

ATTITUDES OF PATRONS, BOARD MEMBERS AND COUNTY
SUPERINTENDENTS TOWARD SCHOOL COOPERATION

by

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INTRODUCTION

The 1935 session of the Kansas legislature enacted a law which provided for the organization of cooperative school areas. The purpose of this law is to provide ways and means whereby two or more school districts might provide for the maintenance of one school jointly in order to reduce expenses and so to obtain certain educational advantages for their children without the disorganization of either district.

The cooperative school area law repealed the law which compelled the disorganization of a one-teacher school district which lies adjacent to a graded school district maintaining a high school if it should discontinue its school for three or more years (1). Consequently it is now possible for a one-teacher district to close its school and send its children to some other district for an indefinite period of time without being compelled to disorganize as was the case under the old law.

Dr. W. E. Sheffer (2), the sponsor of the cooperative movement in Kansas, had this to say about the cooperative plan:

"The plan should do the following things:

1. Afford educational opportunities as good as or better than those now offered in all schools involved, with

a reduction in costs.

2. Reduce present costs if the quality of education is not improved.

3. Improve the quality of education if the costs are to remain the same.

4. Require no expenditure for new school plant.

5. Make a maximum use of present facilities.

6. Not involve the disorganization of any school district.

7. Not render the return of the one-teacher school difficult or impossible.

8. Be legally possible."

Now that the cooperative area plan has been enacted, it is desirable to find how effectively it is working and the attitudes that are being formed over the state toward the cooperative school area law. The purpose of this study is to determine:

1. How well the county superintendents are complying with the new law and if their influence is of a positive or negative nature.

2. If the attitudes of the people in districts with closed schools are favorable or unfavorable.

3. How the children are being transported in districts with closed schools and what are the costs.

4. The amount of tuition and the method of paying.

5. What use is being made of the equipment of closed schools.

6. What use is being made of empty school buildings.

7. Why districts with low enrollments or low valuations do not cooperate.

It is the hope of the author that this study will serve as a guide to those districts that are thinking of the cooperative plan as the means of solving their local school problems and at the same time stimulate the county superintendents to a more sincere effort on their part.

The term "the new plan" refers to the cooperative school area plan.

The author considers a school as a cooperating school whenever it fails to have school in the home district but sends the pupils to another school and pays tuition and transportation.

In the following discussions the author has tried to give a true picture of the attitudes of the people involved.

ATTITUDES OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS
TOWARD SCHOOL COOPERATION

Section two of the cooperative school area law states that on or before the first of April each year the county superintendent of public instruction shall publish in the official county paper and supply to each member of district school boards a statement showing the possibilities for cooperation between districts in the county. This shall include all school districts whose school houses are not more than five miles apart and whose combined enrollment would not exceed 25 pupils, and shall show the difference between the present cost and the probable reduced cost to the districts cooperating (1).

It is easily seen from the above statement that the success of the cooperative movement rests in the hands of the county superintendents and depends upon how well they plan and advertise the movement in their counties.

The county superintendents should have published three statements by April first, 1937. To find their attitudes and reactions to the law, the author made 12 trips to interview county superintendents. The visits were so enjoyable and the information so interesting that twenty questionnaires were sent to county superintendents. The returns from the questionnaires along with the information gathered by personal interviews gave a study of 25

counties. This is approximately 25 per cent of the counties of Kansas, and as the counties were selected at random, the results should show a good cross-section of the state. The information gathered will be shown in the following tables.

Table 1. Have Published a Cooperative Plan for County.

Yes	No
21	4

It is very evident that most of the county superintendents have published a cooperative school area plan for their counties. These plans vary from one or two examples to a well worked out county plan.

One county superintendent said, "I did not publish a plan this year. I was just too busy and besides it would take a lot of work to list all the possibilities in my county. I am not in favor of the law as it now stands. It must be more clearly stated and several of the rough spots smoothed out. Every time I mention cooperation I seem to make enemies. I am certain the parents will want a safe method of transportation for their children."

It is easily seen from the above interview that although the county superintendent made a two-example plan the first year, the influence was negative rather than positive.

Another county superintendent said, "The plan will not work. It did nothing for the rural districts that they could not have done before (except those districts next to graded districts which maintained high schools). We had one district close last year but they paid another district to take their pupils and arranged their own transportation so did not operate under the cooperative plan. Every time I publish a cooperative plan or mention school cooperation I have the boards here to see me. It just makes trouble."

A county superintendent said, "I have never published a cooperative plan for my county. I am going to let someone else get his hands in it. I am not going to make such a statement until I am made to do so. The law is just a lot of theory. As long as I have to be elected I am not taking the responsibility."

To most of the county superintendents the cooperative school area law is just so much added work and they have no interest in the job to be done.

Table 2. Published a Cooperative Plan in 1937.

Yes	No
14	9

Not all county superintendents answered this question on the questionnaire, but it seems that a greater number are not publishing the report on cooperative possibilities and

those who are publishing a report are gradually reducing the number of examples.

A county superintendent said, "Last year I published a complete cooperative plan for my county but this year I published a careful explanation of the law."

Another county superintendent said, "I published just a few examples because it costs so much for legal notices. I aim to publish just enough each year to make the people inquire into the possibilities."

From the above interviews and Tables 2 and 3, one can see a definite trend toward fewer and shorter published cooperative plans.

Table 3. Number of Examples Published.

Number of Examples	2	3	4	5	13	16	20	28	30	Just Law
Number of Counties	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	2

The above table shows how the plans compared according to the number of examples published. Eleven out of 25 counties' superintendents left the question unanswered on the questionnaire.

Only seven county superintendents reported having made and published a complete cooperative plan for their counties.

Table 4. Does the Publishing of a Cooperative Plan Help Close Small Schools?

Yes	No
5	19

The county superintendents seem to agree that the publishing of a cooperative plan for the counties is of little or no value in getting the small schools closed. They think the law does nothing for most of the rural schools and only helps those that lie adjacent to a graded school district maintaining a high school. The county superintendents maintain that if the districts wish to close, they merely have to make arrangements to send their pupils to another school and pay tuition and transportation.

One county superintendent said, "There is nothing to the law. It is a lot of work for nothing. No one does anything with the material you publish".

Other comments were, "I believe the law is of little or no value", and "Persons realize I am following the law and that what I publish are only suggestions".

Table 5. Does the Publishing of the Cooperative Plan Make Enemies for You?

Yes	No
8	16

About one-third of the county superintendents feel that the publishing of the cooperative report hurts them politically. When one's job depends upon being elected every two years, he must be careful to keep his enemies few in number. Most county superintendents are opposed to the law. They seem to think it makes them bear the brunt of the criticism.

If advertising can convert people, it seems as if the county superintendents are missing a real opportunity by not publishing an extensive plan for the counties. They speak of the great cost of publishing a cooperative plan for the counties. If they would estimate the cost of inefficient small schools in their counties, they could easily see that a few dollars spent for printing is just a mite as compared with the thousands of dollars spent each year on the small one-teacher rural schools.

One county superintendent showed in his cooperative report that if 26 cooperative areas could be established, the patrons of the county would save approximately \$11,000.00 a year. It would seem as if a few dollars spent each year for a period of years would be a very good investment if in the end the people could be educated to see the possibilities of cooperation.

Like any good movement, the movement to eliminate schools has to pass through a period of ridicule and then

through a period of misrepresentation. At first the attitude of a great many people is that of hostility. Innumerable, and to them insurmountable, objections are given why cooperation "will never work with us". However, time and reflection change the opinions of many.

The thing to do is to sow the seeds, to inform the country people thoroughly as to the present conditions in the country schools, to inform them as to what cooperation really is, and then let them think the matter through for themselves.

From the foregoing evidence, it seems that the county superintendents are not doing their part as efficiently as they might. They should be sowing the seeds of cooperation by their annual cooperative reports, but in most cases the reports are ignored or are so poorly made that the final result is nothing.

ATTITUDES OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN DISTRICTS WHICH HAVE CLOSED THEIR SCHOOLS

There were 537 one-teacher school districts not operating schools during the year 1936-37 (3). When the cooperative law went into effect in 1935, we had only 331 one-teacher districts not operating schools (4). This shows a gain of over 100 closed one-teacher schools a year during the two-year period the law has been in operation. Of

these 206 schools which were closed or remained closed under the protection of the cooperative law, five are in Elk County.

It was the author's privilege to visit each of these districts and to interview the patrons on the question of how they liked to send their pupils to larger schools. Twenty-one patrons and board members were interviewed and the following table shows the attitudes of the people living in closed districts in Elk County.

Table 6. Attitudes of People Who Live in Closed Districts in Elk County.

Would like to have school remain closed under existing conditions.	Would like to have school reopen.
16	5

The table shows that 76.1 percent of the people interviewed favored the plan of sending the children to larger schools. The patrons feel that it is a real saving to the tax payers of the district and at the same time gives the children the advantages of being in larger groups. The people seem to be losing the idea that school is all book learning and that now social activities play a large part in the child's education. They think of the two-or-three-pupil school as being anti-social. They want their children to be in larger groups with better equipment and better teachers. Larger groups give the children oppor-

tunities to participate in games and social activities not possible in the smaller schools.

There are some who oppose the closing of schools because of the transportation problem. They wonder who is liable in case of an accident. In all cases in Elk County the pupils are transported by their parents. This seems to be the most satisfactory way. On the whole most of the patrons are satisfied, especially those who have children in school. The author looks for more rural districts to use the plan in Elk County the coming year.

Following are some of the opinions of patrons:

Mrs. J., "I was very much against giving up our school and I fought it until the last. We have been closed three years now and I would oppose the re-opening of our school. The children gain so much more from their books because they have other pupils with whom to compete. Also the children can take part in social events that were impossible in our old school."

Mr. R., "I am very much opposed to the transporting of the pupils. I believe the district can be held liable for any accidents that might occur. I see the advantages of the larger school and would be willing to leave the matter in the hands of the parents if the transportation problem could be solved. I resigned from the board over the question."

Mr. H., "I have a boy in the fifth grade and have sent him to town ever since he started to school. If our school should ever re-open, I would continue to send him to town school because he can associate with children his own age. He can take music and other special subjects and have a teacher who is better qualified than the average country teacher. There are five families in our district and when the question of having school was put to a vote last spring, the three families with children voted to send the pupils to town and the two families with no children wanted to re-open the school."

Mr. H., "I would like to re-open the school or have the district divided and joined to the two adjoining rural districts. I would like to cut the tax rate, and I think we can operate our own school cheaper than we can send to town. It is costing our district \$46.50 per month for tuition and transportation for five pupils."

To check the results from Elk County and to see if the attitudes were state-wide, the author sent 105 questionnaires to the county superintendents of Kansas requesting the names and addresses of the directors of closed schools. In reply to the questionnaire 102 names were received and 100 questionnaires were sent to the directors covering the questions of tuition, transportation, attitudes of children,

of parents and of board members and use of equipment. Forty-eight replies were received and the information gathered will be shown in the following tables.

Table 7. The Enrollments of Districts Not Operating Schools

Number of Pupils Enrolled	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Number of Closed Districts	4	9	9	10	4	2	3	1	3	-	1	1

One can see from this table that the greatest number of districts not operating schools are those with enrollments of fewer than five. The patrons have found that it is not economical or satisfactory to operate school when the enrollment drops to less than five. In 1934-35 we had 1010 districts operating schools with an average daily attendance of five or fewer (4). This shows that the field of cooperation is only scratched and much remains to be done. The inability of schools with an average daily attendance of fewer than four to get state aid will be another great factor in helping rid the state of the small inefficient schools.

Table 8. How Transportation Was Paid.

	Family Basis	Mileage Basis	Per Day Basis	Per Pupil per Month Basis
Number of Districts	15	5	6	15

The method of paying transportation seems to be governed by local conditions. If there are just a few pupils in school from one or two families, then transpor-

tation is usually paid on a family basis. If there are a number of pupils from the district going to high school, then the district usually pays so much per pupil per month and sends the pupils with the high school pupils. In a few cases we find districts paying five or six cents per mile one way and in other cases paying from fifteen to seventy-five cents per day per pupil. Each district will have to work out its own transportation problem along the lines that are most satisfactory and economical.

Table 9. How the Children Were Transported.

	Parents' Cars	Horseback or Buggy	Walked	School Bus	Private Car
Number of Districts	28	4	3	4	6

The parents were in most cases responsible for their child's safety in going to and from school. The boards of the districts seem to feel that it is better to pay the parents well for the transportation and let them assume the liability in case of an accident.

It is easily seen from the number going by school bus that this is a movement quite different from consolidation. One always expects to see the buses come in when the rural schools are eliminated. In this case we find the parents and the pupils attending to their own transportation problems with only a few cases depending on outside methods of transportation.

The cost of transportation on the family basis ranked from nothing to \$50.00 per month. Most families receive from eight to fifteen dollars per month. The cost of sending by bus or private car depended entirely upon local conditions.

Table 10. How Much Tuition Was Paid.

Dollars per Pupil Per Month	.75	1.80	2.80	3.80	4.80	5.80	6.80	7.80
Number of Districts	3	9	6	6	7	4	-	1

When the pupils are sent to other rural schools, the tuition rate is generally two dollars and 50 cents per pupil per month. If the pupils are sent to a graded school, the tuition rate is usually from three to five dollars per pupil per month.

Table 11. Other Methods of Paying Tuition.

Per Term	100.00	50.00	No Tuition	50-50 Prorated Basis
Number of Districts	3	2	1	2

Tuition is generally paid per child per month with only a few other plans in use.

Table 12. Attitudes of Children Who Live in Closed Districts.

Attitude	Number of Districts
Children like the new plan	55
Children dislike the new plan	3
Undecided	1

It is easily seen from the above table that the children like to go to the larger schools. They mention the following reasons for preferring the larger schools.

Table 15. Why the Children Like the New Plan.

Reasons	Number of Times Mentioned
More children to associate with	17
Other children in classes	12
More interest	9
More competition	7
Experienced teacher	6
Graded school	5
Music	4
Can ride	4
Better building and equipment	3
Better advantages	3
More convenient	1

Children do not like to have an inexperienced teacher each year. In the low valuation districts, there seems to be a practice of retaining a teacher only one year, and each new teacher is a beginner.

Students are no different from older people. They like to be where there is a crowd. They like to have a number of pupils in their classes as it makes the work easier and more interesting because each pupil has contributions to offer

for the benefit of the class. On the school grounds and in the schools pupils are most content with larger groups. It gives the pupils a chance to play games and put on programs that are impossible in a small school. A mother had this to say about interest due to small numbers: "We lived in town until March first of this year and I had no trouble in keeping my boy in school. He was very much interested and wanted to be there every day. Since we have moved to the farm and he is the only one in the class, he has become disinterested and wants to stay home. I have to force him to go to school."

Many mothers have the same trouble but are not able to discover the cause until too late. It is then that she wonders why her boy or girl does not want to go to high school. She sees that school has been an uninteresting experience that had to be endured for a certain period of years.

Pupils are like adults in that they like competition. When several pupils are in one class they are able to progress more rapidly because each is trying to outdo the other. The author can well remember the teacher who gave ribbons for knowing the multiplication tables; all members of the class wanted the blue one. The same feeling carries over into all school work; the better pupils want to excel.

The graded schools have in most cases better buildings with better equipment and a division of labor among teachers. Many parents want their children to have the benefit of music. Most graded schools have specialized music teachers who spend part or all of their time with the grade pupils. For those who desire music, it is better that they go to a graded school.

Table 14. Why the Children Do Not Like the New Plan.

Reason	Number of Times Mentioned
Too far to go	2
Do not like town school	1

In only three cases did the children dislike being sent to larger schools. In two of the cases the children did not like to go so far and in both cases the children walked. The other case did not like town school. It is very easy by actions and attitudes of other pupils to turn a newcomer against school especially if he is from the country. Much care and judgment must be used by the teacher in seeing that the children in districts which have closed their schools are very happy under the new arrangement. Of those who answered the question in the questionnaire, 89.1 per cent like the new plan.

Table 15. Attitudes of Parents Who Live in Districts Which Have Closed Their Schools.

Attitude	Number of Districts
Parents like the new plan	27
Parents dislike the new plan	7
Some do and some do not	3
Rather have own school	1

The parents are very much interested in having their children attend larger schools. They know that the future welfare of their children depends upon how well they are trained to live with and be a part of a group. One parent said, "We had only three pupils in our school this last year and as far as my daughter was concerned, she just wasted one year of her life."

Table 16. Why the Parents Like the New Plan.

Reasons	Number of Times Mentioned
Less cost	10
More competition	9
More interest	6
Better teachers	6
Better advantages	4
Graded School	2
Better school	2
Children make better progress	1
More convenient	1

Table 16. Concluded.

Culture for the children	1
Parents get to send pupils where they want them to go	1

The sending of pupils to other districts has cut the tax rate in districts with low valuations and in districts with low school enrollments has reduced school costs from 25 per cent to 50 per cent. The question of costs leads the list of reasons why parents like the plan but is closely followed by reasons that pertain to the child's welfare. It is very evident that parents like to have their children in schools with good teachers and enough pupils to have an interesting school with plenty of competition among the pupils.

Table 17. Why the Parents Did Not Like the New Plan.

Reasons	Number of Times Mentioned
Fear of being taken into another district	1
Too far to go	5
Loss of time to father	1
Too expensive	1
Do not like town school	1

Many rural people think they must operate their schools or they will lose their districts. Last fall a petition was circulated in a near-by district to see if the patrons wanted to close the school. Twenty patrons voted against

closing and four for closing. The people who voted against closing thought if they closed their school they would lose their district.

The people who said "too far to go" were divided into three groups. The first group of two districts had their pupils walk to school. The second group of two districts were sincere in their beliefs. The third group or one district disliked the new plan because the only family with children lived next to the schoolhouse and it seemed foolish to go three miles to school when there is a schoolhouse in the yard.

The man who said the parents of his district did not like the new plan because it was too expensive was probably voicing his own opinion as the district transported and paid tuition for five pupils for \$270.00 for the year. One cannot see how a rural school could operate for less than that amount.

Table 18. Attitudes of Board Members Who Live in Closed Districts.

Attitudes	Number of Districts
Board members like the new plan	31
Board members dislike the new plan	7
Rather have own school	1

From the above table, one concludes that most of the board members favor the new plan. One board member said,

"We tried having school last year with thres pupils but found it did not pay. Our students were not interested in school and did not make the proper progress. This year we are sending our pupils to another school, and we like the arrangement very much."

Table 19. Why Board Members Liked the New Plan.

Reasons	Number of Times Mentioned
Less Cost	21
Better Schools	9
More Children to associate with	3
Nine Months School for less than Eight Months of School	1
Less Worry	2
School Site Condemned	1
Schoolhouse Burned	1
No Equipment to Buy	1

The reduction of school expenditures seems to be the main reason why board members like the new plan. The following examples show how economically a district can operate under the new plan:

District X. Elk County.

School open 1935-36. Valuation \$91,669.00, Tax Levy 5.1 Mills. Enrollment 4.

School closed 1936-37. Valuation \$89,050.00, Tax Levy 3.7 Mills. Enrollment 6. All pupils live less than two miles from new schools.

District Y. Elk County
 School closed 1936-37 Valuation \$44,505.00, Tax
 levy 3.2 mills, transporting 2 pupils.

Two board members said it was less worry to operate under the new plan. They had so little money to spend that it was always a problem as to how they were going to operate their schools. Now by sending the pupils to other schools they have enough money to operate at a reduced tax rate.

Nine board members said they liked the new plan because it gave their children better schools to attend. They believed larger numbers made a better school possible.

One board member liked to get nine months of schooling for his children for less than the cost of eight months of school in the home district.

Two districts liked the new plan because it solved a pressing problem for them; one district's school site was condemned and the other's building burned. In both cases the boards liked sending the children to other schools and they doubted if they would reopen their own schools.

Table 20. Why Board Members Dislike the New Plan.

Reasons	Number of Times Mentioned
Too expensive	2
Too far to go	2
Divides children	1
Hard to find transportation	1

Table 20. Concluded.

Poor transportation	1
Afraid of consolidation	1

In each of the two districts where the boards say the new plan is too expensive, they are operating school for about 50 percent of what they spent before the schools were closed. It seems that perhaps a little personal feeling has entered into their judgment.

The two board members who said "too far to go" had their children walk to the new schools.

One board member said that if proper transportation could be arranged they would like the new plan fine; as it was they did not like the way their transportation problem was worked out and that they would try to remedy it at the next annual meeting.

The people who live in districts with closed schools are not using their own equipment as it should be used. In most of the closed districts, the playground equipment and the books are left in the schoolhouses and are not taken to the schools the children attend. The school work could be much enriched if the cooperating schools would utilize the equipment of both schools. It would be hard to estimate the value of the equipment that is standing idle due to the closing of the rural schools.

The following tables will give some idea as to the general practices in the districts with closed schools.

Table 21. The Use of the Library Books in Districts with Closed Schools.

	Left in Old Building	Taken to New School
Number of Districts	43	-

Table 22. The Use of Maps and Globes in Districts with Closed Schools.

	Left in Old Building	Taken to New School
Number of Districts	42	1

Table 23. The Use of Playground Equipment in Districts with Closed Schools.

	Left at Own School	Taken to New School
Number of Districts	43	-

Table 24. The Use of School Buildings in Districts with Closed Schools.

Vacant	Used for Other Purposes
39	4

In only four districts are the people using their school buildings. One district uses their building for a church. Another for a community house and the other two districts have given the use of their buildings to the Four-H Clubs.

The people who live in districts which are not operating schools are missing a great opportunity by not using

their school buildings as community centers. There are certain organizations which have for a purpose the betterment of farm conditions. These organizations would welcome the opportunity to use these buildings. The Farm Bureau and the 4-H Clubs are such organizations that help the rural people solve their problems.

Table 25. Will Continue the New Plan Next Year.

	Yes	No	To Be Decided
Number of Districts	51	1	6

From the foregoing information one can see that the new plan is favored by the majority of the people living in districts which have closed their schools. The children like the new plan because it puts them in schools with enough pupils to be interesting and gives them a chance to enjoy the games played by normal children. The children like to have the advantage of better teachers and better buildings with more and better equipment. All the above items help train the children to find their places in society and then take those places. In only three districts did the children dislike the new plan. Two of the districts made their pupils walk to school, and the pupils thought the distance too far. In one district the pupil did not like town school.

A great majority of the parents like the new plan be-

cause it costs less and at the same time puts their children in larger schools with better teachers and more adequate equipment. They want their children to attend schools that are interesting and which stimulate the pupils to seek more education. The parents feel that it takes competition to bring out the best qualities in children.

A few of the parents disliked the new plan because some had the fear that their districts would be disorganized. Others thought it required the pupils to go too far to school. A few complained that the new plan cost too much and required too much of the parents' time in transporting the pupils.

A majority of the board members liked the new plan because it reduced the expenses of operating school. They point out that their pupils are placed in better schools with more children to associate with. When a rural school cooperates with a graded school, the board members say they get nine months of school for less cost than eight months of school. Two of the board members were opposed to the new plan because it was too expensive. (The author has shown that in both cases they are operating under the co-operative plan for less than it cost to operate the district school.) Others said it was too far for the children to go and the transportation problem was not yet

worked out satisfactorily.

Operation under the cooperative plan seems to be very satisfactory, and the only way one can judge the merits of the cooperative plan is to go into districts which are co-operating and visit the people who are taking part in the cooperation movement first hand. The parents will give vivid accounts of how much better their children like school under the new plan. The board members will tell how much cheaper operation under the new plan is in comparison with the cost of operating the district school. The co-operative movement will continue to spread as it becomes better known. One county superintendent told the author that she did not think that many of the schools in her county would cooperate unless economic conditions got worse. This year in that same county there are five more schools cooperating and three others thinking about the plan. This shows that the cooperative movement has just started. It is very evident, furthermore, that the co-operative movement will be aided by the state school equalization law.

In view of the facts gathered in this study, the author sees no reason why any school district should operate a school with an enrollment of fewer than five or with a valuation of less than \$100,000.

ATTITUDES OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN RURAL DISTRICTS
WHICH SHOULD CLOSE THEIR SCHOOLS

In Elk County there are 76 school districts. Of the 76, 20 have valuations of less than \$100,000.00. There are nine schools operating with an average daily attendance of five or less, and six (one closed March 1) schools closed and transporting pupils to other schools (if they have pupils)*.

From the above facts it can be readily seen that Elk County is in need of school district reorganization. Of the schools closed only two have valuations of less than \$100,000.00. This shows that the low valuation districts are slow to give up their schools. With this thought in mind the author proposed five possible cooperative areas. The districts selected for the areas were districts with either low enrollments or low valuations. The author went into the proposed districts and suggested cooperation to get the people to express their ideas and attitudes toward the new plan. The purpose was to find why the districts were not using the cooperative plan. Fifty-four personal interviews were made and only four people refused to state their opinions of the plan. The following table shows

* Communication from Mrs. Opal Green, county superintendent, May 7, 1937, Howard, Kansas.

their attitudes on the question of a change in rural school organization.

Table 26. Is a Change Necessary in Rural School Organization?

Yes	No
35	15

One can see that the majority of the people feel as if some change is necessary in the rural school organization. Some feel that their taxes are too high and that a redistricting should be planned in such a manner as to give each district an enrollment and valuation large enough to operate a school on a moderate tax levy. This would mean fewer schools and larger districts.

Some people maintain that it is not economical to operate a school with a small enrollment and that it is not fair to the children to have to attend a school where the number of pupils is so small that they cannot enjoy the privileges of normal children. This group wants to transport their children to larger schools so the children can be in schools that are capable of creating and holding their interests.

Another group is made up of land owners who have educated their children or have none to educate. These people can see the advantages of the larger school but are

afraid to take part in any school movement for fear their taxes will be raised.

A third class of people is those who are very ignorant. They are not able to give any reasons why they want their district to remain as it is. They cannot reason a problem through but reach an early conclusion and then do not seek the truth. They feel as if everyone is working against them and that they must protect themselves and the best way is to oppose any change in the existing order. One old couple went to see the county superintendent about the matter of school cooperation. They thought if they closed their school, their district would be disorganized. The county superintendent read the law to them, but they would not believe what they heard and before they left the office told the county superintendent they knew she wanted to do the right thing but that she was wrong about the cooperative school law. This shows that these people will not accept the truth when it is presented and must be converted by watching the cooperative plan work in some nearby district.

The author found some of the people very willing to try the plan and others very much opposed. Some went so far as to make the author their personal enemy. The information in the following pages will give the history of the

cooperative areas and the attitudes of a few of the people involved.

Cooperative Area 1	{	School District E Rural
	{	School District F Graded School

School district E has a valuation of \$97,000.00 with a tax levy of six mills. The schoolhouse is located on an all-weather road. It had an average daily attendance of three this year. The following is a report of the statements of the patrons about the proposed plan.

Mr. H. is in favor of closing the small rural schools. His daughter goes to the district school, and he said there were not enough pupils to have an interesting school. He said they could not play games or put on a program. He is willing and believes they will send their children to school F next year.

Mr. P., "We have no children in school now, but we are interested in having the children of others get a good education. We have lived here eight years and the largest enrollment we have had was seven. We think they should close the school and send the pupils to school F. They do not have enough competition to do well in so small a school."

The people of district E seem to favor the closing of their school and transporting of the pupils to school F. They believe it will cut down their taxes and at the same

time put their children in larger and better equipped schools.

	{ School District G Rural School
Cooperative Area 2	{ School District H Graded School
	{ School District I Rural School

School district G has a valuation of \$212,000.00 and a tax levy of 3.5 mills. It had an enrollment of six pupils this year and has prospects of only five next year. Their school cost them \$620.00 this year. If they close and send three pupils to school H and two children to school I, they can operate for \$411.00 next year thus saving the district \$209.00. The schoolhouse is less than two miles from school F and is located on an all weather road.

The following paragraphs give the expressed attitudes of the patrons on school cooperation.

Mrs. W., "My children are through school. They went to the eighth grade at school H and liked it very much. We voted on the question of sending the pupils to school H last year, but it was voted down. I don't see why we keep school in our district because we have only six pupils and school cannot be very interesting."

Mr. H., "I would have liked to send my boy who is in the eighth grade this year to school H. We voted on the question of sending the children to school H last year, but

the proposal did not carry. I was very much disappointed and because I was on the school board I did not send him to school H. I would be in favor of closing our school and sending the pupils to school H."

Mr. F., "I voted against the proposition last spring because I believe that if we close our school we will be joined on to district H and we cannot pay the high taxes. We have no children and are interested most in our taxes."

Mr. F., "I was opposed to sending the children to school H. It would mean the moving of the community center out of the district. We would lose our literary and community clubs. I have no children in school and am only a renter so do not have to worry about the taxes."

Mrs. D., "I want the school to stay open. I do not want to send my boy to school H as there is too much devilment going on in town. I do not believe my boy will go to high school as he is not interested in school."

Mrs. D., "We were very much disappointed when they voted to keep the school open. We wanted to send our boy to school H. We do not have enough pupils to have an interesting school. Three of the five families who have children of school age voted to send the pupils to school H. One family was opposed, and the other family didn't care what the patrons did. All the landowners voted against closing the school because they thought it would raise

their taxes."

Mrs. A., "I am very sorry our school did not close last year. I wanted our girl to go to school H so she could be with boys and girls her own age. She is the only girl in our school."

One can readily see from the above interviews that the people are divided on the question. Most of the families with children want their children in larger schools with larger groups of children.

The property owners are afraid of an increased tax rate. School H has a very high tax rate and they are afraid they are being baited with something good so they can be led into the slaughter. The landowners want to reduce taxes as much as possible, and the ones who are trying to keep the school open now are the ones who come to the annual meeting each year with one sole object in view to keep the budget as low as possible.

The author felt very much encouraged over this area until a few weeks ago when some of the people started a campaign of misrepresentation and the people do not know whom or what to believe.

Cooperative Area 3	{	School District X Rural School
		School District Y Rural School

District X has a valuation of \$71,000.00 and a tax

levy of six mills. They will have only five pupils next year.

District Y has a valuation of \$84,000.00 with a tax levy of 2.4 mills and an enrollment of 12 pupils.

Both schools have low valuations and it would be worthwhile for both if district X would transport their pupils to district Y. The schoolhouses are only two and one-fourth miles apart. The schools were once together, but there were too many children for the building and so the district had to be divided. There are only five families in district X.

The following interviews show how the people in district X feel toward the plan.

Mrs. M., "It would be too far to send the small children, and the roads are very bad. I would like to see something done so our children could have a normal education. We do not have enough pupils to play ordinary games, let alone put on a program."

Mr. R., "I am not in favor of sending the children to school Y. The people of the districts have not been very friendly, and it will be of no use to talk of sending our children to district Y. The road is very bad, and in the end we would not be saving anything."

Mr. A. (Moved into the district this spring.), "We

would like very much to have our children attend a larger school. The smallest daughter has always been alone in her grade." They moved from a district school with 14 pupils to one with five pupils. They did not like the change. They would be glad to send their children to school Y. It would mean more competition and more interest for their children.

The people in district Y show the following attitudes:

Mr. D., "We would like to join with district X in supporting a school, but the folks in district X will not send their children to our school. We could hire a better teacher, and there would be more competition and more interest in school."

Mr. T., "I would like to see district X send their pupils to our school. It would give their children a more interesting school and would make our school better. Last year I had a hard time to get the two schools to hold their pie suppers and Christmas tree together. The people of the two communities do not get along together. I believe through a few community meetings such as we have had this year we may be able to break down this feeling."

Mr. L., "I would like very much to see district X send their children to our school. We could hire a better teacher and have a much better school."

We can see from the above interviews that school district Y would be willing to cooperate with school district X but that a feeling of jealousy has kept the two districts from enjoying a better school at a reduced cost. This feeling of jealousy has been carried down ever since the district was divided.

School district X would rather send their children to school X and would but for the distance. Both schools have to hire a beginner for a teacher each year and therefore only serve as places to gain experience on a low salary.

Until the feeling of jealousy is broken down, the author sees no hope for cooperation between the districts. From appearances they have made a start to break down this feeling by holding some of their community meetings together.

Cooperative Area 4 { School District J Rural School
 { School District K Graded School

School district J has a valuation of \$76,000.00 with a tax levy of six mills. They will have only three pupils for next year. The schoolhouses are two and one-fourth miles apart and an all weather road connects the two. The cooperation would reduce their tax levy to three mills.

This is the way the patrons feel about the plan:

Mr. H., "We are opposed to closing the school. If we

are closed for a few years we will be joined to school H, and our taxes will be much higher. We can see our children from the time they leave school until they get home. We would not like to send them to school H even though I know they would receive much better schooling there."

Mrs. H., "I want to send my granddaughters to school H. The oldest will be in high school and the youngest in the seventh grade. Our school has been a good school as far as books were concerned but lacked in everything else. Next year we will have only three pupils and my granddaughter will be the only girl. Our valuation is low and our tax levy high. I think we should close and send to school H. I am going to send my granddaughter to school H regardless of the decision at the annual meeting."

Mr. C., "I am opposed to closing the school. Our boy did right well this year. I think a pupil can do better when he is the only one in the grade as the teacher can spend more time with him. My boy walks to school and if they would close, it would take my time to transport him. You probably have a better school and better teachers at school H, but a fellow cannot afford to transport for the money they are offering."

Mr. D., "We lived in town until February first and our boy attended school H. We would like to have him go back

to school H. He seemed to lose interest when we moved to the country, and we had to make him go to school. I would be glad to have him ride with some high school student that comes this way."

In two weeks time Mr. D. had been so misinformed that he said this, "I have changed my mind about the school closing. I just bought my place, and I cannot afford to have the taxes go sky high. I am afraid if we close for a few years, we will be joined on to district H and our taxes will be raised."

The conflict in this district is warm with the people about evenly divided. The matter is to be settled at the annual meeting. They have had a very hard time making both ends meet in the past, and as teachers wages increase, the quality of their teachers will decrease.

There are two reasons given for not cooperating. The first reason is fear of losing their district. They believe the author is working for school H and is not presenting true facts. They have a feeling that they are being baited.

The second reason is that two of the parents think they should be paid the same amount in transportation and tuition as it would take to run the school. It may take a few years to teach the district the economy and value of

cooperating.

Cooperative Area 5	{	School District S Rural School
	{	School District H Graded School

School district S has a valuation of \$163,000.00 with a tax levy of 3.1 mills. It had only three pupils last year and will have only two pupils next year.

They talked about closing this year but a petition was circulated and the patrons voted 20 to four to keep the school open. It was their opinion that if the school was closed, they would lose their district and, as the railroad paid 51 per cent of their taxes, they were opposed to closing.

The patrons have the following attitudes toward the plan:

Mr. E., "We will have to do something to our rural school organization. I am not in favor of forcing this plan on the parents. We kept a good teacher in our school when my children were in school, and now I feel like it is up to the parents to decide if they want their children to go to other schools. The plan would cut our school tax 50 per cent. I am in favor of the cooperative plan if the parents are satisfied."

Mr. A., "I do not like to have my boy go to a small school. He was the only small child in the school last year and they certainly made a baby out of him. I was

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against the proposition of closing school last year in the middle of the term as our teacher would have been out of a job and with no chance to get one until the next year. It looks as if we might agree upon a better plan than we are now using, but the transportation problem will have to be solved if we do."

Mr. H., "We have offered the parents the opportunity of sending their children to other schools at the expense of the district and if they refuse, I see no reason why we should not reduce the budget and give the tax payers the benefit of the savings that could be made if the children were transported by hiring an inexperienced, cheap teacher."

In the above district there are three trends of thought: First, the man who thinks that since they provided well for his children, they should do the same for other children; Second, the parents who are debating the question of sending their children to larger schools; Third, the tax payers who are wanting the tax burden reduced. The question of cooperation is to be voted upon at the annual meeting, and it is impossible to predict the outcome.

The following general trends of thought can be seen in all the proposed areas:

First, the fear of being taken into a different dis-

trict.

Second, ignorance of the cooperative school area law.

Third, finding reliable transportation.

Fourth, jealousy between districts.

Perhaps one of the best movements to get the small rural schools to close is to allow the brothers and sisters of high school pupils to go to town grade school without the payment of tuition. It will take a long time and be a slow process to eliminate the schools with valuations of \$100,000.00 or less or those with low enrollments, but the author believes the cooperative movement is a step in the right direction.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The influence of the county superintendents is necessary for the success of the cooperative plan. In the past their influence has been of a passive or negative nature.

2. Each county superintendent should prepare a list of all the districts of the county that are sending their pupils to other schools. This list should show the actual costs of operating under the new plan. The list would then be sent to all board members in the county.

3. The author suggests an amendment to the cooperative school area law which would require the county superinten-

dents to file with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction a copy of each annual cooperative report. Failure to do so would prohibit the county superintendents from drawing their salaries.

4. Among those answering the question in the questionnaire, 89.1 per cent reported that children living in districts with closed schools liked to attend larger schools because they can be in larger groups, which offer more competition and interest.

5. That the parents liked the new plan because it reduced school costs and put the children in larger schools was the opinion of 71 per cent of those answering the question in the questionnaires.

6. Of those answering the question in the questionnaire, 79.4 per cent reported that the board members living in districts with closed schools favored the cooperative plan because it reduced the cost of education in their districts.

7. Cooperating districts are not using their equipment to best advantage. The schools that transport their pupils in most cases leave their equipment in the old school buildings.

8. The parents in most cases furnish the transportation for their children. The cost ranged from \$3.00 to \$15.00 per family per month.

9. Tuition is usually paid on a per pupil per month basis. The common tuition rate is \$2.50 per pupil per month in rural districts and \$3.00 to \$5.00 per pupil per month in graded schools.

10. Districts which are not operating schools are not making any use of their school buildings.

11. Districts with low valuations or low enrollments are not cooperating because of fear of losing their districts, ignorance of the cooperative school law, trouble of finding reliable transportation, and jealousy between districts.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire Sent to County Superintendents

Have you ever published a cooperative school area plan for your county? Yes No 19__ 19__ 19__.

Did you publish a cooperative plan this year? Yes No

If so, how many examples did you publish? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12.

Did you publish all the possibilities in your county? Yes No

Do you think the publishing of this report helps get the smaller schools closed? Yes No

Does the publishing of this report make enemies for you? Yes No

Remarks:

Questionnaire Sent to School Board Directors

1. Transportation

1. How many pupils were transported and how much did the transportation cost?
2. Did you pay your transportation on a mileage basis? If so, how much per mile?
- Did you pay your transportation on a mileage basis? If so, how much per pupil?
3. What other methods were used in paying transportation?
4. How were the pupils transported:
By parents _____
By school bus _____
What other methods of transportation were used?

2. Tuition

1. How much tuition did you pay?
2. Did you pay tuition in a lump sum?
3. Did you pay so much per child per month? If so, how much per pupil per month?
4. Did you use another method of paying tuition? If so, what was the method?

3. Attitudes

1. Do the children like the new plan?
 - a. Why do they like it?
 - b. Why do they dislike it?
2. Do the parents like the new plan?

- a. Why do they like it?
- b. Why do they dislike it?
- 3. Do the school board members like the new plan?
 - a. Why do they like it?
 - b. Why do they dislike it?
- 4. Are you using this plan during the school year 1936-37. If not, why not?

4. Equipment

- 1. Library Books
 - a. Left in your own building.
 - b. Taken to the school which the pupils attended.
- 2. What did you do with the globes and maps of your school?
- 3. What did you do with the playground equipment?
- 4. What use are you making of your school building?