision-makers of North Dearborn Heights were concerned about adequate course offerings for students, and Crestwood seemed
more favorable to annexing the North Dearborn Heights District through negotiation of expressed concerns (Bachman, 1984, July 19, pp. A1, 4). After a number of joint meetings, each board unanimously adopted an annexation resolution. State Board of Education approval cleared the way for a May 7, 1985 election.

Despite last minute concerns which addressed the need for special legislation regarding seniority and layoff/recall procedures for teachers and a Michigan Education Association (MEA) request for an injunction to stop the election, the annexation resolution vote occurred as scheduled and was approved by a 1,736 to 745 margin (Bachman, May 9, 1985, pp. A1, 10).

Some of the difficulties encompassed in school district reorganization efforts was demonstrated by the arduous process experienced by the Cherry Hill, Crestwood, and North Dearborn Heights districts. If more effective school systems, with increased programs and services for students and greater cost efficiency, are created by reorganization, the question may be raised as to why the decision to reorganize is not made more rapidly and with less difficulty.

Perceptions and Political Ramifications

Since the decision-makers are those with vested interests in the school system and those having the power
to influence decisions, an exploration of their roles and perceptions and the political ramifications that result follows.

One reason for the reticence toward reorganization may be as Fitzwater (1957a) stated, "Reorganization cannot rightly be considered as something separate and apart from the social, cultural, and economic trends and developments influencing people's way of living" (p. 20). Also, due to the nature of the reasons for reorganization, Boyd's (1979) quote, "the politics of scarcity is the politics of conflict" (p. 334), may offer enlightenment.

To consider some of the issues in reorganization efforts is to explore the roles of decision-makers in the local school setting. In analyzing the major roles visible in a local school district, the following quote from Gross, Mason, and McEachern (1958) served as a definition:

The role concept . . . focuses attention on ideas of central import to the several social sciences. One of these is that human behavior is influenced to some degree by the expectations individuals hold for themselves or which other individuals hold for them. Another is that a person's location or position in social structures influences the kind of social relationships in which he is involved and the evaluative standards he or others apply to his behavior. Deviation from these is the basic proposition that human behavior is in part a function of the positions an individual occupies and the expectations held for incumbents of these positions. (p. 319)

Five social roles with varying degrees and kinds of commitment to the school are identified in the decision-
making process for reorganization. While the student role has considerable influence by its impact on parents, only the four roles of community members, teachers, administrators, and board of education members were addressed in this study. A synopsis of each of these four roles begins with the community members.

**Community Members**

Since a majority vote of approval is required for reorganization to occur in Michigan, community members' support of the issue is crucial for reorganization to occur.

While members of the State Department of Education consider the local school as a unit of a state-wide administrative system, the community "views the school as a part of itself, and the community's defense of its jurisdiction over the school becomes a defense of its own integrity and identification" (Alford, 1960, p. 368). Standards that may be established to create a more effective system of school organization "are implicitly rejected by some of the defenders of small schools and local autonomy, who hold that the presence of a school in the community, and the power of the community to select its own school board are most important" (Alford, 1960, p. 352). Also, Alford noted that "In general, organizations which facilitate consistent and intimate social relations tend to become valued for
themselves" (p. 357).

Major problems in merger attempts have been identified in previous studies on school closings. In Wisconsin, superintendents noted aversion to change, opposition to the attachment of rural schools to urban districts, fear of losing a voice in the operation of a larger system, and concern over the location of school buildings as reasons for the reticence of community members in approving consolidation of schools. Also listed were transportation, taxes, and educating people to the advantages of reorganization (Jensen, 1952).

When Ohio superintendents were asked what factors most affected the decisions of people on school reorganization, the factors that ranked higher than the advantages or disadvantages of extended services to students were "the 'cooperation or rivalries between neighborhoods or communities' and 'what the change would mean to the life of the communities'" (Campbell, 1956, p. 59).

The same forces were evidenced in an Idaho study of three small school districts. Data revealed that "fears of big schools, of a 'lack of belonging', of a loss of the school, and loss of 'local control' were important hindrances to reorganization" (Alford, 1960, p. 356).

As in other school closures and reorganizations, Cuban (1979) noted the "full force of community anger, reaching vitriolic heights . . . a pitched battle of letters, memo-
randa, position papers, heated exchanges at public meetings, and verbal attacks upon board members and staff" when recommendations were made for the closing of two schools in Arlington, Virginia (p. 379).

Thus it appeared that community members prefer the status quo rather than reorganization of "their" school district even when a more efficient system is proposed. It also appeared "that community protest against school closings is a highly complex phenomenon" (Berger, 1983, p. 161).

Since school board members are also community members, their role is explored next.

**Board Members**

School board members are generally laymen with respect to the educational system and are usually elected to their position by the school district community. As representatives of the community, they are responsible for advancing the desires of the community regarding its schools in the best possible manner within economical constraints.

Thus, as Alford (1960) explained, "The school is one of the few important institutions over which there is still some local control. Also, through the very existence of a school, the community and the school board receive status" (p. 358). Further,

Members of the school board in a small community are usually long-time residents and part of the community elite. Their defense of the schools is
based not only on this, but also on their status as officials in an organization. Officials of any organization . . . defend its existence and purpose, simply because they are part of it and receive status from their position. (p. 366)

A frequent argument is that "local boards are more aware of local problems than a 'remote' unified board would be" (p. 369).

School board members are forced to face the pressures placed upon them locally by their constituents due to local concerns such as reorganization. Since board members seek their positions due to reasons of civic responsibility, a desire to represent a certain group, or a desire to acquire political experience (Gross, 1958), they are influenced by members of the community, their own value systems, and the desire for recognition of their status.

Board members, however, encounter several restraints. Because of the limited tenure afforded board members, they have a relatively short time to accomplish something significant. Initially, some time is required to garner voting support both from the public and from fellow board members. Since lay members usually approach an organizational problem "with less information, their limited factual base predisposes them to deal with symptoms and bits of a problem rather than with root causes and comprehensive solutions" (Cibulka, 1983). Outside work commitments are a further constraint.

Still community members seek board member positions. It is when faced with external issues, such as reorganization,
that their status is threatened the most. Board members appear favorable to their constituents when reacting to pressures for the continuation or addition of programs. Voting for decrements, however, places board members in negative favor, "especially if the impact of the decrement is visibly differential. School closings fit this category" (Cibulka, 1983). This is further supported by Berger (1983), who related, "School closings are the most difficult kind of decremental decision-making, making it hard to build a winning voting coalition" (p. 169).

While a board member may wish to make the "right" decision, the reorganization issue is a volatile one which may determine his/her continuing membership on the board at the next election. The status of remaining a board member may then rely on subsequent postures when the reorganization issue is raised in a local school district.

**Administrators**

Unlike lay boards, school administrators (including central office staff and local school building principals) have a role interest in enhancing the long-term stability of an institution. Also, they view organizational problems more "objectively" than board members due to their professional training (Cibulka, 1983).

Burlingame (1979) identified this objectivity in an examination of case studies of the problem-solving process.
followed by school districts facing consolidation. In the ten steps of the process, it is the superintendent who first recognizes declining enrollments as enrollment trends and finances available to the district are calculated. Following this rather informal stage, superintendents bring other district administrators together and consciously seek to generate alternative proposals.

Initially, economic pressures may be alleviated by program and administrative position cuts, but eventually, very small districts often find themselves facing reorganization of some variety in order to provide appropriate services for students.

The political impact of the reorganization issue, whether involving school closings or district consolidation, may cause fear of political suicide for district superintendents and other school administrators. As Cuban (1979) indicated, "The often repeated experience of Salt Lake City Superintendent Arthur Wiscombe who resigned after his school board was overturned due to a rash of school mergers still haunts gatherings of administrators" (p. 387).

Still, school superintendents remain liable for the promotion of adequate services to students within budget confines. Through interviews with superintendents (and board members), however, the vagueness which clouds attempts to calculate the trade-offs between "educational" and "budgetary" considerations in reorganization decisions
Another consideration in the role of school administrators is that, after promoting the concept of local control and the neighborhood school during the expansion era, school leaders have been forced to change this viewpoint. In Alford's (1960) study, he found that some principals view themselves as hired agents of the local school board and, through them, of the community, and not necessarily as representatives of all recommendations by state agencies. While Alford recognized conflicting evidence in other situations where principals receive tenure, or greater security of position, or where reorganization had previously occurred, it remains that not all principals grant loyalty to the reorganization issue. Thus an adversarial role may develop within the administrative roles of the school district.

This adversarial role may be partially credited to the fact that, as enrollments have declined and schools have closed, the need for personnel has also declined, and administrators have experienced loss of positions and fewer advancement opportunities.

As with administrators, teachers have fought to preserve positions and protect incumbents.
Public conflict between school boards and their employees has been increased by the frustrated aspirations of effective young teachers and administrators. "Unable to provide guarantees unions or professional associations seek, board and staff slide easily into adversarial tactics that sometimes harden already existing differences between 'them' and 'us'" (Cuban, 1979, p. 379).

Reorganization, in its efficiency, is viewed as another step in the reduction of staff. Thus resistance to reorganization and further alienation of a school board and its employees may be enhanced by the fear of further loss of positions.

Even for teachers who would survive a reorganization, the question is raised: Would they be happy in their new school districts? Prohibiting many from seeking such changes are current job satisfaction and/or the reluctance to change. This reluctance is further demonstrated through the fact that "teachers are often more loyal to their schools than to the district as a whole" (Berger, 1983, p. 151).

Teacher associations or unions also provide a major hindrance due to the fact that the staff of each district selects its bargaining representation. Within the five districts selected for this study, three distinct union affiliations were present, and each of the five districts
operated under contract provisions unique to the district. Much consideration would be required to analyze and design a mutual labor agreement in any reorganizational attempt across district boundaries.

In a recent attempt at consolidation, the school districts of North Dearborn Heights and Cherry Hill found resistance not only from community members but from a very active teacher protest movement. The resulting community vote was a resounding defeat. On the negative side, this action further supported Berger's (1983) review of the results of a case study which found that "only teacher involvement has a mitigating effect on opposition" (p. 161).

Description of Variables

Indicated, by a review of the literature and interviews with persons directly involved with past school district reorganization attempts, are a number of variables to be addressed in a reorganization attempt. Perceptions consist of many dimensions, among which are those to be considered in comparing the four decision-making roles of board of education members, administrators, teachers, and community members. Thus perceptions of persons within each of these roles became a variable.

For this study, eighteen sub variables were identified through the review of literature. This review demonstrated that four major categories of variables existed: neighbor-
hood schools, board member status, administrator/teacher concerns, and financial planning and curriculum. A description of each of the four categories follows and includes the sub variables chosen to measure concerns addressed in the category.

**Neighborhood Schools**

The concept of a neighborhood school, i.e., a close relationship between home and school, is protected if school buildings remain near the local community. Increased physical or political distance between the community and the school, personnel, or controlling board of education, is often created by a school district reorganization. Thus increased fears of losses in local autonomy and a voice in the operation of the system are evidenced (Alford, 1960). The variables, perceptions regarding (a) loss of local control, (b) less communication between home and school, (c) less parental involvement, and (d) loss of status for community members, were selected to measure these fears.

If local control and close communication are at stake, the responsibility of school personnel may be questioned. Thus perceptions regarding this responsibility was added as a variable.

Angry battles over school closings were identified by Cuban (1979) and Berger (1983), therefore perceptions regarding school closures became a variable. Related to
school closings are the variables, perceptions regarding taxation and transportation, as identified by Jensen (1952).

These eight variables were used to measure the relationship between perceptions regarding the neighborhood school concept and the role of a person in the school community.

**Board Member Status**

As Alford (1960) noted, "officials of any organization . . . receive status from their position" (p. 366). Would this status be threatened by fewer positions and perhaps less awareness in a larger, more politically distant board of education? The variable, perceptions regarding loss of status for board members, attempted to identify a relationship between perceptions and role incumbents.

**Administrator/Teacher Concerns**

Within the school district, personnel have common interests related to their positions (Cuban, 1979). These were addressed by five sub variables.

Already accustomed to loss of positions due to declining enrollment, administrators and teachers similarly fear greater losses if consolidation results in a further reduction of buildings and/or positions. Therefore perceptions regarding the loss of administrators and teachers created two variables.
With the possibility of lost positions and increased distances from the community and the board of education, status also became an issue. Perceptions regarding a loss of status for administrators and teachers were added to the list of variables.

The issue of teacher employment agreements which are unique to individual school districts was identified by the Michigan State Department of Education's study (Makaluski, 1983) as an inhibitor to reorganization, indicating that perceptions related to confusion on teacher contracts was a variable to be considered.

These variables formed the basis for measuring the reorganization concerns of administrators and teachers.

Financial Planning and Curriculum

Since the major thrust of a consolidation effort is to offer increased services to the community on an efficient, cost-effective basis, financial planning and resultant curricular offerings became factors (Cuban, 1979). As enrollments have declined, school districts have been forced to reduce personnel and curricular diversity (Thomas, 1968). Four variables were added to address these issues: perceptions regarding (a) better financial planning, (b) the return of "cut" programs, (c) a stronger curriculum in the high school, and (d) relief from extra responsibilities due to cutbacks.
Summary

Following an era of expansion and a sense of prosperity, at least in pupil enrollments and personnel employment, the more recent experiences of school districts has been declining enrollment and financial stress. This latest trend has resulted in the need for cut backs and retrenchment while attempting to maintain viable educational services for the community.

It would seem that while all role players in a school setting desire adequate services and recognize the financial restraints, perceptions vary regarding reorganization as a solution. There is significant reluctance to deviate greatly from the status quo to resolve this current dilemma facing educators and the community.

To understand more thoroughly these perceptions and this dilemma, this study explored the hypothesis that there is a relationship between perceptions regarding school district reorganization and the role of persons in a school district. Specifically, the eighteen sub hypotheses relationships were explored across the groups of community members, teachers, administrators, and board members on the dimensions listed above.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Contained in this chapter is a description of the population and sample, instrumentation, procedures, and method of data analysis.

Population and Sample

The population comprising this study was limited to the people living in and/or serving as teachers, administrators, or board members in the respective districts of Crestwood, Dearborn Heights #7, Inkster, North Dearborn Heights, and Westwood in the state of Michigan. These districts were selected due to their proximity to one another and the fact that these five districts had met to study the feasibility of consolidating services and/or districts in some fashion.

Sampling was accomplished by categorizing people with invested interests in the five school communities involved in the Dearborn Heights School District Organizational Feasibility Study. The populations for these categories were:
Board of Education Members. . . . 35
Administrators. . . . . . . . . . . 54
Teachers. . . . . . . . . . . . . . 546
Registered Voters . . . . . . . . 52,947

Stratifying these populations for sampling purposes required one hundred percent of board of education members and administrators due to their relatively small population numbers. The teacher sample was selected from 33 percent of the teacher population, and one percent of the total population of community members was selected. Teachers and community members were selected proportionately according to the population in each respective district (Kerlinger, 1973).

Teacher selection was made by systematic random selection utilizing an alphabetical roster for each district. Those persons certified as teachers by the State of Michigan fit the category of teacher.

Board of education members were identified as those people who had been elected by registered voting procedures to serve as the governing body of each of the five school districts.

Administrators were personnel hired in each district to manage, direct, and/or supervise programs and personnel in their respective districts.

Registered voters served to represent the community members. These people had demonstrated their interest to
become decision-makers in their communities by registering to vote. The voting rosters for each of the five districts served as the lists from which a one percent sample was drawn. A random number from tables in *Foundations of Behavioral Research* (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 716) was selected for each school district to insure random sampling. The selected number identified the first sample member. Subsequently, each one-hundredth person was added to the sample.

**Instrumentation**

Since no existing instrument appeared to meet the requirements of this study, a self-designed instrument (Appendix A) was constructed to survey the opinions of persons selected from each category.

To develop an instrument common to the four indigenous groups, variables identified in the summary of Chapter II were written in terms familiar to all groups. These variables were selected from an analysis of factors noted in the review of literature and in personal interviews with persons involved with past and present consolidation attempts. A review of these major categories and sub variables follows.

**Neighborhood Schools**

A concern of community members and board members noted by Alford (1960) and Jensen (1952) was local jurisdiction
over neighborhood schools, including the power to select its own school board. Cuban (1979) and Berger (1983) also noted that closing neighborhood schools is a volatile community issue in reorganization attempts. To identify perceptions related to these issues, the survey included the following items: "loss of local control" (item 1), "loss of communication between home and school" (item 4), "less parent involvement" (item 15), "less responsibility of school personnel to the community" (item 7), "loss of status for community members" (item 11), and "closing of schools" (item 18). Jensen (1952) identified similar community opposition and included transportation and tax concerns. These factors were addressed by survey items 5 and 16, "bussing more students" and "an increase in taxes."

Board Member Status

As members of the community, board members have similar concerns, plus the element of status of position identified by Alford (1960). Thus, "loss of status for board members" (item 8) was included as a survey item to solicit the perceptions of respondents.

Administrator/Teacher Concerns

Cuban (1979) indicated political ramifications impact administrators and may jeopardize positions. Also, in theory, reorganization serves to create more efficient
operations and usually fewer administrative positions. To
measure perceptions, survey items, "loss of status for
administrators" (item 9) and "loss of administrators" (item
2), addressed these issues.

Similarly, item 10, "loss of status for teachers", and
item 3, "loss of teachers", explored perceptions regarding
the reorganization impact on teachers which was identified
by Berger (1983).

Since teachers in the five school districts identified
for this study were represented by three different union
affiliations and five unique labor contracts (Michigan
Department of Education, 1983, January, p. 7), the survey
item, "confusion on teacher contracts" (item 6), was
included to measure perceptions regarding this issue.

Financial Planning and Curriculum

The overall aims of school district reorganization are
better financial and curricular planning (Thomas, 1968).
Survey items, "a stronger curriculum in the high school"
(item 12), "a return of programs which were 'cut' due to a
lack of funds" (item 13), "relief from extra responsibili-
ties assigned when personnel cut backs have occurred" (item
14), and "better financial planning" (item 17), were
included to survey perceptions in this area.

Survey opinion responses were sought on a six-point
scale. Six areas of response were utilized to force a
decisive response. The responses, one to six, appeared as: "strongly agree" (1), "agree" (2), "slightly agree" (3), "slightly disagree" (4), "disagree" (5), and "strongly disagree" (6). Respondents were asked to identify their opinions regarding a list of eighteen variables which were preceded by the phrase, "In your opinion, would consolidation or merger of your school district and another result in:"

Respondents from each of the four role groups were requested to select one of the response categories for each of the variable phrases, thus identifying their perceptions regarding individual variables. These responses, when grouped, would be used to compare perceptions for each variable.

To validate this survey instrument, four persons, directly involved in a past or present school district reorganization attempt, reviewed the list of variables and agreed that each was a reorganization issue. To avoid contamination of final survey responses, these persons were not members of the selected five school communities.

Procedures

After meeting with the assistant state superintendent and acquiring State Department of Education assistance on the project, personal phone calls were made to the superintendents of each of the five local school districts. These
calls briefly explained the purposes of this research study, solicited support for the project, and the superintendent's assistance in gaining feedback on the survey instrument from school personnel and board of education members in his/her school district. A follow-up letter summarizing the project details was sent each superintendent (Appendix B). Personal contact occurred with three superintendents to answer further questions about the study. An offer was also made to meet with each district's board of education, if the superintendent believed such a meeting would be beneficial to the success of this research project. One such meeting occurred. Each superintendent was invited to publish a cover letter to be included in the survey package for each member of the sample in his/her district. One superintendent responded (Appendix C).

Surveys for board members, administrators, and teachers, identified by code on the instrument and by name on the outer envelope, were delivered to the superintendents of Inkster, Dearborn Heights #7, Crestwood, North Dearborn Heights and Westwood. Due to board of education concerns about confidentiality in Dearborn Heights #7, the superintendent's secretary identified the appropriate sample and distributed numbered envelopes. In Crestwood, the president of the teachers' union followed the same procedure to maintain the established sample. Accompanying each instrument was a cover letter (Appendix D) and a return envelope imprinted with
"Questionnaire for Grace A. Peapples."

Completed surveys were sent to the respective central office and then personally collected by the researcher.

Coded survey instruments for the community were accompanied by a cover letter and a stamped, return-addressed envelope. These were mailed concurrently with distribution to the superintendents. Mail (Appendices E and F) and telephone follow-ups, plus personal contacts regarding unreturned questionnaires began after a two-week waiting period.

Data Analysis

Of the total 791 Consolidation/Merger Opinion Survey forms distributed in mid April, 1985, 65.87 percent or 521 were returned. The return rates for the various forms were as follows: Community Members, 56.60 percent; Teachers, 79.07 percent; Administrators, 94.44 percent; and Board Members, 97.14 percent.

Following the collection of survey sheets, all responses were coded by school district for each of the eighteen sub variables according to population sample groups. Total responses for each variable were tabulated for community members of all five districts. Similarly, responses were tallied separately for administrators, teachers, and board members. While data were recorded individually for each school district, total responses were
utilized for all members of each sample group across school
districts.

In cases where the respondent failed to rate a variable
or gave a variable more than one rating, said variable was
given a rating equal to the respective sample group average
for the valid responses to the item.

The mean of each variable was calculated across the six
response categories for each group. Using analysis of
variance, the four sample group means for the variable,
"loss of local control" (item 1), was compared across the
four sample groups. Subsequently, the means for each of the
remaining seventeen variables were individually compared
across the four sample groups by the same data analysis
procedures. An alpha of .05 for Type I error was used in
testing the hypotheses.

Where a .05 or less level of significance was found
through ANOVA, an a posteriori contrast test, least signifi­
cant difference (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, &
Brent, 1975), was applied to compare all possible pairs of
group means. The probability of .05 was maintained.

Operationally, the hypothesis stated that for some
group, the mean score would not be equal when considering
each of the eighteen sub variable items; i.e., when com­
paring the means of responses to item 1, "loss of local
control," at least one group mean would not be equal to at
least one other group mean.
The hypothesis, there is a relationship between perceptions regarding school district reorganization and the role of the person in a school district, was tested against the null hypothesis of no relationship for each of the items on the survey.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

To determine if a significant difference existed in the means of the perception scores among the four categories of respondents, an analysis of variance was used. Each of the eighteen dependent sub variables was tested individually. Where the resultant probability level was .05 or less, the least significant difference test identified the differences between groups.

Upon completion of this computation, ten of the tests of the sub hypotheses produced a probability of less than .05. Results of the testing of these hypotheses and the remaining eight are reported in the order presented in Chapter III.

Found in the table corresponding to each hypothesis are the results of analysis of variance testing for all four groups. Where relevant, the group comparisons resulting from the least significant difference a posteriori test are included.

Neighborhood Schools

Local jurisdiction over neighborhood schools, long a tenent of Michigan public schools (Alford, 1960), was
tested via eight survey items. Two of these, loss of communication between home and school (Table 2) and less responsibility of school personnel to the community (Table 3), supported a relationship between the role of a person and perceptions related to school district reorganization.

Table 2
Perceptions of Loss of Communication Between Home and School (Item #4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>9.73</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>513</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Compar.</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>3-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSD, p</td>
<td>.024*</td>
<td>.002*</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

According to the data in Table 2, the hypothesis that perceptions vary regarding a loss of communications between home and school when districts merge was supported in two group comparisons. Community members perceived a greater loss (mean 3.82) than teachers (mean 4.19) or administrators (mean 4.53). Responses across groups reflected a trend toward disagreement with a loss of communication.
The community also appeared least secure that school personnel would render the same level of responsibility. As Table 3 indicates, all groups tended to disagree with the concept of less responsibility of school personnel in a merger. The hypothesis that their perceptions vary on this item was supported for four group comparisons: community members and teachers, community members and administrators, teachers and administrators, and administrators and board members. Administrators perceived a greater retention of responsibility than any other group.

Table 3

Perceptions of Less Responsibility of School Personnel to the Community (Item #7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
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<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.85</td>
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<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>13.53</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>514</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Compar.</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>3-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSD, p</td>
<td>.048*</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.575</td>
<td>.025*</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

An analysis of variance found no differences for survey items numbers 1, 15, 11, and 18. A review of the
resultant tables (4, 5, 6, 7) for these sub variables offered an overall view of the perceptions of the four groups.

While differences were not found for the hypothesis that perceptions vary regarding loss of local control due to a school district merger, it was noted from the data in Table 4 that all mean scores related more closely to the "slightly agree" response category. Only teachers expressed an opinion closer to "agree."

Table 4
Perceptions of Loss of Local Control (Item #1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>.060*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>517</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p>.05

The mean scores presented in Table 5 all center near the "slightly disagree" response, and no support was given the hypothesis that perceptions differ regarding parent involvement following a school district merger.
Table 5  
Perceptions of Less Parent Involvement (Item #15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.425*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>515</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p>.05

As seen in Table 6, no support was given the sub hypothesis that perceptions vary regarding loss of status for community members. While teachers and community members' mean scores appeared similar, as did administrators and board members, all scores approached the "slightly disagree" category for responses.

Mean scores listed in Table 7 for the closing of schools variable indicated similar perceptions, and differences were not found between groups. The range of "slightly agree" to "agree" was chosen by all four groups.
Table 6
Perceptions of Loss of Status for Community Members (Item #11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.070*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>514</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p>.05

Table 7
Perceptions Regarding Closing of Schools (Item #18)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>.633*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>517</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p>.05

Directly related to closing of schools is the issue of
transportation. This concern, as well as taxes, was identified by Jensen (1952) as a variable in school district mergers.

Survey items 5 and 16 solicited opinions on these issues. An analysis of variance found no differences in perceptions across groups. For item 5, bussing more students, all four groups' mean scores in Table 8 were fairly similar and approximated an "agree" response. Community members (mean 2.52) indicated a greater tendency toward bussing.

An increase in taxes, item 16, rated responses between "slightly agree" and "slightly disagree" (Table 9) but indicated a trend toward the latter, the 4 rating on the instrument.

Table 8
Perceptions Regarding Bussing More Students (Item #5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.328*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>514</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p>.05
Table 9
Perceptions Regarding An Increase in Taxes (Item #16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.443*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>511</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > .05

Board Member Status

As noted previously, one motivation for community members to seek election to the board of education in the local school district is status of position (Alford, 1960). To test this variable, item 8 was included on the survey instrument. Revealed in Table 10 are the data regarding the hypothesis that perceptions vary for loss of status for board members. The mean scores of all groups reflected slight agreement with a loss of status, with board members scoring more toward slight disagreement than the other groups. Comparisons among groups indicated differences between community members who expressed opinions of less loss of status than teachers. Based on mean scores,
teachers (2.81) perceived a greater loss than did board members (3.55).

Table 10

Perceptions of Loss of Status for Board Members (Item #8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>9.64</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.020*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>514</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Compar.</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>3-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSD, p</td>
<td>.004*</td>
<td>.882</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>.515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

Administrator/Teacher Concerns

Items 2 and 9 addressed the possible loss of positions and status for administrators discussed by Cuban (1979).

The hypothesis that there is a difference in the perceptions regarding loss of positions was supported in two of the six comparisons (Table 11). Testing indicated there was a probability that community members less strongly believed a loss of administrators would occur than teachers. Com-
pared to administrators, the community also sensed less loss than administrators. No difference was found for the four remaining comparisons. While all mean scores fell between the "slightly agree" and "agree" categories, the community tended to perceive less loss of administrators.

Table 11

Perceptions Regarding Loss of Administrators (Item #2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Mean Squares df F-ratio Prob.

| Between Groups | 8.98 | 3 | 3.82 | .010* |
| Within Groups  | 2.35 | 515 |      |      |

Group Compar. 1-2 1-3 1-4 2-3 2-4 3-4
LSD, p .005*.004*.129 .458 .687 .340

*p<.05

Regarding perceptions about loss of status for administrators, the hypothesis that perceptions vary was supported via the data in Table 12 for two group comparisons. While administrators slightly disagreed (mean 4.25) with a loss of status for themselves, community members scored in the "slightly agree" (mean 3.45) category.
Teachers rated the loss even greater than community members (mean 3.36) and therefore also varied from administrators' perceptions. All groups ranged from the "slightly agree" to the "slightly disagree" responses with administrators perceiving the least loss.

Table 12
Perceptions of Loss of Status for Administrators (Item #9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>12.01</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>512</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Compar.</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>3-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSD, p</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.285</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

Similarly for teachers, positions may be lost due to consolidation and status lowered (Berger, 1983). An analysis of items 3 and 10 revealed the testing results of these variables.

As with loss of administrators, the community and teachers appeared to differ in perceptions regarding loss.
of teachers (Table 13). Community members, with a mean score of 2.92, felt a loss of teachers less likely than teachers whose mean score of 2.40 approached the "agree" response. While teachers seemed least secure in their positions, no relationship was evident for the remaining comparisons.

Table 13
Perceptions Regarding Loss of Teachers (Item #3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Mean Squares df F-ratio Prob.
---    ---    ----    ---    ----    ---
Between Groups 8.89 3 3.82 .010*
Within Groups 2.33 515

Group Compar. 1-2 1-3 1-4 2-3 2-4 3-4
LSD, p .001* .146 .679 .444 .101 .441

*p< .05

From the data in Table 14, teachers seemed least secure with their status. Their mean score of 3.49 fell between responses of "slightly agree" and "slightly disagree," while administrators (4.51) and board members (4.32) perceived less loss of status for teachers, scoring between "slightly
disagree" and "disagree." Community members appeared more sympathetic to the teacher viewpoint. Statistical support was realized for four group comparisons. It appears that perceptions vary for community members versus administrators and board members and teachers versus administrators and board members.

Table 14
Perceptions of Loss of Status for Teachers (Item #10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Mean Squares df F-ratio Prob.
Between Groups 17.19 3 6.90 .0001*
Within Groups 2.49 513

Group Compar. 1-2 1-3 1-4 2-3 2-4 3-4
LSD, p .239 .000* .026* .000* .006* .556

*p<.05

At issue in some merger considerations are different individual contracts and bargaining representation. Confusion on teacher contracts (item #6), addressed this variable.

Indicated by the results in Table 15, all groups
appeared to perceive some confusion regarding teacher contracts during a reorganization. Administrators and teachers, with mean scores of 2.33 and 2.35 respectively, closely agreed that confusion would occur. Community members slightly agreed. While the board members mean score (2.47) was more near administrators and teachers, it was more toward slight agreement. Considering the hypothesis that there would be confusion on teacher contracts during a merger, differences were found for perceptions of community members when compared to administrators, teachers, and board members. Support was not evidenced for other group comparisons.

Table 15
Perceptions of Confusion on Teacher Contracts (Item #6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>14.88</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>514</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Compar. 1-2 1-3 1-4 2-3 2-4 3-4
LSD, p .000* .009* .049* .944 .641 .655

*p<.05

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Financial Planning and Curriculum

Perceptions regarding better financial planning and improved curricular offerings, two overall issues in any consolidation attempt (Thomas, 1968), were tested via survey items 17, 12, 13, and 14. Two sub hypotheses were supported, and two resulted in no variance of perceptions.

No support was found for the hypothesis that a relationship exists for perceptions and group membership on the variable concerning better financial planning following a merger. The mean scores in Table 16 indicated that all groups of respondents tended to respond near the third category of "slightly agree."

Table 16
Perceptions of Better Financial Planning (Item #17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>.663*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>510</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p>.05

The same response was noted overall for the variable
regarding a return of programs which were "cut" due to a lack of funds (Table 17). Differences were not found among the four role groups with respect to their perceptions on this item.

Table 17

Perceptions Regarding the Return of "Cut" Programs (Item #13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>.80*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>512</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p>.05

As indicated in Table 18, board members were most optimistic that a stronger curriculum in the high school (item 12) would result from school district consolidation. Their mean response fell between "strongly agree" and "agree," while other groups selected mean responses indicating less agreement. The community was least positive a stronger curriculum would evolve. Four group comparisons supported the hypothesis that perceptions vary regarding this concept. Community members differed in their opinions from teachers and board members, and board members varied
from teachers and administrators.

Table 18
Perceptions of a Stronger Curriculum
in the High School (Item #12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (1)</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.05</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>512</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Compar.</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>3-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSD, p</td>
<td>.014*</td>
<td>.325</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>.029*</td>
<td>.013*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

When personnel cutbacks have occurred in an attempt to reduce expenses, additional responsibilities have generally been assigned to remaining staff. While most mean responses to survey item 14 averaged a "slightly agree" category, a review of Table 19 points out that teachers were least optimistic that a merger of school districts would bring about relief from extra responsibilities. For the hypothesis that perceptions differ on this variable, support was realized for only one comparison, teachers and community members.
Table 19

Perceptions Regarding Relief from Extra Responsibilities (Item #14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers (2)</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.37</td>
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<td>Administrators (3)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members (4)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.18</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>df</th>
<th>F-ratio'</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
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<td>511</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Compar.</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>3-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSD, p</td>
<td>.004*</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>.765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

Summary

In reviewing the results of testing, support was demonstrated for ten of the eighteen sub variable hypotheses. The community was found to differ from the teachers the most (8 variables), from administrators six times, and from board members on three variables. Teacher perceptions varied from administrators on three issues and on a similar number when compared to board member opinions. Administrators generally tended to agree with board members, differing only once in perceptions regarding merger issues expressed on the survey instrument.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Discussed in this chapter are some implications of this study and their relationship with other research. Included are recommendations for additional research which could expand and clarify the current findings.

Findings and Conclusions

According to the literature review, all eighteen items in this study have some impact on the reorganization of school districts. To identify perceptions on these variables and how different groups of district constituents view these items may be of assistance in future consolidation efforts.

Neighborhood Schools

Eight items were used to measure perceptions relating to the neighborhood school concept. These were items 1, 4, 5, 7, 11, 15, 16, and 18. A review of the findings on these items follows.

Historically, as student populations increased, more schools were built to accommodate greater numbers of students, schools became more readily accessible, and control became more localized. Thus the neighborhood school concept
gained impetus and became an institution.

Alford (1960) spoke of "institutionalization" as the "process through which an organization within the community comes to be valued for its own sake, aside from any instrumental purposes it serves" (p. 351). Regarding the main goal of district reorganization, to create a more effective system, Alford (1960) noted, "An 'effective' system of school organization is one which combines maximum economy with maximum opportunity for a professional level of teaching."

As enrollments declined and schools closed, this goal was firmly rejected by some defenders of small schools and local autonomy, who held that "the presence of a school in the community, and the power of the community to select its own board are more important" (p. 352).

In testing these two concepts, closing of schools and loss of local control, neither item resulted in differences of perceptions across sample groups. While the community's mean score (2.70) for closing of schools approached the "slightly agree" category of response, board members, who are also community members, scored similarly (2.71), as did teachers. Administrators felt closings were even more certain. Their mean score (2.41) fell nearer the "agree" category.

In each of the five school districts surveyed, schools had already been eliminated from service (Schreiber, 1982,
These past experiences may have affected responses. The results of this survey indicated that all persons were fairly certain schools would be closed due to a reorganization of districts.

For loss of local control, teachers tended to "agree" (mean 2.49) more than the three other groups whose mean scores of 2.93, 2.94, and 3.02 approximated the "slightly agree" response. All seemed to share the concept that some loss of local control would occur via district reorganization.

Neither were differences of perceptions revealed when responses to less parent involvement and loss of status for community members were tested. It was noted that all mean scores were quite similar and surrounded the "slightly disagree" category for both items. Teachers seemed least secure regarding continued parent involvement. Since teachers are the most directly involved with parents through the students, perhaps they sensed a lessening of this involvement would further jeopardize student learning. It is a well-known tenent that parent involvement is instrumental in the success of student achievement. Therefore, as members of the community, parent input is important if the school is to carry out its mission.

Loss of status for community members is a complex issue. According to Alford (1960), the very existence of a local school grants status to community members. From responses to
this survey, it appeared that although community members perceived the possibility of closing schools, they tended to disagree with a loss of status for themselves. A possible explanation for this deviation from Alford's work may be that fifteen years have passed since his study of reorganization issues. During that time, in the Dearborn Heights area, school closings have become more frequent as the student population has declined following the peak enrollment years of 1966 to 1968. Changes of opinion may have occurred as a result of these more recent experiences. Also, as Dean (1983) noted, the community may not depend upon the school for functions and relations as much as it once did. Communities are more heterogeneous today, and there is a growing disenchantment with schools and programs.

If schools close, the distance to remaining schools will increase for some students. Thus it seemed appropriate that item 5, bussing more students, approximated an "agree" response from all four sample groups.

Considering that a major reason for consolidation is efficiency of operational costs, the response of "slightly disagree" also seemed appropriate for an increase in taxes. Again, all four groups appeared to agree in their perceptions.

Perceptions did vary to some degree, however, on two items. Community members perceived a greater loss in the areas of communication between home and school and the
responsibility of school personnel to the community. Group responses ranged from "slightly agree" to "disagree." Community members were least secure on both issues.

Regarding communication, community members appeared to perceive a greater loss of communication than teachers and administrators. Board members, also members of the community, scored more similarly to community respondents when their mean scores were compared.

Such perceptions of the community (and board) may reflect findings regarding formal and informal communications. Boyd (1976) discussed the fact that, in smaller, less urban communities, informal networks are generally used to communicate information. Armed with this powerful, informal network, the board is able to dominate in decision-making when necessary. By contrast, larger communities and organizations require formal channels for articulation and demands. Thus privileged information may be filtered, and board members thwarted. The caveat offered by Boyd in this discussion is that school politics vary according to environmental differences among districts (p. 555).

Also, as Boyd (1976) pointed out, as a school district increases in size, "The visibility of lay opposition groups tends to decrease, and school system bureaucracy, the social distance to the school authorities and the ability of the system to maintain 'business as usual' in the face of lay opposition, tends to increase" (p. 560).
Support was given by Jack Lam (1982) who stated that consolidation has "often resulted in increasing professional control of policymaking by district administrators" (p. 113). In Jensen's (1952) study, "The fear of losing voice in operating the new and larger school district" was identified as a major problem of reorganization (p. 84).

As with communication, the community also tended to disagree with the perceptions of teachers and administrators concerning the maintenance of responsibility. Board members again appeared to side with the community on this issue. Disagreement seemed to be supported for the comparisons of teachers versus administrators. Administrators perceived little loss of responsibility on the part of school personnel. Noting that the community and board members slightly agreed with loss of local control, there may be some feeling that without local control, school personnel will be less accountable.

**Board Member Status**

Logically, as districts consolidate, there will be fewer board of education positions available, thus less opportunity for status as a board member. Although the status of the position would remain, fewer people would be required. Therefore, loss of status for board members may have presented an ambiguous concept. Some respondents may have considered pure loss of status, while others may have
interpreted the concept as number of status positions available.

From the testing results, it was observed that support was given for a difference of perceptions when teachers were compared to community members and board members. As has been demonstrated previously, community and board members have responded similarly; such is the case for this variable. Both varied in their perceptions from teachers, supporting less loss of status for board members than responses indicated for teachers.

To assess fully the results from this item, clarification of the concept may be required. Since mean scores for the community and board members, 3.31 and 3.55 respectively, indicated a range between "slightly disagree" and "disagree," perhaps the interpretation that the position retains status influenced the response decision. It would only be conjecture to state this was not so for teachers. Since the board employs them, it is possible that teachers hold different attitudes toward board members than do administrators who are more familiar with board members due to their position and working relationships in a school district.

Administrator/Teacher Concerns

Testing revealed differences for community members compared to administrators and teachers on perceptions regarding a loss of administrators. Board members responded more
similarly to the school personnel. The community was less sure a loss would occur. It may seem logical to assume that school personnel and the board, due to their closer involvement and professional awareness regarding consolidation efforts, may have a greater sense of past outcomes than some community members. However, all groups perceived some loss, scoring response means between "agree" and "slightly agree."

The statement, loss of status for administrators, may again raise the issue of ambiguity. Do responses indicate a loss of status due to fewer positions or a loss of status in the position? This is a question for further study and clarification.

Testing of this item revealed differences of perceptions for comparisons of administrators versus the teacher and community groups. Administrators selected a mean response (4.25) between "slightly disagree" and "disagree," indicating they felt less loss of status would occur than teachers or community members whose mean scores were 3.36 and 3.45 respectively. Board members chose a mean response of 3.85 which is closer to "disagree" than community members or teachers.

Some thought may be given the various administrative roles. Since both central office and school building level administrators were included in this sample group, different forms of status may be involved. With consolidation, a larger school district will be available to administer from
one central office. In which case, status may be enhanced for those central office personnel who remain. For building administrators, their status may remain the same concerning building staff members, community, and students. Their influence, however, may be tempered by a larger, more bureaucratic atmosphere developed by enlarging the district and including a greater number of building administrators.

Similarly to administrators, teachers were most positive that losses in their positions would occur due to consolidation. Their perception also garnered support for a difference from the opinions of community members. Again the community (mean 2.92) seemed to feel only slight agreement with a loss, whereas the teachers' mean response (2.40) approached the "agree" range. Board members approximated the community response, while administrators seemed to support teacher perceptions.

Teachers, as well as administrators, in the Dearborn Heights area are fully accustomed to staff reductions since the decline in student enrollment began around 1969. Thus, they may perceive the situation in a different light than community members.

Board members, as is noted later, more strongly perceived an improved curriculum as districts merged. These improvements may assist in lessening the loss of teaching staff and may have affected board perceptions.

Teachers also indicated least security when considering
loss of status for teachers. The community agreed with this perception. Testing supported a difference in opinions between community members and teachers versus administrators and board members. These four comparisons may demonstrate sympathies such as community and teachers versus administrators and board of education. Parents are generally more reliant on teachers due to their common interest in students, while administrators supervise teachers and work more closely with the board to make changes or resolve conflicts.

Again, however, the issue remains: Is status considered as the number of positions or the status in the position? If the latter is true, then the bureaucracy of a larger school district may be influential in reducing individual teacher impact, thus reducing status. In the classroom, however, the status may remain the same.

A difference was demonstrated when comparing community perceptions with all three remaining groups regarding confusion on teacher contracts. The community perceived the least confusion. Since teachers, administrators, and board members regularly operate with contract regulations, the similarity of their mean scores is not surprising. They may be considered more knowledgeable than the community regarding the difficulties in resolving the complex issues raised when unique contracts must be made one. All groups tended to perceive some difficulty, since all mean responses ranged from "slightly agree" to "agree."
Financial Planning and Curriculum

Means for all four groups indicated very similar responses to items concerning better fiscal planning and the return of programs eliminated due to previous budget cuts. They all tended toward the "slightly agree" range. While "slightly agree" does not signify a strong faith in the purpose of reorganization, it does signal a similar understanding of the purpose of consolidation over all groups in this study.

Of concern to every school district is a viable high school curriculum, one which will allow students a variety of opportunities to prepare them for higher learning ventures or occupational choices. Small school districts have found this diversity constricted due to few students and resultant budget restraints.

In reviewing the data related to the development of a stronger curriculum in the high school following a merger, it was noted that board members were most positive this would occur (mean 1.74), while community members (mean 2.51) were less convinced. While the board generally had favored community responses, this item displayed the most divergent views. Even teachers and administrators appeared to differ from the perceptions of board members. However, all group responses indicated some sense of agreement.

Differences in perceptions were noted for the community
versus teachers, and board members differed from the community, teachers, and administrators. Because of these differences, it appears more discussion must occur on this item, so this issue may receive clarification and more unified support.

All groups, except teachers, expressed slight agreement with relief from extra responsibilities. Differences of perceptions were found for only one comparison, teachers and community members. Clarification may be offered by Cuban's (1979) study regarding consolidation. To accommodate declining enrollment and increasing per-pupil costs, "administrators feverishly searched for economies" and the contraction of staff positions, "particularly administrators," was documented (p. 381). As administrators are reduced, the responsibilities of eliminated positions are often parcelled out to those who remain. This is not generally found possible with teaching staff due to contractual restraints. Thus the reduction of extra responsibilities may not be pertinent to teaching positions.

Recommendations

The purpose of the instrument utilized in this study was to compare the perceptions of various people with vested interests in school districts regarding consolidation issues. It did not serve to acquire a favorable or unfavorable vote for such mergers. Should a reorganization be considered, a
survey containing opportunities to respond to both types of information may prove of great assistance. The resultant information would allow concentration on items requiring planning and clarification to meet the communication needs of school personnel and community members.

Several outlines for communication and planning have been developed. Ball (1983) compared two school closings. The first was wrought with bitterness and anger. The second, unlike the first, included community participation and was more amenable. These experiences illustrated how different formats may lead to different consequences.

Rust (1984) supported the benefits of community involvement that both Ball (1983) and Campbell (1956) stated is essential. Campbell, from his study of reorganization, stressed the importance of communication. "The lack of any easy, two-way communication between citizens of the school district and educational leaders" can be a particular source of strength to a group opposing the reorganization (p. 59). Campbell summarized by stating,

You're not likely to fail if you: (1) Always keep in mind the personal feelings, habits and beliefs of the people. (2) Work within the social framework of the community. (3) Establish a face-to-face relationship with local board members. (4) Rely on local leaders to assure their neighbors that the new arrangements make sense. (p. 60)

Fitzwater (1957b) also listed leadership pointers. A study of these and other plans of action would assist in organizing for community involvement during district reor-
In these reorganization efforts, some variables need further study. Literature seems to address the conflict and required planning for consolidation, but only recently have outcomes been addressed. Thus it appears that a need exists to assess how a reorganization does affect parent involvement, what effect does bussing have on students, does curriculum improve, what happens to communications between the home and school, and does fiscal planning become more efficient.

Serious doubts as to the benefits of reorganization were proposed by Jack Lam (1982) who perceived that many promises of consolidation do not occur. Not only did he cite an example where administrative per-pupil costs actually increased, but he briefly mentioned three studies that pointed out failure to meet the needs of transported students. He described consolidation thusly:

With consolidation, the desirable characteristics of small schools—closer administration-teacher-parent cooperation, greater decision-making opportunities, protection of minority and majority interests, protection of professional staff decision making—become less attainable. In contrast, the bureaucratic structure typical of large schools stiffens interpersonal relationships, standardizes procedures, regiments school activities, and raises serious doubts as to the benefits that consolidation has for upgrading or maintaining quality education. (p. 113)

Another item needing clarification is the ambiguity of status as discussed earlier. To assess more thoroughly the item of status for community members, teachers, administra-
tors, and board members, the question of status by position or number needs resolution. Further study is required.

Traditions have played a major role in our search for alternatives with which to cope with declining enrollments. Laws are included in these traditions. Kreitlow (1953) believed that "passage of school laws that provide incentives for superior teachers and administrators who . . . are able to use the laws as a means of developing and changing the factors in our tradition that limit school improvement" are essential if we are to improve education (p. 84).

It seems appropriate to conclude this study with this quote from Jack Lam (1982):

If current controversy over school closures could be a catalyst for critically examining the educational system, for arousing public interest that seeks alternative to the current manner of planning, decision-making, and financing education, then school closure, which began as an expedient way to resolve short-term problems, can pave the way for innovation and lasting solutions. (p. 114)
APPENDICES
### CONSOLIDATION/MERGER OPINION SURVEY

In your opinion, would consolidation or merger of your school district and another result in; (please check one column for each statement.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Loss of local control.</td>
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<td>2. Loss of administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Loss of teachers</td>
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<td>4. Loss of communication between home and school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Bussing more students</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Confusion on teacher contracts</td>
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<td>7. Less responsibility of school personnel to the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Loss of status for board members</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Loss of status for administrators</td>
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<td>10. Loss of status for teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Loss of status for community members</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. A stronger curriculum in the high school</td>
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<td>13. A return of programs which were &quot;cut&quot; due to a lack of funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Relief from extra responsibilities assigned when personnel cut backs have occurred</td>
<td></td>
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<td>15. Less parent involvement</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. An increase in taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>17. Better financial planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Closing of schools</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Thank you.
Please return in the enclosed envelope to your district's Central Office.
Appendix B

Summary Letter to Superintendents
March 6, 1985

Dear

Thank you for your receptivity to my phone call asking for assistance and information which will be helpful to me in the completion of my dissertation and doctorate degree in Educational Leadership from Western Michigan University.

Per our discussion, I am forwarding a summary of my survey research project and the informational assistance I will need for the project’s success.

My dissertation research thus far has included research on the topic of school district consolidations and mergers. This has led to the development of a survey instrument to be administered to 100% of board of education members and school district administrators (including central office and principals), 33.3% of the teachers, and one percent of the community members of each of the five school districts of Crestwood, Westwood, Dearborn Heights, Inkster, and North Dearborn Heights.

This research and survey are intended to lend some insights on the perceptions of people regarding consolidations and mergers. The tentative date for this survey is late April or early May, pending my dissertation committee’s final approval.

To prepare for the survey distribution, I would appreciate your assistance with the following items. I will need rosters with mailing addresses for:

1. Board of Education Members
2. Teachers
3. Administrators (Central Office and School Level)
4. Registered Voters for your School District

From these rosters, I will draw samples as indicated previously. The above rosters will remain confidential and be used only by myself for survey purposes. I will surely return the information as soon as I have drawn my sample populations.

If you would deem it helpful for respondent’s understanding and return of the surveys, I would appreciate a letter of endorsement from you which I would enclose with each survey for your district. If you wish, I will be pleased to share a copy of the results of this research with you.

Any suggestions or sources of information regarding school district reorganization or the survey process for your district will be appreciated.

Once again, thank you for your assistance. I look forward to working with your district on this project.

Sincerely,

Grace A. Peapples, Principal

"Westwood is Leading the Way"
Appendix C

Superintendent's Cover Letter
March 7, 1985

Dear Board Members, Administrators, Teachers, and Public:

One of our colleagues from the Westwood School District, Mrs. Grace Peapples, is conducting doctoral dissertation research on matters related to the six-district school reorganization study we participated in during the 1984-85 school year. Her research is intended to lend some insights on the perceptions of people regarding consolidations and mergers. Mrs. Peapples is seeking to survey individuals from the six districts; she wishes to survey 100 percent of board of education members and administrators, 33 percent of the teachers, and 1 percent of the community members.

Mrs. Peapples expects her survey distribution to occur in late April. We all know the great difficulties our colleagues face in preparing and conducting advanced degree research projects. You have been selected to participate in this study; I wish only to encourage your assistance and cooperation on this project, and urge you to complete and return the survey instrument on behalf of our fellow educator and a person concerned with the public's views about their schools.

I know that Mrs. Peapples will deeply appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

David J. Taylor
Superintendent of Schools

DJT/1r
Appendix D

Initial Letter to Survey Sample
Dear

I am a principal at the William H. Thorne Elementary School in the Westwood Community School District. As a part of my doctoral work in educational leadership at Western Michigan University, I have chosen to explore the issue of school consolidation and merger in the five districts of Crestwood, Dearborn Heights #7, Inkster, North Dearborn Heights, and Westwood. Your opinions are valuable to me in completing my research on whether the community, board of education members, administrators, and teachers hold similar opinions regarding the consolidation/merger issues. I am seeking your assistance in completing this survey study.

As you know, schools and education have received much emphasis lately. After much growth, school populations have declined, and numerous problems have resulted. Consolidation or merger has been suggested as one means by which some problems of curriculum and finance may be resolved. Not everyone, however, agrees with this solution.

While it is recognized that some districts have already addressed this issue, your opinions are still valuable and will add to the overall results of the study.

Your prompt response to the enclosed survey would be appreciated and of great benefit to my study. Please take a few minutes to respond to the survey, place it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope, and place it in the mail.

All responses will remain confidential. The code number in the upper right hand corner is for follow-up purposes only. After all responses are recorded, all survey sheets will be destroyed. There will be no way to associate responses with individual persons.

If you have any questions regarding this study, I may be reached at 292-1600 during business hours.

Thank you for your interest and time spent in completing the enclosed survey.

Sincerely,

Grace A. Peapples

"Westwood is Leading the Way"
Appendix E

Follow-up Letter to School Personnel
May 29, 1985

Dear

A few weeks ago I distributed survey material to 260 teachers (random sample), board members, and administrators in five school districts and mailed 530 survey packages to a random sample of community members in each of those districts.

My educational goal was to gather opinions about consolidation and/or mergers. My personal goal was to facilitate the completion of the final requirement for my doctorate in educational leadership.

I realize the survey requires some of your time which, I also appreciate, is a precious commodity during or after a busy work day.

Although I did not find your survey among those I collected recently, I am hopeful you will help me reach an acceptable percentage of returned surveys by lending me a few minutes in which to complete the enclosed questionnaire and forward it to your Central Office.

Please be assured that individual responses are strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone. Mean scores will be utilized for statistical purposes only.

Please feel free to call me at Thorne School (292-1600) with questions or comments.

I would greatly appreciate your assistance in completing this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Grace A. Peeples
Appendix F

Follow-up Letter to Board Members
Dear

I apologize for imposing on your busy schedule once again, but I am in dire need of your assistance.

As you may recall, I am attempting to complete my doctorate dissertation and degree. Of prime importance to this project is the survey I distributed to 790 persons in four categories: board of education members, administrators, teachers, and the voting communities of five school districts.

Since there is a total of 35 board members in this population, and responses were received from only 25, I am advised that the resultant percentage of 71% is below the acceptable level for statistical purposes. Therefore I must increase this percentage of returns in order to continue my work.

I realize you may have completed the survey and for some reason I did not receive it, but if you would please complete the enclosed survey and return it in the stamped return envelope as soon as possible, I would be extremely grateful.

Please feel free to call me at 292-1600 during the work day or 383-4336 evenings and weekends.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Grace A. Peapples
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