

A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE IN RICHARDSON
COUNTY NEBRASKA CONCERNING REORGANIZATION
OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED	1
The Problem	1
Statement of the problem	1
Importance of the study	2
Definitions of Terms Used	3
Reorganization	3
Attitudes	4
Institutionalization	5
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	6
School District Structure Specifications	7
The Importance of Sociological Factors	9
Understanding Reorganization and its Implications	13
Greater Educational Opportunities Demanded	15
Regulations Concerning Reorganization	18
Accepting the Responsibility to Reorganize	22
Summary of the Literature	25
III. METHOD OF PROCEDURE AND LIMITATIONS	28
Defining the Population	28
Western half of County	28
Population of the Report	29
Limitations	29
Concentration of Population	29

CHAPTER	PAGE
IV. THE STUDY	30
Existing Structure of School Districts	30
Tax Support of Schools	34
Educational Opportunities Needed in Relation to all the Youth of Richardson County	37
Reorganization Reluctance	40
Reorganization Support	42
Proposals for Consideration	44
V. THE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	49
The Summary	49
The Conclusions	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY	53
APPENDIX	57

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Existing Structure of School Districts	32
II. Tax Support of Schools	35
III. Educational Opportunities Needed in Relation to all the Youth of Richardson County	38
IV. Reorganization Reluctance	41
V. Reorganization Support	43
VI. Proposals for Consideration	45

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Reorganization of school districts in Richardson county is moving very slowly. It is apparent that there has been no effective leadership in this movement and efforts to extensively reorganize have not been successful. Reorganization has occurred in some areas of the county but not to the extent that any real effort has been made to improve the organizational structure of the school districts.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. Reorganization of school districts in Richardson county is a serious problem. As evidenced in the past, reorganization has been attempted without any real effort to understand the true meaning of reorganization and its effect on the improvement of education. Although the people of Richardson county are highly concerned about the caliber of schools, no one has thus far assumed the responsibility to improve the schools through a concentrated program of reorganization.

The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes and the understandings of the people of Richardson county, Nebraska relative to: (1) the present school district

structure, (2) the adequacy of an education in the public schools, (3) their knowledge about reorganization of school districts, and (4) suggestions and proposals believed necessary to improve the educational opportunities for the youth in Richardson county.

Importance of the study. The people within the state of Nebraska are slow to reorganize school districts. At one time, Richardson county had a total of 105 school districts. During the 1964-1965 school year, thirty-eight school districts were in operation. An additional twelve school districts in the county continued to retain their identity and educate their children in other districts through arrangement of contract agreements. A total of fifty districts were still identifiable in Richardson county.

The total number of school districts in an area is not important. The size and population of the area are important and should be considered in organizational structure. To add to the importance of this study, Richardson county is eighteen miles wide and averages thirty-one miles long and is a small enough area to warrant a smaller number of school districts. The area is not heavily populated. The greatest concentration of people is in Falls City, with a population of about five thousand. The population of the entire county is about fifteen thousand.

Reorganization has been proved worthwhile in other areas of the United States and it is considered possible that the same advantages can be made possible in Richardson county.

There is a marked shift in the population in Nebraska from rural to urban areas. Extension and expansion of the school programs and improved transportation and communication facilities are factors which make reorganization of school districts imperative.¹ Programs of school reorganization should be preceded by a careful study of educational needs and of the resources available for support. In most instances, reorganization has been preceded by studies, plans, and recommendations of dedicated personnel.²

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Reorganization. Reorganization of school districts is a process whereby two or more districts are formed into one. Basically, reorganization centralizes administrative control and maintains schools where location is justified. The primary purpose of reorganization of school districts

¹Melvin W. Farley, "A Study of Local, Lay, and Educational Leadership in School District Reorganization," Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations, Doctor's Thesis (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 1953, pp. 245-250.

²National Commission on School District Reorganization, Your School District, (Washington, D.C.: Department of Rural Education, 1948), p. 116.

is to improve efficiency in the operation of schools and to equalize educational opportunities for all children.

One authority suggests that reorganization is synonymous with consolidation. Both terms refer to a change in district structure whereby two or more districts are joined together into a single unit.³ For the purposes of this study, the word consolidation will not be used.

Attitudes. An attitude is a relatively constant tendency to act in certain directions and in accordance with certain mental patterns. Attitudes may be primarily intellectual and based on knowledge and understanding or emotional and based on appreciation.⁴

An attempt was made in this study to measure what people know about school districts and reorganization of school districts and not what they should know. With each interview, this understanding was stressed and each person interviewed was instructed to express his own thoughts and opinions. In the measurement of attitudes, the final product is really a measurement of opinions.

³Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education, (New York: McGraw-Hill and Company, Inc., 1945, pp. 138 and 342.

⁴William H. Burton, The Guidance of Learning Activities, (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, Inc., 1962), p. 98.

Opinions, therefore, are expressed attitudes, according to Remmers.⁵

Institutionalization. Organizations within communities are sometimes valued for their own sake and apart from any instrumental service. When a school is institutionalized, its perpetuation is seen as an end in itself and not as a means. A school may be regarded as more than a place to learn and in some instances, may be considered personal property by extremely loyal citizens.⁶

⁵H. H. Remmers, Introduction to Opinion and Attitude Measurement, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 4.

⁶Robert R. Alford, "School District Reorganization and Community Integration," Harvard Education Review, number 4, 30:350, Fall, 1960.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The organization and reorganization of school districts has been going on since the establishment of the first town schools in colonial New England. Recommendations for enlarging administrative units originated about a hundred years ago, but little action resulted. The National Education Association's first resolution on the problem was in 1914 when it endorsed the plan of a larger unit in school organization and administration as a means of promoting greater economy and efficiency. Many states have completed programs of reorganization successfully.¹

School district organization has never been regarded as something that should not be changed. When a district has not been able to do the job for which it was created, it has been modified.² Our American life is an ever-changing process and education is an integral part of our make-up. Therefore to keep in tune with ourselves, it is

¹Calvin Greider, Truman Pierce, and William Rosenstengel, Public School Administration, (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1961), p. 5.

²American Association of School Administrators, The Point of Beginning: The Local School District (Study on School District Reorganization, Washington, D.C.: Department of the National Education Association, 1958), p. 16.

necessary to change those things which will best serve mankind. Reorganization or some other plan of sharing the costs of education is a must if education is to keep pace with the changing times.³

A trend in reorganization is toward bigger school districts so that better educational opportunities may be realized for all students and not just a select few. It appears that within the next decade, the number of school districts in the nation will not exceed 15,000. School authorities believe that there have been too many school districts and that reorganization has long been in order.⁴

I. SCHOOL DISTRICT STRUCTURE SPECIFICATIONS

There is really no inherent value in the size of a school district, however school districts with a pupil population of twelve hundred to two thousand or more pupils provide better school opportunities and greater economy of operation.⁵ It is generally agreed among students of school administration that a school district should be large enough

³Roald R. Campbell, and Freeman H. Vaughn, "Reorganization Revisited," Illinois Education Association, 26:251, February, 1964.

⁴Howard A. Dawson, "The Reorganization Story Throughout the Country," NEA Journal, 48:11, November, 1959.

⁵John G. Shultz, "Fewer, Bigger, Better," NEA Journal, 48:13, November, 1959.

to employ at least forty teachers and enrol twelve hundred pupils in grades one through twelve. In districts that employ eight to ten teachers with approximately fifty students per class in a four year high school, there would be little opportunity to offer advanced courses or accelerated programs that challenge gifted pupils and develop their full potential. Remedial work that corrects deficiencies and helps slow learners over difficult places would also be difficult and expensive. In the smaller school, there would be very few, and in many cases, no course offerings to meet special interests and to develop unique abilities of students that could be expected in a school that served children from every level and segment of community life.⁶ Such services as guidance and counseling, library, health care and needed supervisory personnel are part of the products of reorganization. Reorganization should provide facilities that may be used with greater efficiency. The working conditions for both teacher and pupil should be more satisfactory.

There are many reasons for the growing move toward reorganization. A larger district can attract a higher quality of administration, and more competent supervisors

⁶American Association of School Administrators, op. cit., p. 6.

and teachers. Reorganization can increase provisions to care for individual differences. It should provide better counseling services, more library and audio-visual facilities, and a wider range of education tools.⁷ Reorganization should provide for better educational opportunity and more competent administrators and teachers.⁸ The public schools need a staff which is adequately prepared in the subjects taught and facilities which will allow the school to adjust its instruction to the individual student.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS

If educational opportunity for every child is desired, there is need to help children and their families to understand the role of education in their lives and society as a whole and to provide services for the most complete education possible.⁹ In planning for reorganization, school leaders, such as county superintendents and school administrators, must come to see the importance of the feelings and attitudes of people with respect to any part of the

⁷Walter C. Cocking, "School District Reorganization," Overview, 2:62, June, 1961.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Francis Keppel, "Want Our Schools to Improve with a Great Restless and Compelling Urge," Education Digest, 29:5, September, 1963.

school operation.¹⁰ Due to religious, fraternal, and social ties, the citizens of a particular community will maintain allegiance to a particular area. Frequently state and county lines help to define allegiance as do trade-centers and institutionalized schools. Factors affecting reorganization are closely related to sociological ties.¹¹

Alford found that cooperation or rivalries between Ohio neighborhoods or communities and what the change would mean to the life of the communities ranked much higher than advantages or disadvantages of expanded service to pupils as factors most affecting decisions of the people on school reorganization.¹² Other major areas hampering school district reorganization programs include aversion to change, opposition by rural districts to urban districts, fear of losing local control of the school and concern over the location of the school. Financial, political, legal, and sociological factors affect school district reorganization programs considerably. In general, existing school finance programs do more to retard reorganization than to encourage it. In Indiana, it has been concluded that no single piece

¹⁰Roald F. Campbell, "Feelings Are Facts in School District Reorganization," Nation's Schools, 57:58, March, 1956.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Robert R. Alford, "School District Reorganization and Community Integration," Harvard Education Review, number 4, 30:350, Fall, 1960.

of legislation would likely solve organizational problems. Much legislation will be necessary to consummate a detailed organizational program in any area.¹³

The effective school district makes it possible to bring children and adults together in groups that can participate easily and naturally in the educational program. Failure to understand community life and its social significance frequently leads to misconceptions as to desirable school district organization.

One of the chief reasons for disappointing results seems to have been the failure to plan and carry on a good public relations program in the community and throughout the county where reorganization was attempted. Generally, public relations activities which enter in school district reorganization are designed to meet three basic needs: (1) to inform the people about the proposed plan or reorganization, (2) to gain the participation of the citizens generally in the planning and realization of the plan, and (3) to arouse the voters so that they will go to the polls and vote favorably on school district reorganization.¹⁴

¹³Burton W. Kreitlow, "Organizational Patterns: Local School Districts," Review of Educational Research, 31:380, October, 1961.

¹⁴Leslie L. Chisholm, School District Reorganization (University of Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, 1957, p. 57).

Many people resist the reorganization of school districts and support one-teacher schools because they fear the destruction of neighborhood centers or of a community life which does not exist in any real sense and probably never did. Those who oppose reorganization often fear the loss of local control, loss of community identity, and the possibility of increased costs of education. Practically all arguments against reorganization have a high emotional content and involve loyalties which, even when misplaced, show the deep commitment to and interest in education of the American people. Indeed, one of the primary obstacles to reorganization of small high schools into more efficient academic and vocational units is the loyalty to the symbols of the school as expressed by athletic teams, bands, and other public evidences of activities carried on in the school.¹⁵

As society becomes more complex, it has been necessary to broaden the curriculum and add to the number of years of formal education. The common school district based on the local neighborhood usually can no longer provide the kind of educational program needed or desired.¹⁶ In many

¹⁵Campbell and Vaughn, op. cit., p. 249.

¹⁶National Commission on School District Reorganization, Your School District (Washington, D.C.: Department of Rural Education, 1948), p. 71.

parts of the country, there is much evidence to indicate that the administrative unit and the natural community should be coterminous. Basic administrative units should not be smaller than the area included within the boundaries of the natural sociological community. Sometimes it may be both desirable and practical to include two or more such communities so that the enrolment may be large enough to justify a good program. In every community, there is a need, individually and collectively for wholesome health practices, adequate nutrition, satisfactory family living, good social relationships, wholesome recreational facilities, and a solid economy. An educational program cannot be entirely satisfactory unless all the people in the area it serves receive a reasonable measure of these advantages.

III. UNDERSTANDING REORGANIZATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Many factors have delayed the formation of school districts of adequate size. Politically ambitious local school trustees; community acceptance of the "status quo"; misconceptions of what a reorganized district would mean; cumbersome procedures for reorganization; and state school finance structures, in some states, which have favored small districts are obstacles which must be considered when reorganization is promoted. These conditions must be

anticipated by the leadership and programs developed to bring understanding as reorganization progresses. Several real concerns should include the adjustment of people to a larger community, understanding the new tax structure and moving the policy-makers further away from the people.¹⁷

Despite obstacles, reorganization has gone forward. The number of school districts in the United States has decreased by sixty-eight per cent since 1931. Further reduction is necessary to bring further improvements in school opportunities for children.¹⁸

There appears to be a slowing down of reorganization in comparison with the pace of the previous two decades. It is suggested that further progress may be impossible without a redirection and establishment of a new set of goals in legislation and local action. It is known that something needs to be done when one sees rich districts with fine buildings, and well-balanced educational programs next to poor school districts with inferior schools, in spite of maximum efforts of local support. There is a need in practically all of the metropolitan and quasi-metropolitan areas for a complete reorganization of governments and school

¹⁷Cocking, loc. cit.

¹⁸"Bigger and Fewer School Districts," NEA Research Bulletin, 33:15, February, 1960.

districts. Such programs are the only possible means of reducing waste and duplication, of eliminating un-needed officials, of leveling costs and financial inconsistencies, and of providing better uniformity of curriculum and teaching programs. It is suggested that state school boards re-examine school district organization and develop legislative measures to promote reorganization within each state. If state departments will take action and give leadership to local school boards and administrators, much can be accomplished. More effort should be devoted at the state and local levels to the work that needs to be done in reorganization and less attention and effort given to federal aid legislation.¹⁹

IV. GREATER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES DEMANDED

Many administrators, teachers, and laymen support the general principle of reorganization in a belief that reorganization will yield greater educational opportunities. This belief coupled with the remarkable persistency with which the differences in test results favor reorganized school districts, shifts the burden of proof to those who oppose reorganization. Studies which compare the achieve-

¹⁹William C. Bruce, "Is District Reorganization Halted?" American School Board Journal, 141:34, December, 1960.

ment of students in unreorganized districts with those in reorganized districts, have been few in number. Such a study is being conducted by Burton Kreitlow in the state of Wisconsin. This study matches five control groups from reorganized schools.²⁰ 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. Results of comparative measurement in all areas favor the larger reorganized school. In the larger reorganized communities, children achieve significantly better in basic skill subjects than children in either the small reorganized districts or the unreorganized districts. There is no difference between the smaller reorganized districts and unreorganized districts. After considering many studies, authorities conclude that the preponderance of evidence indicates that greater academic achievement is more likely to take place in the larger and/or reorganized schools. Evidence indicates that reorganization of school districts does improve educational opportunity for the children and that the kind of district in which a child lives makes a difference in the caliber of education received. It is apparent from research

²⁰Burton W. Kreitlow, "Reorganization Makes a Difference," NEA Journal, 50:55, March, 1961.

that the general theory which supported reorganization as a basis of improving opportunities has been proved in practice. Pupil achievement has been aided by reorganization.

It is reasonably clear that reorganized school districts provide equal opportunities at lower cost, however reorganization for the purpose of increasing opportunities and achievement often costs the taxpayer more money.²¹ An effective system of school organization is one which combines maximum economy with maximum opportunity for a professional level of teaching.

Reports indicate that the larger area provides greater financial ability per student. More students require more teachers with stronger areas of specialization and make possible a greater variety of academic and vocational course offerings to meet student needs.²² Studies indicate that chances of attracting better teachers in reorganized districts are significantly greater than for small school districts.

The real starting point in any program of school district reorganization is the decision of the people as to the kind of educational program they need and want. American

²¹Burton W. Kreitlow, "Organizational Patterns: Local School Districts," Review of Education Research, 31:380, October, 1961.

²²DeForest Hamilton, and Robert N. Rowe, "Academic Achievement of Students in Reorganized and Non-reorganized Districts," Phi Delta Kappan, 43:401, June, 1962.

people should desire an educational program of such quality and scope as to develop insight, cultural understanding, and a breadth of vision that will enable different groups to work together on problems of common interest. Education should break down artificial economic and social barriers and provide the true ideals of democratic living. The program should build up the special interests, aptitudes, and abilities of each individual, should seek to correct and remove personal shortcomings and prepare each person to do the job or fill the position in life that interests him most and for which he is best fitted. Such an educational program needs to be developed as a series of closely integrated learning experiences. It is so vitally related to the people in all age groups in the community that many of its most important objectives may be seriously impaired if various segments are placed under the control of non-integrated administrative units.²³

V. REGULATIONS CONCERNING REORGANIZATION

There have been many incidents where local manipulating has occurred so that local school districts would be eligible to receive state apportionment of monies to protect districts from being dissolved. As an example, two

²³The National Commission on School District Reorganization, op. cit., p. 21.

districts in Nebraska have retained their district organization without providing a public school for a single child for eighteen years and neither district has levied a tax for the support of schools since the school year 1923-1929.

Nebraska school law number 79-137 required the dissolution of districts which did not operate a school or contract for school services for two consecutive years, but this law had obviously been ignored. In another area, three districts contracted the same students to each other to receive state benefits and to retain their status. These are unusual cases of abuse of school related regulations, however, it is believed that the majority of the people in the state will, when in the possession of the facts, accept a program that means better educational opportunities for their children.²⁴

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 reenacted because the same or new board members prefer a different program at a later date.²⁵ Schoolmen need to acquaint themselves with the proper laws and procedure prior to reorganization. Laws

²⁴Stanley L. Hawley, and Kenneth E. McIntyre, "Present School District Organization," Nebraska Educational Journal, 23:161, May, 1948.

²⁵Lee O. Garber, "Once a Merger, Always a Merger, District Finds," Nation's Schools, 71:53, June, 1963.

must be brought up to date to allow areas to reorganize without infringing on other areas.²⁶

One of the most persistent and perplexing problems in American education has been the reorganization of school districts into acceptable units of administration. Education as a function of the state is clearly recognized by constitutions, statutes, and court decisions. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the people's elected representatives to provide an efficient and economical administrative organization for public education which will provide those educational services that are essential to the public welfare.²⁷

One requirement for a successful school district reorganization program is the enactment of a comprehensive law which clearly sets forth the procedure for effecting changes and places responsibility for the program on both state and local levels. In California, a change in the pattern of school district organization has occurred since the responsibility for the study of school district organ-

²⁶Lee O. Garber, "Investigate; then Consolidate," Nation's Schools, 72:64, November, 1963.

²⁷Calvin H. Reed, "Financial Factors Related to School District Reorganization," Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations, Doctor's Thesis (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 1949), pp. 136 and 142.

ization was delegated by the legislature to county committees in 1949. The number of unified school districts has more than doubled since 1949 at which time there were sixty-two in operation as compared with 155 in 1964.²⁸ Most authorities on school district organization agree that the best form of local school government thus far devised is a unified district.²⁹

In 1941, the Illinois legislature provided for a county survey program which had advisory powers only. This program was intended to permit the people of any county in Illinois to make their own surveys and on the basis of their findings, determine the type of school district organization which would provide the best schools for the children of their county. Only a few counties participated and little progress was made toward bringing about reorganization. In 1945, a more positive school survey act was enacted as a result of public demand. The act provided for state subsidy which paid part of the survey costs. As a result of these surveys and the people's general desire to improve the schools, most of the smaller schools, both elementary and

²⁸Robert Clemo, and Loren A. Wann, "District Organization Patterns Change," California Education, 1:25, February, 1964.

²⁹John C. Packard, "School District Size Versus Local Control," American School Board Journal, 146:9, February, 1963.

secondary, have disappeared through merger, consolidation, or partition.³⁰ Since 1945, there has been an eighty-six per cent reduction in the number of school districts in Illinois.

VI. ACCEPTING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO REORGANIZE

As the people of a community become increasingly aware of the demands the future will place on their children and youth as adults, they will realize that the so-called basic fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic of the early school curriculum no longer provide adequate preparation. The fundamental educational problem at the local level is that of providing the best possible educational program for every child and youth in the area. Although school reorganization is not the basic problem of a school district or local community, in many instances, it is the means and often the only means of making available minimumly essential educational programs.³¹

As through their investigations, the people of a community come to know and understand the educational needs of their children and the adequacy of their financial

³⁰George T. Wilkins, "School District Reorganization," Illinois Education Association, 23:294, March, 1961.

³¹George T. Wilkins, "The Community's Role in Reorganization," Illinois Education, 50:120, November, 1961.

resources, they are ready to consider the different available means for providing the needed educational demands. One of the means that they will want to consider seriously is that of uniting their efforts and resources with other school districts. Consideration of school reorganization in the light of all the facts can prove most rewarding and can result in sound school organization through serious and adequate study on the part of the people of the community. In the management of school districts, the size of schools is a matter of school board policy. Local conditions require compromises with recommended standards occasionally, and although there is nothing sacred about recommended standards, they should be seriously considered as elements in the total situation.³² While further school district reorganization will not guarantee the solution of all problems, it seems that a more adequate organizational structure would permit many improvements. Any new district should not be formed for size only, but should provide educational advantages to justify the change. A community should strive for the optimum size school district that will best meet its needs.³³ The largest school district possible is not necessarily the

³²Greider, Pierce, and Rosentengel, op. cit., p. 16.

³³Packard, loc. cit.

ideal, however larger school districts usually offer a richer program of education more efficiently and economically.³⁴ DeShane described school district adequacy as follows.

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.³⁵

When the elements listed above are not evident, reorganization is demanded.

Leadership is urgently needed to successfully reorganize. Where reorganization efforts have been successful, the vigorous leadership of both county and local superintendents has been one of the strongest factors in the whole process.³⁶ Effective leadership by a school superintendent brought about the successful reorganization of school districts into one district in Banner county in 1955. This western Nebraska county was successful in reorganizing twenty-three school districts.³⁷ A survey of the county in 1960 indicated that only two per cent of the people are

³⁴Roy DeShane, "An Effective Intermediate Unit," Illinois Education Association, 26:205, January, 1964.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶American Association of School Administrators, op. cit., p. 12.

³⁷Barclay G. Bayley, "A Banner Victory," NEA Journal, 50:51, May, 1961.

dissatisfied with the present organizational structure. Reorganization of school districts is supported by those who have experienced the benefits of an expanded and enriched program. The limited educational program of yesteryear is attractive to those who have an aversion to change and do not truly understand the educational demands of modern America.³⁸

VII. SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature on school district structure in the United States substantiates the validity of reorganization. Professional leaders in the field of education support the movement for reorganization of school districts as a definite improvement in the educational opportunities presented in the public schools.

Reorganization must be accomplished by local authorities with the aid of professional educators and the help of effective legislation. All people must be concerned with the improvement of schools to make the optimum educational program available without prejudice to race, color, religion, or pocket-book. People need to understand benefits possible from reorganization to support it.

³⁸Roald R. Campbell, and Freeman H. Vaughn, "Reorganization Revisited," Illinois Education Association, 26:249, February, 1964.

Reorganization of school districts involves the people of several communities. Their ideas and concerns should be foremost in the minds of those chosen to initiate a successful reorganization program. A concentrated effort should be made to fully acquaint the people of a proposed reorganized area with the need for better schools and to show how reorganization could solve this problem. Successful reorganization demands an informed public. Comparisons must be made and advantages of reorganization publicized to assure the participation of the citizens.

Evidence from Kreitlow's study indicates that reorganization of school districts improves educational opportunities for the children and that the kind of district in which a child lives makes a difference in the caliber of education which he receives.

Reorganization is governed by laws. It is essential that all personnel connected with reorganizational programs keep informed of all rules and regulations pertaining to school district structure. They further have the responsibility to support legislation relative to effective school district reorganization. One requirement for a successful reorganization program is the enactment of a comprehensive law which clearly sets forth the procedure for effecting changes and places responsibility for the program at both state and local levels.

Where reorganization has occurred, effective leadership has been evident. Someone must assume the responsibility to initiate the program and have the stamina and fortitude to continue with the program regardless of obstacles encountered. The literature supports reorganization of school districts as a means of improving schools.

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF PROCEDURE AND LIMITATIONS

Attitudes of people are an expression of feelings and thought. This is a report of a study of the attitudes of the people in Richardson county, Nebraska concerning reorganization of school districts.

An analysis of the important parts of the literature provided the material for the formation of the questions for the interview. The average length of each interview was approximately twenty minutes and all questions, including instructions to the interviewee, are shown in the appendix, pages fifty-nine through sixty-three. All questions were read by the interviewer. A blank form, as shown in the appendix, page fifty eight, was used for recording responses, and the responses were analyzed for the purposes of this study.

I. DEFINING THE POPULATION

Western half of county. The western half of the county which includes an area fifteen miles by eighteen miles is the site of this study. The citizens of this area have a slightly different organizational problem than that which exists in the eastern half of the county. The largest high school in Richardson county is located at Falls City which is in the eastern half. People in the eastern area

would tend to express different feelings about reorganization than those in the western half where the largest high school has only a hundred fifty students. The western half includes communities which are more nearly the same in size and structure with school district problems much the same in character.

Population of the Report. Four major communities, Dawson, Humboldt, Salem, and Stella are in the western half of Richardson county, and listed in the Southeast Nebraska Telephone Directory. Within these four communities, 1193 residential telephone extensions were listed in the February, 1964 directory. Every twentieth residential telephone extension listed, beginning with the first listing in the Dawson portion of the directory and continuing through the Humboldt, Salem, and Stella portions of the directory consecutively, provided the sample for this study. A total of sixty interviews was obtained by this procedure, and were completed between October, 1964 and May, 1965.

II. LIMITATIONS

Concentration of Population. The population of Dawson, Humboldt, Salem, and Stella was greater than the area surrounding each community. The study revealed that more telephone users resided in these communities than in the rural areas. Therefore, this report reflects a high per cent of the attitudes of people living in small communities.

CHAPTER IV

THE STUDY

The information obtained from the interviews is made up of six parts. Each part will be presented separately.

Some questions from the interview were not directly concerned with reorganization of school districts. However, a response to each question was considered necessary to better understand the attitudes of the people about conditions that related to reorganization.

The responses to some questions were contradictory. Of the population interviewed, seventy-five per cent believed that better schools were needed in Richardson county and thirty-seven per cent believed that this could be accomplished under the present school district structure. Seventy-five per cent were also satisfied with the effort that was being made to improve the educational opportunities, while a similar per cent believed that better schools were needed in Richardson county.

I. EXISTING STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

A school district has a definite physical structure which makes the educational program possible within its area of jurisdiction. A school district has boundaries,

board members, school buildings, administrators, teachers, legal and financial rights, and most important of all, students. Failure to understand this structure and the relationship of its parts frequently leads to misconceptions as to desirable school district organization.

Information pertaining to the existing structure of school districts, according to this study, is shown in Table I, page thirty-two. Although a majority of those interviewed understood the present district structure, seventy per cent did not believe the people of the county were sufficiently informed to determine the school district organization structure needed to make possible the best education for all children and youth in the county.

The existing school district organization did not offer equal educational opportunity to all youth in the county according to the responses to this survey; however, thirty-seven per cent of the people interviewed believed that the necessary educational programs could be provided under the present school district structure. Of the interview responses, sixty-three per cent, indicated that maximum use was being made of existing school buildings, grounds, and teachers. Seventy-seven per cent of those interviewed felt the need for more adult education and favored vocational courses as indicated by the eighty-

TABLE I

EXISTING STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Questions from the interview	Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Do you understand the existing school district structure?	36	23	60	38
2. Do you believe that most people of Richardson county are sufficiently informed to determine the school district organizational structure needed to make possible the best education for all children and youth in the county?	13	42	22	70
3. Do you believe the present school district organization offers equal educational opportunity to all youth in the county?	17	41	28	68
4. Is maximum use being made of existing school buildings, grounds, teachers, etc.?	38	15	63	25
5. Should schools be more extensively utilized through -				
A. adult education?	46	8	77	13
B. extended school term?	16	40	27	67
C. vocational courses?	51	6	85	10
6. Do you believe that the necessary educational programs can be provided under the present school district structure?	22	33	37	55

TABLE I (continued)

Questions from the interview	*Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
7. Do you believe a small school of 50 students or less can educate its youth as well as a school of 200 students or more?	18	42	30	70
8. Do you believe teachers and administrators in small schools of 50 students or less are as professionally dedicated to the educational needs of children as teachers and administrators in schools of 200 students or more?	33	9	63	15
9. Would the combined efforts of two or more small school districts serving 200 students or more, meet the present educational needs of youth better than one school district serving only 50 or fewer students?	50	5	84	8
10. Are you satisfied with the educational effort which is being made to maintain and improve the educational offerings for the youth in your school district?	45	11	75	19

*The raw score indicates the actual number of people registering a particular response.

five per cent "yes" response to question five (C) of Table I.

Although a trend exists to extend the school term, sixty-seven per cent of those surveyed did not favor a longer school year, as shown in question five (B), Table I. Sixty-three per cent of the people interviewed believed that teachers and administrators were equally dedicated to their profession regardless of the size of the school. However, the responses to the two questions which related size of school to quality of education (see Table I, questions seven and nine) indicated belief that the larger school could do the better job of educating students. The satisfaction with the educational effort made in the existing structure reflected in the seventy-five per cent "yes" response to question ten, is not consistent with other responses in Table I. Responses to questions three, six, seven, and nine of Table I, page thirty-two and thirty-three, supported the need for reorganization. The response to question ten indicated a lack of support for reorganization.

II. TAX SUPPORT OF SCHOOLS

As evidenced by this survey, the respondents were not overly concerned about the cost of public education. Table II, page thirty-five, shows that most respondents,

TABLE II

TAX SUPPORT OF SCHOOLS

Questions from the interview	Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Is a broader tax base needed to support our schools?	38	8	63	13
2. Should all citizens bear a relatively equal share of the tax burden in the support of schools in the county?	60	0	100	0
3. Should providing the children with the best recommended educational opportunities be the basis for determining the number of tax dollars for school support?	44	8	74	13
4. Is more state financial support needed to support the cost of schools in Richardson county?	33	14	55	24
5. Is more federal financial support needed to support the cost of schools in Richardson county?	21	35	36	58
6. Do you know the per cent of your county and local tax dollar which is allocated for school support?	48	0	20	80
7. Are you aware of the amount of money your school district spends annually for education?	26	34	43	57
8. Is the amount of money you spend for school support less than the amount of money you spend for entertainment, including liquor and tobacco, annually?	28	27	47	45
9. Do you believe all citizens in the county, at the present time, assume an equal share in the financial support of the schools?	10	47	17	78

eighty per cent, did not know the proportion of their tax dollar which was allocated for school support. More than half of the respondents were not aware of the amount of money their school district spent annually for education and approximately half of the people interviewed expended less money for education than they did for their own entertainment.

People interviewed who did not thoroughly understand a question, normally responded with "no opinion". This was evident in Table II, questions one and four. In question one, twenty-four per cent expressed "no opinion" and usually stated that they had not understood the question. Question four was also answered similarly, as respondents indicated a lack of knowledge of the present cost of schools. Although nearly a fourth of the respondents expressed "no opinion" to questions one and four, a majority of those surveyed expressed support for state financial aid and a broader tax base. In opposition to additional financial aid, fifty-eight per cent of the respondents did not favor federal financial support as evidenced in question five in Table II, page thirty-five.

To determine the tax support for the schools, seventy-four per cent believed that this should be dependent upon the cost of the best recommended educational opportunities as shown in question three in Table II.

III. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES NEEDED IN RELATION TO ALL THE YOUTH OF RICHARDSON COUNTY

To adequately educate all the youth of Richardson county, many services, both academic and vocational should be made available. Of the services listed in Table III, page thirty-eight, those interviewed responded very favorably to guidance and counseling, and vocal and instrumental music as necessary services in the schools. Special programs for the gifted, psychiatric services, and the driver training program received the least favorable response, but were still supported by a majority of the respondents. All services listed in Table III, questions one (A) through (L), were supported by sixty-six per cent or more of the people interviewed.

Nearly eighty per cent of the people interviewed were in favor of creating districts of sufficient size to economically provide all the services, as shown in Table III, to all students within each district. According to the responses listed in Table III, questions three and four, all districts should make provision for the education of all students from kindergarten through grade twelve, or they should be organized with a district that does or will be capable of making such services available. Seventy-five per cent of the respondents in question five,

TABLE III

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES NEEDED IN RELATION TO
ALL THE YOUTH OF RICHARDSON COUNTY

Questions from the interview	Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. To adequately educate all the youth of this county, should the following services be made available?				
A. Guidance and counseling	59	1	98	2
B. Vocational agriculture	43	15	71	25
C. Industrial arts	53	2	88	4
D. Health services with a full time nurse on duty	47	10	78	17
E. Special programs for the gifted	40	17	67	28
F. Psychiatric services	41	17	68	28
G. Home Economics	56	3	93	5
H. Speech therapy	56	3	93	5
I. Vocal music	59	1	98	2
J. Instrumental music	60	0	100	0
K. Special programs for the retarded	57	2	94	4
L. Driver training program	40	18	66	30
				38

TABLE III (continued)

Questions from the interview	Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
2. Should reorganization create districts of sufficient size to economically provide all of the foregoing services to all students within each district?	46	9	77	15
3. Should all school districts make provision for the education of all students from kindergarten through grade twelve?	58	0	96	0
4. If such provision is not presently made, should districts not offering a complete program be organized with a district that does or will be capable of making such services available?	54	4	90	6
5. Are better schools needed in Richardson county to provide students with an educational opportunity equal to the needs developed in modern America?	45	8	75	13
6. Is reorganization the best approach to improve the schools in Richardson county and to provide more comprehensive programs of instruction and improved administrative leadership?	44	7	73	12

supported the need for better schools in Richardson county and seventy-three per cent, as shown in question six, supported reorganization as the best approach to make this possible.

IV. REORGANIZATION RELUCTANCE

In section four of this study, an attempt was made to determine the extent tradition and community loyalty affected reorganization thinking. A "no" response in Table IV, page forty-one, questions one (A) through (E), indicated that the particular area of concern would not interfere with the respondents support of reorganization.

Most attitudes surveyed in this section showed very little opposition to reorganization. According to Table IV, page forty-one, the greatest opposition was shown in the responses to question one (F). Fifty-eight per cent felt that inadequate transportation facilities, which were not sufficiently developed to comfortably transport children distances that might be required by reorganization, would cause the respondent to be reluctant to support reorganization. Transportation was a greater concern than losing the local control of the school, losing the school in a district, increased taxes and decreased community participation in the schools. Over eighty per cent, in question one (E), Table IV, did not think that decreased parental

TABLE IV

REORGANIZATION RELUCTANCE

Questions from the interview	Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No opinion	Yes	No opinion
1. Do you believe that the following areas of concern would cause you to be reluctant to reorganize the school districts in Richardson county?				
A. Losing local control of the school	13	2	21	4
B. Losing the school in your district	19	4	32	6
C. Increased taxes	10	1	17	2
D. Decreased community participation in schools	12	6	20	10
E. Decreased parental influence on children	6	4	10	6
F. Inadequate transportation facilities which were not sufficiently developed to transport children distances that may be required by reorganization	35	2	58	4

influence on children would be a major factor in influencing the attitude of people in supporting a reorganization program. Although some opposition was evident, as indicated by the "yes" responses in Table IV, the "no" responses to questions one (A) through (E), indicated no major problem areas that would be of special concern to the respondents in the support of reorganization.

V. REORGANIZATION SUPPORT

In section five of this study, areas of improvement made possible by reorganization of school districts were used to determine the extent the people of this area would support reorganization. The responses to the questions in Table V, page forty-three, indicated the degree to which the respondents believed the advantages of reorganization, as supported by the review of the literature, would be evident in a reorganized school district.

According to the responses recorded in Table V, page forty-three, question one, seventy-eight per cent of the respondents believed that a higher quality of professional leadership would be available in the reorganized schools. The respondents favored all questions in Table V, at or above, the seventy-eight per cent level, except question six. Questions one through five of Table V, indicated that the respondents supported reorganization in the area

TABLE V

REORGANIZATION SUPPORT

Questions from the interview	Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No opinion	Yes	No opinion
1. Would a higher quality of professional leadership be available in the schools?	47	7	78	12
2. Would reorganization make possible more adequate buildings and equipment?	56	1	93	2
3. Should better qualified and more professional teachers be available to all students?	47	11	78	18
4. Would reorganization maintain a more efficient use of financial resources?	49	6	82	10
5. Would duplication of services such as transportation facilities be minimized?	50	5	84	8
6. Would reorganization give parents an opportunity to help plan and direct the educational program?	23	25	47	41

questioned and that reorganization would make possible the advantages shown in the questions. Approximately half of the people interviewed believed that reorganization would give parents an opportunity to help plan and direct the educational program as shown in Table V, question six. A higher per cent of the respondents registered "no opinion" to question six than to the other questions in this section. This response usually indicated a lack of understanding a particular question or the respondent did not feel sufficiently informed to register a "yes" or "no" response.

The area of greatest support to reorganization was indicated in question two of Table V. Ninety-three per cent of the respondents believed that reorganization would make possible more adequate buildings and equipment.

VI. PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION

Questions from the interview in this section concern proposals, both state and locally initiated, that might be considered in planning for reorganization. In question one in Table VI, page forty-five, seventy-eight per cent of the respondents believed that a survey should be taken of the existing school systems to determine if a change in school district reorganization would be justified in comparison with recommended educational specifications. Questions two and three of Table VI, supported the need for the formation

TABLE VI

PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION

Questions from the interview	Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Should a survey be taken of the existing school systems to determine if a change in school district organization is justified in comparison with recommended educational specifications?	47	9	78	16
2. Should a committee or county school board be formed to continually investigate the educational needs of this county?	51	9	84	16
3. Should this committee and/or county school board keep the citizens of the county informed as to changes considered appropriate according to its findings?	54	3	90	5
4. Should state monies be made available to provide special incentives for districts to reorganize?	41	11	68	19
5. Should the legislature of the state of Nebraska provide the leadership to reorganize school districts and set deadlines for such action?	39	21	63	35
6. If the local school districts do not take the initiative to reorganize, should this responsibility be delegated to the state department of education?	39	20	65	33
7. Should schools be required by the state to meet certain standards of educational proficiency?	57	0	95	0

TABLE VI (continued)

Questions from the interview	Raw Score		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
8. Should school districts that do not meet state educational specifications be forced to close their schools and reorganize?	47	8	78	13
9. Should providing the best educational opportunities for the youth in Richardson county be the major factor in determining future school district structure?	59	0	98	0
10. Suggested school district structure in Richardson county. Indicate a response to only one of the following.				
A. Do you believe that the present school district structure is satisfactory?	14	-	24	-
B. Would you recommend two districts in the county, one for the east and one for the west, each maintaining one high school and elementary schools where needed?	21	-	35	-
C. Would you form one district for the entire county with one administrative head over the complete operation with two centralized high schools and elementary schools maintained where needed?	9	-	15	-
D. Other proposals.	16	-	26	-

of a county committee or school board by eighty-four and ninety per cent of the respondents, respectively. This board would continually investigate the educational needs of the county, and keep the citizens informed as to changes considered appropriate to their findings. Nearly seventy per cent of those interviewed believed state monies should be made available to encourage reorganization. A smaller majority, as shown in question five in Table VI, page forty-five, indicated that the Nebraska legislature should provide the leadership to reorganize school districts and set deadlines for such action. In question six in Table VI, approximately two-thirds of those interviewed approved of delegating the responsibility to reorganize to the state department of education if the local districts did not take the initiative. Although the majority of the people interviewed supported both proposals, approximately one-third of the respondents voiced opposition to questions five and six of Table VI. This reaction may have indicated a desire to limit outside interference concerning reorganization problems.

A great majority of the respondents favored state educational requirements, according to question seven of Table VI. In the same Table, question eight, seventy-eight per cent of the respondents supported action to close school districts if state educational specifications could not be

met. As evidenced by responses to question nine in Table VI, page forty-six, ninety-eight per cent believed that provision for the best educational opportunities for the youth in Richardson county should be a major factor in determining future school district structure.

Of the four choices listed in Table VI, page forty-six, question ten (A) through (D), a county two district structure received the greatest support. A one county district structure received the least support, with twenty-three per cent contending that the present structure was satisfactory. Other proposals were considered and the responses recorded in question ten (D), in Table VI. A three district structure in the county was most frequently suggested. Greatest support for the three district proposal was received in the Stella community. A movement was underway to form one district in the Stella community and surrounding area with the suggestion that the remaining part of the county be divided into two districts. Although no proposal described in question ten in Table VI received a majority of support, nearly eighty per cent of those responding, suggested a change in the structure of school districts in western Richardson county.

CHAPTER V

THE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Better educational opportunities are needed to adequately educate the youth of Richardson county, Nebraska. Some respondents indicated a desire to make this possible under the present school district structure. However, most of the people interviewed supported a reorganization of school districts to provide the educational opportunities demanded by modern America.

I. THE SUMMARY

This study revealed that a majority of the people understood the existing school district structure, however seventy per cent believed that the general public would be unable to improve the structure. Professional leadership would then be necessary to make reorganization possible. A majority of those interviewed believed that the present school district organization should be changed to offer equal educational opportunity to all youth.

Very few of the people surveyed, twenty per cent, were aware of the amount of money needed to support the schools. Less than half of the people were aware of the amount of money expended annually for education by the school district in which they lived.

A more equitable taxing program was suggested from the responses to this study. Although, most people were not aware of their individual tax load to support schools, nearly eighty per cent believed that the citizens of the county did not assume equal shares in the financial support of schools at the present time.

To adequately educate all the youth in this county, many services should be made available. This survey indicated a favorable support for all services including guidance and counseling, vocational agriculture, industrial arts, health services with a full time nurse on duty, special programs for the gifted and retarded, psychiatric services, home economics, speech therapy, vocal and instrumental music, and driver training. It was suggested that reorganization should create districts of sufficient size to economically provide such services. A district which was not able to provide such services should be organized with a district that was or would be capable of making such services available. Reorganization was considered the best approach to achieve improved schools in Richardson county and to provide more comprehensive programs of instruction and improved administrative leadership.

Although very little effort has been made to reorganize the school districts in Richardson county, most people interviewed seemed to understand the significance of

reorganization. They were aware that some sacrifices would be necessary to make possible a better school system. Closing the local school and increasing taxes would not have impeded reorganization efforts. The greatest concern involved transportation and the facilities considered necessary to comfortably transport children distances that might be required by reorganization.

This study revealed that the attitudes of the people interviewed supported the advantages of reorganization of school districts. A majority of the respondents believed that higher quality of professional leadership would be available in the schools through reorganization. Additional support was voiced in the belief that better buildings and equipment, better qualified and more professional teachers, more efficient use of financial resources, and minimized duplication of services would be possible.

Responses of the study showed that local effort should be instigated to determine if reorganization is needed and to what extent the school district structure should be changed. State help should be made available, both in money and leadership, to assist in initiating reorganization programs. The findings of this study indicated that school districts whose schools did not meet state education specifications should be forced to close their schools and reorganize. Only twenty-four per cent of the respondents

believed the present district structure was satisfactory. Most respondents favored two districts in the county, one for the east and one for the west, each maintaining one high school and elementary schools where needed.

II. THE CONCLUSIONS

The people surveyed were sufficiently interested in improving the schools of Richardson county, Nebraska to justify a change in the school district structure. Equal educational opportunity and equal support of the schools was found to be needed in Richardson county. Reorganization of school districts was considered the best approach to improve the schools.

Inadequate transportation facilities were considered a major concern relative to support of a reorganization program. In other areas of attitude measurement, strong support was indicated for reorganization of school districts.

State and local leadership should be initiated in future planning for reorganization. If the local effort fails to take the initiative to reorganize, state leadership and legislation should be available to bring about effective reorganization of school districts in Richardson county, Nebraska.

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APPENDIX

RESPONSE BLANK

Name				Address			
*:	Yes :	No :	No opinion	:	Yes :	No :	No opinion
1	:	:	:	33	:	:	:
2	:	:	:	34	:	:	:
3	:	:	:	35	:	:	:
4	:	:	:	36	:	:	:
5	:	:	:	37	:	:	:
6	:	:	:	38	:	:	:
7	:	:	:	39	:	:	:
8	:	:	:	40	:	:	:
9	:	:	:	41	:	:	:
10	:	:	:	42	:	:	:
11	:	:	:	43	:	:	:
12	:	:	:	44	:	:	:
13	:	:	:	45	:	:	:
14	:	:	:	46	:	:	:
15	:	:	:	47	:	:	:
16	:	:	:	48	:	:	:
17	:	:	:	49	:	:	:
18	:	:	:	50	:	:	:
19	:	:	:	51	:	:	:
20	:	:	:	52	:	:	:
21	:	:	:	53	:	:	:
22	:	:	:	54	:	:	:
23	:	:	:	55	:	:	:
24	:	:	:	56	:	:	:
25	:	:	:	57	:	:	:
26	:	:	:	58	:	:	:
27	:	:	:	59	:	:	:
28	:	:	:	60:A	:	:	:
29	:	:	:	:B	:	:	:
30	:	:	:	:C	:	:	:
31	:	:	:	:D	:	:	:
32	:	:	:				

Additional Comments

*Numbers one through sixty of this form correspond to the questions as listed in Tables I through VI consecutively.

INTERVIEW

Instructions. The information gathered from answers to the following questions concerns attitudes about school district structure and reorganization of school districts in Richardson county. You are requested to respond "yes", "no", or "no opinion", to each question. Thirteen minutes are required to read all questions and the quickness of your response will determine the length of the interview.

I. EXISTING STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1. Do you understand the existing school district structure?
2. Do you believe that most people of Richardson county are sufficiently informed to determine the school district organizational structure needed to make possible the best education for all children and youth in the county?
3. Do you believe the present school district organization offers equal educational opportunity for all youth in the county?
4. Is maximum use being made of existing school buildings, grounds, teachers, etc.?
5. Should schools be more extensively utilized through-
 - A. adult education?
 - B. extended school term?
 - C. vocational courses?
6. Do you believe that the necessary educational programs can be provided under the present school district structure?
7. Do you believe a small school of 50 students or less can educate its youth as well as a school of 200 students or more?
8. Do you believe teachers and administrators in small schools of 50 students or less are as professionally

8. (continued) dedicated to the educational needs of children as teachers and administrators in schools of 200 students or more?
9. Would the combined efforts of two or more small school districts serving 200 students or more, meet the present educational needs of youth better than one school district serving only 50 or fewer students?
10. Are you satisfied with the educational effort which is being made to maintain and improve the educational offerings for the youth in your school district?

II. TAX SUPPORT OF SCHOOLS

1. Is a broader tax base needed to support our schools?
2. Should all citizens bear a relatively equal share of the tax burden in the support of schools in the county?
3. Should providing the children with the best recommended educational opportunities be the basis for determining the number of tax dollars for school support?
4. Is more state financial support needed to support the cost of schools in Richardson county?
5. Is more federal financial support needed to support the cost of schools in Richardson county?
6. Do you know the per cent of your county and local tax dollar which is allocated for school support?
7. Are you aware of the amount of money your school district spends annually for education?
8. Is the amount of money you spend for school support less than the amount of money you spend for entertainment, including liquor and tobacco, annually?
9. Do you believe all citizens in the county, at the present time, assume an equal share in the financial support of the schools?

III. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES NEEDED IN RELATION
TO ALL THE YOUTH OF RICHARDSON COUNTY

1. To adequately educate all the youth of this county, should the following services be made available?
 - A. Guidance and counseling
 - B. Vocational agriculture
 - C. Industrial arts
 - D. Health services with a full time nurse on duty
 - E. Special programs for the gifted
 - F. Psychiatric services
 - G. Home economics
 - H. Speech therapy
 - I. Vocal Music
 - J. Instrumental music
 - K. Special programs for the retarded
 - L. Driver training program
2. Should reorganization create districts of sufficient size to economically provide all of the foregoing services to all students within each district?
3. Should all school districts make provision for the education of all students from kindergarten through grade twelve?
4. If such provision is not presently made, should districts not offering a complete program be organized with a district that does or will be capable of making such services available?
5. Are better schools needed in Richardson county to provide students with an educational opportunity equal to the needs developed in modern America?
6. Is reorganization the best approach to improve the schools in Richardson county and to provide more comprehensive programs of instruction and improved administrative leadership?

IV. REORGANIZATION RELUCTANCE

1. Do you believe that the following areas of concern would cause you to be reluctant to reorganize the school districts in Richardson county?
 - A. Losing local control of the school
 - B. Losing the school in your district
 - C. Increased taxes
 - D. Decreased community participation in schools
 - E. Decreased parental influence on children
 - F. Inadequate transportation facilities which were not sufficiently developed to transport children distances that may be required by reorganization

V. REORGANIZATION SUPPORT

1. Would a higher quality of professional leadership be available in the schools?
2. Would reorganization make possible more adequate buildings and equipment?
3. Should better qualified and more professional teachers be available to all students?
4. Would reorganization maintain a more efficient use of financial resources?
5. Would duplication of services such as transportation facilities be minimized?
6. Would reorganization give parents an opportunity to help plan and direct the educational program?

VI. PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Should a survey be taken of the existing school system to determine if a change in school district organization is justified in comparison with recommended educational specifications?

2. Should a committee or county school board be formed to continually investigate the educational needs of this county?
3. Should this committee and/or county school board keep the citizens of the county informed as to changes considered appropriate according to its findings?
4. Should state monies be made available to provide special incentives for districts to reorganize?
5. Should the legislature of the state of Nebraska provide the leadership to reorganize school districts and set deadlines for such action?
6. If the local school districts do not take the initiative to reorganize, should this responsibility be delegated to the state department of education?
7. Should schools of the county be required by the state to meet certain standards of educational proficiency?
8. Should school districts that do not meet state educational specifications be forced to close their schools and reorganize?
9. Should schools providing the best educational opportunities for the youth in Richardson county be the major factor in determining future school district structure?
10. Suggested school district structure in Richardson county. Indicate a response to only one of the following.
 - A. Do you believe that the present school district structure is satisfactory?
 - B. Would you recommend two districts in the county, one for the east and one for the west, each maintaining one high school and elementary schools where needed?
 - C. Would you form one district for the entire county with one administrative head over the complete operation with two centralized high schools and elementary schools maintained where needed?
 - D. Other proposals -

A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE IN RICHARDSON
COUNTY NEBRASKA CONCERNING REORGANIZATION
OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

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Many school districts continue to retain their identity in Richardson county, Nebraska even though some districts do not operate a school or have enough students to warrant continued operation. Reorganization of school districts in this area has been very limited as indicated by the fact that fifty school districts were still identified during the 1964-1965 school year. The county is small enough both in size, approximately eighteen miles wide and thirty-one miles long, and population, approximately 15,000 people, to warrant some reduction in the number of districts. According to the literature, such a reduction of districts would be feasible and should also improve educational opportunities for the children and youth within the county.

In an attempt to explore attitudes and understand the people relative to reorganization of school districts in Richardson county, a survey was made in the western half of the county involving the communities of Dawson, Humboldt, Salem, and Stella. The interviews were conducted and responses recorded between October, 1964 and May, 1965. The February, 1964 issue of the Southeastern Nebraska Telephone Directory was used to determine the population for this study. One-twentieth of the 1193 residential telephone extensions listed in the four communities provided a total of sixty interview prospects.

The interview consisted of sixty questions with three optional answers, yes, no, or no opinion, and each person was asked to make a choice. Six major areas of concern made up the interview format and related to attitudes about: (1) the existing school district structure, (2) tax support of schools, (3) educational opportunities needed in relation to all the youth of Richardson county, (4) areas of concern that might cause people to be reluctant to support reorganization, (5) areas of concern that might cause reorganizational support, and (6) proposals for a school district structure that would provide better educational opportunities for all youth in Richardson county.

As indicated by the survey results, reorganization of school districts was found to be important to the people of Richardson county. More than fifty per cent of the respondents supported the kind of services which are generally made possible through reorganization. Seventy-five per cent of those who responded wanted better schools in Richardson county to provide students with an educational opportunity equal to the demands developed in modern America. Seventy-three per cent of the people interviewed supported reorganization as the best approach to improved schools in Richardson county and to more comprehensive programs of instruction and improved administrative leadership.

The type of district structure most frequently

supported by those interviewed was two districts in the county, one for the east and one for the west. Each district would maintain one high school and elementary schools where needed. Other suggestions were made in support of a three district county structure.

Even though some of the people surveyed did not fully understand the meaning of reorganization, much support was indicated for a different district structure. This was described through the kinds of attitudes expressed concerning educational opportunities made possible by reorganization. Of the total population surveyed, ninety-eight per cent contended that providing the best educational opportunities for the youth of Richardson county should be the major factor in determining future school district structure.