

A SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE IN POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY
KANSAS CONCERNING REORGANIZATION OF HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

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B. A., Washburn University, 1961

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Charles M. Peccolo, Professor of Education, Kansas State University, for his assistance and guidance in the preparation of this report.

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INTRODUCTION

Man's endeavor to develop and maintain a good educational system has been a constant struggle for centuries. It is presently apparent that the endeavor to broaden the scope of education is continuing. An ever-changing and complex society hosts many obstacles to be overcome before achieving a sound educational system. To transfer the accumulated knowledge of the past to the next generation, to help learn how it is used, and subsequently to expand this knowledge, is the ultimate goal being sought by leaders in education today.

To reach the greatest number of students with the best possible education is the basic objective of reorganization. There have been, and no doubt will continue to be, mixed emotions over the various reorganizational proposals. Kansas Senate Bill 400 is typical of the various proposals and the general purposes of the bill are as follows:

- (1) General improvement of the public schools of Kansas.
- (2) The equalization of the benefits and burdens of education throughout the state.
- (3) To expedite the organization of sound public school districts.
- (4) To establish a thorough and uniform system of free public schools.
- (5) Include all areas of the state in school districts which maintain grades one through twelve.
- (6) To have wiser use of public funds expended for the support of the public school system of the state.¹

¹Manual of Suggested Procedures for County Boards of School Planning, A report prepared by the State Committee on School District Organization (Topeka: State Printing Office, 1961), p. 1.

The listed objectives of Senate Bill 400 are only minimum requirements and were found to be unconstitutional in the state courts.

A second bill, House Bill 377, was later passed to serve as a guideline for the various county planning boards to follow. The objectives of House Bill 377 were as follows:

- (1) General improvement of the public schools in the state of Kansas.
- (2) Equalization of the benefits and burdens of education throughout the various communities in the state.
- (3) To expedite the organization of public school districts of the state so as to establish a thorough and uniform system of free public schools throughout the state whereby all areas of the state are included in school districts which maintain grades 1-12, and kindergarten where desired.
- (4) To have a wiser use of public funds expended for the support of the public school system of the state.¹

Due to the many varied proposals that were submitted to the Kansas State Department of Public Instruction by the county planning board, the patrons of Pottawatomie County were quite uneasy about the final outcome of re-organization.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purposes of this survey were to explore attitudes and concepts held by residents living in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, relative to: (1) present school districts; (2) adequacy of an education in public schools; (3) knowledge of reorganization of high school districts; and (4) suggestions and proposals the people believe necessary to improve

¹"A Summary Study of Schools in the Pottawatomie County Planning Unit," A Public Document. 1963, p. 2.

educational opportunities for the youth of this county.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SURVEY

Reorganization is not a new term to the people in Pottawatomie County. The initial start of the reorganization of Pottawatomie County schools commenced in 1960. The reorganization plan at this time was being carried out under Senate Bill 400. Due to the court finding Senate Bill 400 unconstitutional the reorganization activity was impeded.

In 1963, the second reorganization plan was attempted with the passage of House Bill 377. The county planning board, operating under House Bill 377, submitted a plan which was approved by the Pottawatomie County patrons. The proposed plan was sent to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and received his approval. The newly reorganized districts will begin operation July 1, 1966.

When work began under House Bill 377 there were eight high schools operating in Pottawatomie County. When reorganization takes effect July 1, 1966, the number of operating high school districts will have been reduced to four. Those districts being discontinued will be absorbed by the newly reorganized districts.

Area wise, Pottawatomie county is one of the larger counties of Kansas located in the Northeast part of the state. The 1960 census listed Pottawatomie county as having a population of 12,246. The size and population of the area are important and should be considered during and/or in organizational structure.

The reasons for reorganization in the county were numerous; high per pupil cost, transportation, inadequate physical plants, non-comprehensive curricular programs, inability to hire and maintain well qualified teachers, and inadequate evaluation to maintain an enriched educational program.

The beneficial aspects of reorganization would be that all the children of the county would be provided equal opportunities in an educational program that provided for varied interests, abilities, and aptitudes.

The past three years produced a shift in public sentiment concerning reorganization in Pottawatomie county. Extension and expansion of the school programs have been approved by the majority of people concerned, however, the minority are still voicing their disapproval. It is important to find the reasons for disapproval and to pursue a policy and/or plan to remedy the disapproval.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Most of the terms will be defined in the context of this report. There are, however, five terms which merit definition and will be defined here for the benefit of the reader.

Reorganization. Reorganization of school districts is a process whereby two or more districts are formed into a single unit.¹

¹Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education, (New York: McGraw-Hill and Company, Inc., 1945), p. 342.

Attitude. An attitude is a relatively constant tendency to act in certain directions and in accordance with certain mental patterns.¹

Opinion. Opinions are expressed attitudes.²

Rural. Land area outside the corporate limits of a city.

Urban. Land area within the corporate limits of a city.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Reorganization

With America's long established tradition of local control over education, the problem of school district reorganization is very complex.³ The strength of this tradition is indicated by the fact that a large measure of the State legislation relative to school district reorganization is permissive rather than mandatory.

School district reorganization has emerged as a major problem only recently. The reorganization procedure, however, is not a new concept at all. Its history is easily traced back to the late 1880's when the six New England states reorganized their schools primarily on the basis of townships and cities. Many states across the nation have reorganized their schools entirely or partially. In 1961 there

¹William H. Burton, The Guidance of Learning Attitudes, (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, Inc., 1962), p. 98.

²H. H. Remmers, Introduction to Opinion and Attitude Measurement, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 4.

³Leslie L. Chisholm, School District Reorganization, (University of Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, 1957), p. v.

were 40,000 school districts in the United States. It is predicted by 1971 there will be 30,000 although with larger enrollments.¹

There seems to be a definite trend on the national scope for larger administrative units. Reorganization is the procedure being used. The review of literature seems to single out two main reasons for reorganization, (1) finance of the educational unit, (2) the education structure itself. The data, although showing the advantages and persisting problems in reorganized school districts, present evidence that school district reorganization is moving toward its goals of improving efficiency of operation and equalizing educational opportunities for increased numbers of pupils.²

Although much has been accomplished in the reorganization of school districts during the past decade, much remains to be done in the future. The various states and their local communities must strive to improve their schools. Kansas ranks high among those states striving for larger, more efficient school districts. To illustrate the trend in Kansas, in 1931-32 there were 8,748 school districts, thirty years later there were 2,585.³ This is a seventy per cent decrease in the

¹Walter D. Cocking, "School District Reorganization," Overview, 2:62, June, 1961.

²Leslie L. Chisholm, School District Reorganization, (University of Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, 1957), p. 96.

³"Bigger and Fewer School Districts," National Education Association Research Bulletin, 38:15-17, February, 1960.

number of school districts in the thirty year span of time. The number of school districts was further reduced by reorganization to 374. Of this present total, 302 are unified districts and seventy-two are non-unified school districts.¹

Greater Educational Opportunities Demanded

For many decades, the weaknesses of small school districts have been known and deplored. With the knowledge of the inadequacies of small districts available to the lay public, small school units continued to be the typical organization outside large cities.

The National Education Association made its first resolution on the small school problem in 1914 when it endorsed "the plan of a larger unit in school organization and administration," as a means toward greater economy and efficiency.² Great strides have been made in the past three decades toward reorganization in both secondary and elementary districts. The Kansas legislature took a giant step toward complete reorganization with the passage of House Bill 377. The entire bill was directed toward creating quality school districts. The basic specifications for an adequate school district to meet the following criteria:

¹"97% of Kansas Land Area is in Unified Districts," Kansas Schools, 22:1-2, February-March, 1966.

²"Bigger and Fewer School Districts," op. cit.

- (1) Four hundred students in its schools, grade 1-12, on the first September 15 after the effective date of organization of such district, or, no less than two hundred square miles of territory and an assessed evaluation of two million dollars.
- (2) The territory in each proposed unified district shall be composed of one contiguous compact area. All of the territory within the boundaries of any city district shall be recommended to be included in one and only one unified district.
- (3) Every unified district shall maintain, offer and teach grades one through twelve, with kindergarten being optional, and shall offer and teach at least thirty units of instruction in grades nine through twelve in each and every high school operated by the board. Such units of instruction, to qualify for the purpose of this act, shall have the prior approval of the state superintendent.¹

The revisions of state plans for the support of public schools have played a large part in the striking improvements of the past three decades.

Evidence continues to grow showing that greater academic achievement is more likely to occur in the larger, reorganized district.²

Despite the evidence in support of reorganization there are still problems causing delay in district formation. Research points to the following as being obstacles in reorganization:

- (1) Politically ambitious local school trustees have been unwilling to be displaced.
- (2) False local pride, community acceptance of the status quo, and resistance to change.

¹"A Summary Study of Schools in the Pottawatomia County Planning Unit," A Public Document, 1963, p. 2.

²DeForest Hamilton, and Robert N. Rowe, "Academic Achievement of Students in Reorganized and Non-reorganized Districts," Phi Delta Kappan, 43:401-404, June, 1962.

- (3) Misconceptions of what a reorganized district would mean have produced unwarranted fears.
- (4) Cumbersome procedures for reorganization have obstructed efforts to form larger districts.
- (5) State school finance structures in some states have favored small districts.¹

Despite the many obstacles confronting reorganization the movement toward larger administrative units continues to make progress.

The electorate in any given district is quite difficult to convince of the feasibility of reorganization. People desire to know the facts even though the facts may not be entirely to their liking.² Chisholm points to the fact planning boards for reorganization should provide specific answers to local problems. The attitude toward reorganization held by the school patron might well be influenced by the degree of interest shown by the planning board for his particular school district.

Many administrators, teachers, and laymen support the general principles of reorganization in a belief that reorganization will bring about greater educational opportunities. Studies directed at comparing academic achievement in reorganized districts and small school districts indicate favorable results in reorganized districts. Such a study is being conducted by Burton Kreitlow in the State of Wisconsin which

¹"Bigger and Fewer School Districts," National Education Association Research Bulletin, 38:15-17, February, 1960.

²Leslie L. Chisholm, School District Reorganization, (University of Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, 1957), p. 55.

matches five experimental groups of reorganized schools.¹ The study is in its thirteenth year and is designed to measure for each of the groups, educational opportunities, educational achievement, educational costs, and community social and economic processes. Evaluation of the study indicates all areas of measurement strongly favor the larger reorganized school. The study points to the fact that children tend to achieve significantly better in the basic skill subjects than do children of smaller reorganized or unreorganized districts. It is apparent from the various studies completed by Kreitlow that the theory of reorganization has proven itself correct in actual practice. Pupil achievement has been aided by reorganization.

Perhaps one of the misconceptions held by the general public is the financial aspect of reorganization. The general public has been led to believe that if reorganization becomes a reality the financial burden of the taxpayer will be eased. It is reasonably clear that reorganized school districts provide equal opportunities at a lower cost, however, reorganization for the purpose of increasing opportunities and achievement often cost the taxpayer more money.² An effective system of school organization is one which combines economical administration, equitable distribution of revenues, and equalized local

¹Burton W. Kreitlow, "Reorganization Makes a Difference," NEA Journal, 50:55, March, 1961.

²Burton W. Kreitlow, "Organizational Patterns: Local School Districts," Review of Educational Research, 31:380-392, October, 1961.

tax burdens.¹ The ability for a larger unit to provide better educational goals would be brought about by a larger land area which provides greater financial ability per student. In a recent survey of per pupil cost in Pottawatomie county, it was found the per pupil cost ranged from \$175.00 to \$1500.00.² The wide variance in per pupil cost could be interpreted in two ways--poor economic judgement or an apparent willingness on the part of some taxpayers to assume a larger financial responsibility for public education. The larger administrative unit will have far more students under reorganization. To provide each student with equal educational opportunities the reorganized district will employ many more teachers with a greater area for specialization. Research points to the fact that larger facilities often mean greater possibilities for specialization in remedial work, foreign languages, vocal and instrumental music, industrial arts, citizenship, health education, and other special fields of curriculum.³ With effective organization and curriculum planning the larger reorganized school district can better meet the educational challenge of the twentieth century. Effective organization would enable both quantity and quality education to be achieved. It is the responsibility of each school

¹Ibid., p. 392.

²F. L. Sparks, "Reorganizational Report," p. 4.

³DeForest Hamilton and Robert N. Rowa, "Academic Achievement of Students in Reorganized and Non-reorganized Districts," Phi Delta Kappan, 43:401-404, June, 1962.

district to administer an educational facility that will meet the individual needs and desires of its students. If quality education is provided the youth of today, each will be better prepared to assume his role in a modern, complex society.

Regulations Governing Reorganization

Regulations governing school district reorganization are quite necessary. Since the reorganization of school districts decreases the number of operating districts, it is necessary to have regulations to guide the formation of the new districts. To many patrons in the various districts, reorganization, in one manner or the other, upsets the status quo of the community. Regardless of the community in which reorganization is taking place, it is most likely that varied philosophies and/or opinions of school patrons will exist. Since the objective of reorganization is to create new, larger districts out of several smaller districts, many aspects of governing this procedure are vital. Once several districts have agreed to reorganize, there is no turning back. Debate on policy is closed when voters approve the proposals and cannot be re-done because the same or new board members prefer a different program at a later date.¹

The basic requirement for a successful school district reorganization program is a comprehensive law to act as the guideline to follow in setting up the program on both state and local levels. The size of

¹Leo O. Garber, "Once a Merger, Always a Merger, District Finds," Nation's Schools, 71:58, June, 1963.

district can and should be determined on the local level.¹ Studies in the state of California show that the number of unified school districts has more than doubled since 1949 when the responsibility of reorganization was delegated by the state legislature to county committees.² Most authorities of school district reorganization agree that unification is the best form of local school district government thus far devised and that an adequate school district is a unified district.³

The question of size enters the varied problems of reorganization. Leading authorities seem to be in agreement on the question of size of the school district. A community school should strive for the optimum size school district that will best meet its needs.⁴ School districts that are reorganizing should not be formed for size only, but should take into consideration the many educational advantages that would justify the change. Just because a school district is large in area, it will not automatically have the necessary ingredients for a quality district. It is apparent, however, that larger school districts usually

¹John C. Packard, "School District Size Versus Local Control," American School Board Journal, 146:9-10, February, 1963.

²Robert Clemo and Loren A. Wann, "District Organization Patterns Change," California Education, 1:25-27, February, 1964.

³Packard, op. cit., 146:9-10.

⁴Ibid.

offer a more efficient educational system at a more reasonable cost.

If competent teachers, administrators and trustees; services which meet the needs of all students; a comprehensive program at a reasonable cost; and evidence of superior achievement existed in a school system, there would be little reason to reorganize.¹

Careful analysis should be made of each school district and local situations before reorganization should be attempted.

The entire process of reorganization is complex and complicated. To achieve acceptance of reorganization quality leadership is essential. Many school district patrons do not fully understand reorganization. Consequently, vigorous leadership is necessary at each phase throughout the process. The school districts in existence prior to reorganization are quite adequate to the people who have never experienced the benefits of an enriched program. It is necessary and completely essential that proper rapport be established between the planning board and the general public concerned with reorganization. With proper rapport existing, a true understanding of reorganization and the benefits possible could be achieved.

Acceptance of Reorganization Responsibility

Pottawatomie County is one of the larger counties in the state of Kansas in land area. Its population of more than 12,000 is basically agriculturally orientated. There were eight operating high school

¹DeForest Hamilton and Robert N. Rowe, "Academic Achievement of Students in Reorganized and Non-reorganized Districts," Phi Delta Kappan, 43:401-404, June, 1962.

districts in the county at the start of reorganization in 1960. The high schools located at Blaine and Havensville were closed in 1958 and 1959 respectively. Several of the operating high schools are presently operating a district with fewer than fifty students.

School district reorganization is a movement of considerable magnitude and significance in the nation and many states.¹ Shifts in administrative units seldom come easy; in most cases they entail considerable effort by professional and lay groups. The efforts by these people sometimes convince a majority of the electorate, and sometimes they do not.² Factors that influence decisions on district reorganization are many. In a survey of twenty-four Ohio county superintendents it was found that personal feelings, opinions and influence of friends and neighbors ranked first as the influencing factor toward school reorganization.³ Also ranking high in public influence was the question of what reorganization will mean to the life or future of the neighborhoods or communities concerned. Since the beginning of our American educational system the local high school has served as the center of interest, a meeting place for the citizens of the community, and a common topic for conversation. Many people in the reorganizational process

¹ Roald F. Campbell, "Feeling's Are Facts in School District Reorganization," Nation's Schools, 57:58-60, March, 1956.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

felt that the loss of the school would place an undue hardship on the continuity of the community. By losing a high school through reorganization, the communities felt they had lost the "core" of their sociological structure.

Reorganization must be accomplished by local authorities with the aid of professional educators and a proper foundation of sound legislation. The interest of the school patrons toward reorganization and the improvement of schools must be stimulated to make the best possible educational program available for each student. People in the school district must understand reorganization to encourage and support it.

In any reorganizational program people of the various communities are involved. Their interests and ideas should be taken into consideration by the professional and lay personnel on the planning board. Reorganization cannot help having some political overtones connected with it. Successful reorganization process demands an informed public. It is the responsibility of the planning board to meet with the patrons and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a newly proposed school district. Chisholm states major handicaps have been encountered when the programs have failed to produce the desired results.¹ One of the chief reasons for the disappointing results seems to have been the failure to plan and carry out a good public relations program in the community and

¹Leslie L. Chisholm, School District Reorganization, (University of Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, 1957), p. 54.

throughout the country where reorganization is attempted.¹ Comparisons should be made and plans evaluated with the patrons' interests being foremost in the minds of the planning board members.

Summary of the Literature

The review of literature on school district structure throughout the United States indicates a strong movement toward complete reorganization of school districts. Leading educators throughout the various states indicate strong support for reorganization of school districts as a means of improving the educational opportunities in the public schools.

Reorganization is not easy to achieve. All people must be involved with the reorganization process. The degree of involvement is achieved by informing the general public as to what reorganization is and the possible benefits that could be realized from the process.

Geographic school district lines will change with reorganization of school districts. Consequently, several communities will be involved. A tremendous effort by the proper authorities should be made to acquaint the patrons of the proposed reorganized area with the direct benefits that may be achieved through reorganization.

Careful analysis should be made of each school district before reorganization is attempted. If a district meets the approved comprehensive standards set forth by the State Department of Public Instruction

¹Ibid.

it is not necessary to reorganize that particular school district. It is quite possible the school patrons in each district would agree to reorganization if the proper understanding was achieved.

School reorganization is governed by laws. Each planning board should be aware of the rules and regulations governing the reorganization procedures. The various boards have the responsibility to plan for effective school district reorganization. The comprehensive school laws effecting changes would damage and/or violate the program procedure on both the state and local levels.

The review of literature points to the fact when reorganization has occurred, effective leadership was evident. It is essential that there be dedicated personnel, both laymen and professional, who would assume the responsibility for achieving reorganization. These individuals must assume the responsibility to outline the program, initiate it, and to carry the program through regardless of obstacles encountered. In order to overcome obstacles these individuals must have a keen sense of understanding school laws and requirements and they must also be patient and have an understanding of public relations.

A tremendous amount of literature supports the program of reorganization. However, the improvement of education is the basic objective being sought. To achieve a sound educational system the process of reorganization seems to be the most feasible plan yet devised.

METHODS OF PROCEDURE AND LIMITATIONS

Procedure

A survey of attitudes toward a given topic will vary from one locale to another. The variance could be attributed to many factors, such as geographical location, financial ability of the residents, values held by the residents, sociological ties of the community, religious beliefs, and many others. This report is a survey of attitudes of the people of Pottawatomie County, Kansas, concerning reorganization of high school districts.

The review of literature provided a basis for the formation of the questions used in the interviews. Approximately twenty minutes was utilized for instructions to the interviewee and the reading of the questions by the interviewer. A blank form was used for each interview. A copy of the survey blank may be found in Appendix A. The interviewer checked the appropriate answer after the response by the interviewee was given. The responses were analyzed for the purposes of the survey.

Limitations of the Survey

Only patrons with high school students in the defined population were utilized in the survey. Various high school records were utilized to determine the high school population in the four newly reorganized school districts. Each interviewee in the survey population was personally contacted. After the explanation to the interviewee was completed, the interviewer would read the questions and place a check mark

in the proper position. Each person was given the option to reply "yes," "no," or "no opinion" to each question.

Defining the Population

The population used in the survey consisted of school patrons with high school children in the four newly reorganized high school districts in Pottawatomie County, Kansas. These included the districts of: (1) Onaga-Wheaton-Havensville, (2) St. George-Westmoreland-Flush, (3) St. Marys-Emmett-Delia-Rossville, and (4) Wamego. The stratified sampling technique was employed to maintain a like ratio of rural and urban students in the survey population. At present there are approximately 1,000 high school students in Pottawatomie county high schools. One twenty-fifth of parents with high school students provided a sample of forty interviews for the survey. The interviewees were selected with district ratio being as evenly distributed as possible. Due to the use of the stratified sampling technique this survey reflects both rural and urban attitudes toward reorganization.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Information obtained from the interviews is presented in five parts. Each section will be discussed separately with tables and comments dealing with that section of the survey.

There are some questions appearing on the questionnaire which might seem unrelated to the objective in question, however, they may be

of benefit in the final analysis of the attitudes held by the patrons toward reorganization.

Existing School District Structure

The traditional school district has been in operation since the beginning of public education. Within each district one could find evidence of existing common characteristics. These would include a definite physical structure for jurisdiction of educational policies, school board members, physical plants, administrators, teachers, legal and financial obligations followed, and most importantly, students. In any given school district one would be able to find a varying degree of apathy toward the school district and its operations. Table I indicates a slight majority, fifty-eight per cent, saying they understood the present school district structure. Fewer respondents, fifty per cent, said they understood the newly reorganized district of which they would soon be a part. Sixty per cent of the survey population felt the present school district was adequate to properly educate the children of the district. Sixty-two per cent of the people who were surveyed were satisfied with the efforts being made by the present school district to educate their youth.

The knowledge of the existing school structure revealed the patrons understanding of their districts. Ninety-two per cent of the survey population felt they were not sufficiently informed to know the type of district organization to make possible the best education for all children in the district.

TABLE I
ATTITUDES OF PATRONS WITH RELATION TO
EXISTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Questions from the interview	Raw Scores			Per Cent		
	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
			Opinion			Opinion
1. Do you understand the structure of your present school district?	23	17	0	58	42	0
2. Do you believe that most people are sufficiently informed to determine the school district organization structure needed to make possible the best education for all children in the district or county?	2	37	1	5	92	3
3. Do you understand the new organized school district structure?	20	20	0	50	50	0
4. Do you feel the present school district is adequate to properly educate the children of the district?	24	10	6	60	25	15
5. Do you believe a small school of fifty students or less can educate youth as well as a school of 200 students or more?	12	28	0	30	70	0
6. Are you satisfied with the efforts of your present school district to educate your youth?	25	11	4	62	28	10
7. Do you believe teachers and administrators are as professionally dedicated in small schools as they are in larger schools?	25	10	5	62	25	13

It was apparent in the interviews that the respondents had not participated in programs that were held during the formation of the newly reorganized districts. Seventy per cent of the respondents felt a school of fifty could not educate as well as a school of 200 or more. The opinions voiced by the respondents were those which did not coincide with the basic proposals called for by reorganization.

The attitude toward teachers and administrators was quite favorable. Sixty-two per cent felt teachers and administrators were as professional in their work in small schools as in larger schools.

Tax Support of the Schools

Since schools cost money and this money is derived from the tax fund, people should have an intense interest in the financial aspect of school support. Table II reveals that only twenty-five per cent of those interviewed were aware of the amount of money spent by their present school district annually for education. A large majority, seventy-eight per cent of the respondents felt a broader tax base was needed. The survey indicated an overwhelming sentiment, eighty-five per cent, for patrons of the district to pay an equal share toward support of the educational operation in the district.

It was interesting to note the attitude toward more aid to public education. Fifty-eight per cent of those interviewed voiced a need for more state support to education. In contrast to this only thirty per cent felt more federal aid was needed for the schools.

TABLE II
ATTITUDES OF PATRONS WITH RELATION TO
TAX SUPPORT OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Questions from the interview	Raw Scores			Per Cent		
	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
			Opinion			Opinion
1. Is a broader tax base needed to support our schools?	31	4	5	78	10	12
2. Should all citizens in the district bear an equal share of the tax burden for support of the schools?	34	2	4	85	5	10
3. Is more state support needed for support of schools in Pottawatomie County?	23	4	13	58	10	32
4. Is more federal support needed for support of schools in Pottawatomie County?	12	20	8	30	50	20
5. Are you aware of the amount of money your present school district spends annually for education?	10	30	0	25	75	0

Educational Opportunities

With reference to educational opportunities provided under reorganization, the patrons interviewed responded in the affirmative to all but one item. The response to the item, that of an accelerated program for the gifted student, did more negative than positive responses appear in the data. Forty-three per cent felt the accelerated program for the gifted student was not necessary. Comparing the two ends of the

intelligence scale reveals those interviewed felt the formation of a remedial class is by far more important. The remedial classroom service was approved by eighty-five per cent of those interviewed.

Each interviewee was asked his opinion on whether or not reorganization was the best approach for providing a comprehensive education for all the youth in his district. Sixty per cent felt reorganization was the best approach thus far.

Table III indicates the following school services were approved by seventy-five per cent or more of the survey population: Guidance and Counseling, Industrial Arts, Vocational Agriculture, Home Economics, Vocal music, Instrumental music, Special program for the slow learner, and Driver Education.

Reorganizational Reluctance

The responses in this section indicate considerable opposition to reorganization. Perhaps the two questions in which the respondents were most vocal toward dealt with loss of local control of the school and loss of their district school. Table IV indicates fifty-two per cent of the respondents voiced fear of losing local control of their school. Having one or more representatives on the reorganized school board did not alter the opinion of the respondents.

The attitude toward losing the district high school was evenly split in the survey population. Table IV reveals fifty per cent fearing loss of the district school and fifty per cent with no fear of losing their district high school.

TABLE III

PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES NEEDED WITH
RELATION TO REORGANIZED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Questions from the interview	Raw Score			Per Cent		
	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
			Opinion			Opinion
1. Guidance and Counseling	38	2	0	95	5	0
2. Full time health service (Duty Nurse)	25	14	1	62	35	3
3. Industrial Arts	37	1	2	92	3	5
4. Vocational Agriculture	31	7	2	78	17	5
5. Accelerated program for gifted students	16	17	7	40	43	17
6. Home Economics	36	1	3	90	3	7
7. Speech Therapy	28	6	6	70	15	15
8. Vocal music	39	1	0	98	2	0
9. Instrumental music	40	0	0	100	0	0
10. Special program for slow learners	34	2	4	85	5	10
11. Driver Training program	38	1	1	95	3	2
12. Should education of all students from kindergarten through grade twelve be maintained in all school districts?	33	4	3	83	10	7
13. Are grades K-12 being operated in your present district?	35	5	0	88	12	0
14. Is reorganization the best ap- proach to providing a compre- hensive education for all youth of your district?	24	10	6	60	25	15

TABLE IV
PATRONS ATTITUDES WITH RELATION TO
REORGANIZATIONAL RELUCTANCE

Questions from the interview	Raw Score			Per Cent		
	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
			Opinion			Opinion
1. Do you fear losing local control of your school due to reorganization?	21	19	0	52	48	0
2. Do you fear losing your district high school?	20	20	0	50	50	0
3. Do you fear reorganization will increase taxes?	18	15	7	45	38	17
4. Do you fear community school activities would be decreased due to reorganization?	21	19	0	53	47	0
5. Do you fear the transportation problem of reorganization?	14	22	4	35	55	10

Almost half, forty-five per cent, felt taxes would be increased as a result of reorganization.

When the reorganization process started a great deal of opposition was based on the transportation aspect of the program. Table IV in the survey indicates a positive attitude toward transporting students greater distances. Fifty-five per cent of those interviewed voiced no fear of the problem.

Reorganizational Support

The attitudes tested in this section indicated positive feelings toward the newly reorganized school district. Table V indicates a positive feeling toward each question of concern in the questionnaire. Sixty per cent of the respondents felt reorganization would make possible efficient use of the tax dollar. Ninety-eight per cent felt reorganization would make possible a varied curriculum for all the students of the district. This aspect seemed to be one which each respondent voiced strong approval.

TABLE V
PATRONS ATTITUDES WITH RELATION TO
REORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Questions from the interview	Raw Score			Per Cent		
	Yes	No	Opinion	Yes	No	Opinion
1. Would reorganization make possible better physical plants?	31	4	5	77	10	13
2. Would higher quality teachers and administrators be available under reorganization?	18	14	8	45	35	20
3. Would reorganization make possible efficient use of the tax dollar for education?	24	9	7	60	23	17
4. Would reorganization make possible a varied curriculum for all the students of the district?	39	1	0	98	2	0

Seventy-seven per cent of the respondents felt the newly reorganized district would make possible better physical plants.

Less than a majority, forty-five per cent, of the survey population felt reorganization would make higher quality teachers and administrators available.

Even though reorganization will take effect July 1, 1966, there are many patrons who do not fully understand the implications of reorganization. Under proposals of the survey in Table VI, ninety per cent of those interviewed agreed on a program that would inform the patrons of the district about the operation of the newly reorganized district. One would find a substantial number of problems confronting the district without having public sentiment against the operation of the district.

Table VI reveals eighty-seven per cent of the patrons felt adult programs in the school would be beneficial as a public relation aspect.

TABLE VI
PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION RELATIVE TO
SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

Questions from the interview	Raw Score			Per Cent		
	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
			Opinion			Opinion
1. Should a program be started to inform the patrons as to the operation of the newly reorganized district?	36	4	0	90	10	0
2. Should an adult program be considered by the newly reorganized district to encourage parent participation in school functions?	35	3	2	87	13	0

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Unlike the present school district structure, reorganization is something quite new to the patrons of Pottawatomie county. Concern for a good educational system is quite strong in all the proposed districts. There are, however, some pessimistic attitudes prevailing among the county patrons.

Summary

The survey revealed that fifty per cent of the people in the population fear losing local control of their school or losing their school entirely. It was quite apparent the patrons were somewhat hostile to the proposed plan of reorganization as a whole. Items of some concern to the patrons were loss of interest in the school, rising taxes, and the problem of pupil transportation connected with reorganization.

The section on reorganizational support revealed strong support for reorganized districts with reference to better physical plants, a varied curriculum, and benefits derived by better use of the education tax dollar.

A majority of the people in the survey understood the present school district structure. This was contrary to the understanding of the newly reorganized districts where only fifty per cent understood the boundaries, assessed evaluation, and mill levy.

The majority of the people were quite satisfied with their present district to educate their youth. In several situations the respondent answered by saying the education that could be offered under reorganization would be the same and even inferior in some respects due to the size of classes and lack of individual help. The same individuals who were content with the present educational endeavors felt the smaller schools were handicapped in their educational pursuit. This was indicative of the answer given on the ability of the patrons in Pottawatomie County to determine the type of school needed to educate their youth. Ninety-two per cent felt the people were inadequately informed to determine the best possible education for their youth.

The survey revealed that people are aware of paying taxes but they do not know what for or how much. Seventy-seven per cent felt other tax monies were necessary to help ease the burden of property tax. The respondents also felt the payments for school operation should be equally divided throughout the district to all patrons.

It was agreed that more state funds should be allocated to public education for its support. The contrary was true for the need of federal monies. Only thirty per cent felt more federal support was needed for public education. The somewhat surprising aspect of tax support to schools was that only twenty-five per cent of the survey population know how much money was spent annually for education in their district.

Equal educational opportunities were strongly supported in the survey. The importance of a varied program of school services was highly

recommended by the majority of patrons. Of the services listed in the questionnaire only the program for gifted students was rejected as not being necessary. In a few cases the respondents felt the school services suggested should be maintained in the elementary school rather than in the secondary school.

Conclusions

School district structure and reorganization are not thoroughly understood. The majority of those interviewed supported the plan of reorganization, but felt the existing school districts could carry out a comprehensive educational plan if given the opportunity. On the basis of the questionnaire it was concluded that the existing districts in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, are far short of the goal, both economically and professionally, to meet present day standards of education.

Another conclusion showed that the people of Pottawatomie County, Kansas, are concerned for the education of their youth.

Further conclusions revealed that the people of Pottawatomie County, Kansas, are not adequately informed about reorganization. A great amount of effort is needed by interested lay personnel and professional educators to accomplish the informative program relative to reorganization. The objective to work toward while informing the patrons of the county about reorganization is to make the individual feel he is working to better "his" school and not "their" school.

It was further concluded that the people of Pottawatomie County, Kansas, held strong convictions about adequate education for their youth.

Many patrons expressed desires that a sincere effort should be made by the district officials to communicate with patrons concerning issues when their district was involved. Proper relationships within the newly reorganized districts will be necessary to complete the cycle of reorganization.

IMPLICATIONS

The State of Kansas, like many other states of the Union, has been confronted with reorganization for some time. To maintain our premise of a democratic society, the people of Kansas were to determine the best possible solution to accomplish reorganization of high school districts. One could not begin to list the many problems facing the existing school districts. Now with new territories, complete communities, new standards of education, and many other problems facing the people, the aspect of finding an acceptable solution to all parties involved seems to be an almost unsurmountable obstacle.

The basic starting point of any problem is finding an acceptable approach to solving the problem. When the general lay public is involved with something as important to them as the local high school one might rest assured that sentiment is going to be strongly voiced in one manner or another. Public relations activities which center in school district reorganization are designed to meet three basic needs: (1) the need to inform the people about the proposed plan or reorganization, (2) the need to gain the participation of citizens generally in the

planning and realization of the plan, and (3) the need to arouse the voters so that they will go to the polls and vote favorably on school district reorganization. There seems to be a tremendous breakdown of communications between the county planning board and the patrons of the newly proposed districts.

Reorganization is a new educational venture in Pottawatomie county. The writer feels a program is needed to inform the patrons about their district. A suggested program could be in the form of a periodic bulletin from the office of the Unified Superintendent informing the patrons as to the operation of the district, the objectives of the district, and proposals to reach the objectives. The people of the district need to be involved.

Schools are in many ways like other fields of endeavor; if the individual can be motivated and encouraged to take an active part in the program he will be an asset to the system. Without active involvement it is likely the only time the patron will be heard from is through the voicing of criticism of or about the school and its operation. The writer therefore feels an adult program should be considered by the various unified districts to further the cause of education by encouraging parent participation. Through this type of public relation procedure the people may become familiar with reorganization and understand to far better degree what the state legislature and local planning boards are striving to achieve.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING REORGANIZATION
OF HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Educational Opportunities Needed for all
Youth in Pottawatomie County

To adequately provide for and educate all the youth of Pottawatomie County, should be following services be available?

- | | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Opinion</u> |
|--|------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. Guidance and Counseling | | | No |
| 2. Full time health service | | | |
| 3. Industrial Arts | | | |
| 4. Vocational Agriculture | | | |
| 5. Accelerated program for gifted students | | | |
| 6. Speech Therapy | | | |
| 7. Home Economics | | | |
| 8. Vocal music | | | |
| 9. Instrumental music | | | |
| 10. Special program for slow learners | | | |
| 11. Driver training program | | | |
| 12. Should education of all students from kindergarten through grade twelve be maintained in all school districts? | | | |
| 13. Are grades K-12 being operated in your present district? | | | |
| 14. Is reorganization the best approach to providing a comprehensive education for all youth of your district? | | | |

Tax support of school districts

1. Is a broader tax base needed to support our schools?
2. Should all citizens in the district bear an equal share of the tax burden for support of the schools?
3. Is more state support needed for support of schools in Pottawatomie County?
4. Is more federal support needed for support of schools in Pottawatomie County?
5. Are you aware of the amount of money your present school district spends annually for education?

Reorganizational Reluctance

No
Yes No Opinion

1. Do you fear losing local control of your school due to reorganization?
2. Do you fear losing your district high school?
3. Do you fear reorganization will increase taxes?
4. Do you fear community school activities would be decreased due to reorganization?
5. Do you fear the transportation problems of reorganization?

Reorganizational Support

1. Would reorganization make possible better physical plants?
2. Would high quality teachers and administrators be available under reorganization?
3. Would reorganization make possible efficient use of the tax dollar for education?
4. Would reorganization make possible a varied curriculum for all the students of the district?

Existing School Districts

1. Do you understand the structure of your present school district?
2. Do you believe that most people are sufficiently informed to determine the school district organization structure needed to make possible the best education for all children in the district or county?
3. Do you understand the new reorganized school district structure?
4. Do you feel the present school district is adequate to properly educate the youth of the district?
5. Do you believe a small school of fifty students or less can educate as well as a school of 200 students or more?
6. Are you satisfied with the efforts of your present school district to educate your youth?
7. Do you believe teachers and administrators are as professionally dedicated in small schools as they are in larger schools?

Proposals for Consideration
Concerning Reorganization

Yes No Opinion

1. Should a program be started to inform the patrons as to the operation of the newly reorganized district?
2. Should an adult program be considered by the newly organized district to encourage parent participation in school functions?

A SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE IN POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY
KANSAS CONCERNING REORGANIZATION OF HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

RUSSELL LEROY HOUSH

B. A., Washburn University, 1961

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

The purposes of this survey were to explore attitudes and concepts held by residents living in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, relative to: (1) present school districts; (2) adequacy of education in public schools; (3) knowledge of reorganization of high school districts; and (4) suggestions and proposals people believe necessary to improve educational opportunities for the youth of this county.

For the survey, forty personal interviews were conducted and forty questionnaires were completed by patrons having high school students in the four newly reorganized school districts in Pottawatomie County, Kansas. Both urban and rural attitudes were reflected in the survey due to the use of the stratified sampling technique.

It was found that fifty per cent of the patrons interviewed feared the loss of local control with special concern about rising taxes, the school as a community activity center, and pupil transportation.

The survey revealed strong support in reorganized districts for better physical plants, a varied curriculum, and more efficient use of public funds.

Further findings showed that fifty-eight per cent of the people in the survey understood the present school district structure whereas only fifty per cent understood the newly reorganized district.

Sixty-two per cent of the patrons surveyed were quite satisfied with the present district's educational endeavors. Other findings from the survey brought to light contradictions in actual comprehension of

these endeavors. Ninety-two per cent of the people felt that they were inadequately informed to determine the best possible education for their youth.

Seventy-five per cent of those surveyed were aware of paying taxes to support the education system, but they did not know the amount of monies spent annually for education.

It was found that fifty-eight per cent of the survey population voiced a need for more state support while thirty per cent voiced a need for more federal support.

Equal educational opportunities with a varied program of school services was strongly supported in the survey.

Conclusions showed that existing districts in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, are far short of present day educational standards, that patrons are concerned about educational opportunities for their youth, that these same patrons are not adequately informed about reorganization, and that the patrons held strong convictions about educational opportunities for their high school students.