A Study of a Proposed Plan for School District Reorganization in Sultan, Gold Bar and Index

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A STUDY OF A PROPOSED PLAN FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION IN SULTAN, GOLD BAR AND INDEX

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George Thomas Sofie
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For more than three decades, the possibility of attaining improvement in educational programs in the public schools through the reorganization of school districts has been recognized by responsible authorities in the field of education. While much progress has been made throughout the nation in reorganizing school districts into larger administrative units, more than half of the school districts in the United States in 1960 were considered too small to provide adequately for the education of American youth in a changing modern society.

The long established American tradition of local control over education has presented many problems to forces that favor school district reorganization. People in the United States want good schools for their children and hold firm beliefs about how their schools should be operated.

Recently the move of people from the farm to the city has been astonishing. So many people have left farming areas that Chambers stated:

The small rural school district has become incapable of complete self-support and self-sufficiency. In many states all school districts, of whatever size and wealth, now receive a substantial portion of their annual operating expenses from state collected revenues (4:26).
Generally rural counties, across the nation, have many small local school districts in which inadequate elementary school facilities are maintained. High school facilities are made available only by means of make-shift devices such as sub-standard high schools or transportation of pupils to a high school in an adjoining district (4:71).

A report of the committee for the White House Conference on Education recommended that the American people study carefully their systems of school organization. They also suggested that funds, other than local, be denied the districts which did not reorganize on an efficient basis after a reasonable length of time (27:4-5).

The Washington Education Association recognized that school district reorganization improved the school program and the status of teachers (40:20). That association was also cognizant of a need for future reorganization of school districts and issued the following statement:

From an educational viewpoint, there should be continuing or permanent school district reorganization machinery to provide for growth and development in any part of the state. Satisfactory conditions at present may prove entirely inadequate several years hence (40:20).
I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to determine if there was a need for reorganization in Sultan, Gold Bar and Index school districts. If reorganization was needed, this paper will propose a plan by which this reorganization can be carried out.

II. PROCEDURE

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, it was necessary to determine possible advantages of reorganization. The information gathered was compiled and compared with the present conditions in the Sultan, Gold Bar and Index school districts.

Much of the information gathered was of documentary evidence. Materials from the Snohomish County Superintendent's office, past newspaper articles, and other materials related to the reorganization in the Sultan, Gold Bar and Index school districts were used. Additional information from the Washington State Department of Education and other agencies was used.

Procedures used were (1) the use of the historical approach, (2) the study of information concerning the communities involved, (3) illustrations by charts and tables were given to show the benefits to the districts involved, and (4) the study of previous reorganization elections.
Once this information was gathered, it was compared with criteria stated by authorities in the field of reorganization and conclusions were made.

III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Non-high districts. The term "non-high districts" refers to school districts that do not operate high schools.

Reorganization. For the purposes of this paper, reorganization means the annexation, consolidation, or forming of new school districts.

School district. According to the State Manual of Washington,

A school district is a political subdivision of the State, established pursuant to acts of the Legislature. It is defined by statute as "the territory under the jurisdiction of a single governing board designated and referred to as the board of directors." It must comprise continuous territory which may be located in a single county or in two or more counties. Each incorporated city must be included in a single school district; but the district may extend beyond the limits of the city and may include two or more incorporated cities (37:81).

Six-six system. This term refers to grades kindergarten through the sixth as the elementary school and grades seven through the twelfth as the secondary school.

Upper Skykomish Valley schools. This term refers to the Sultan, Gold Bar and Index school districts.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I. GROWTH OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The structure of most of the early school districts in the United States was poorly planned. It must be remembered that the size of original school districts was set when the areas were new and underdeveloped and when the population was sparse. Since that time a great deal of development has taken place since the original district lines were fixed. Populations have increased, financial resources have been developed, social organizations have multiplied, social and economic patterns have changed, roads and streets have become an intricate network, new businesses of many kinds have developed, standards of living have gone up, and the needs and wants of people have changed (7:7).

The efficient size of the school district must be constantly reviewed in terms of the changes which develop within the district. Some problems cannot be met adequately within the limits of present school districts. Such conditions will continue as social and economic changes continue. The problem of effective school district reorganization, then, is a permanent and continuing one. It is the administrator's duty to keep the people
of the community aware of this problem.

The National Education Association advocated as early as 1914 that a larger unit in school organization and administration was a worthwhile plan to gain greater efficiency and economy in education. During the past twenty-five years, the National Education Association's Department of Rural Education continued to campaign for school districts large enough to make a comprehensive program possible (23:15).

The American Association of School Administrators suggested reorganization of school districts so that an administrative unit would enroll a minimum of 1,200 pupils and employ at least forty teachers in grades one through twelve (40:20).

Packard believed that the biggest disadvantage of the small school district was that the small school had a lack of local control by the board and inadequate administration. He contended that too many services had to be provided by outside agencies for the small districts. He suggested unification of school districts to provide continuous instruction under one school board and one administration for both elementary and secondary levels of education (25:9).

Packard recognized the necessity of small school districts in isolated areas, but he suggested a district
ranging from 4,000 to 25,000 pupils as the one which could provide the most education to the greatest number of pupils. This would allow maximum control to be exerted by the local board and the least interference from outside sources (25:11).

Conant visited more than fifty high schools in twenty states during 1957. He had the following views on the size of high schools and district reorganization:

Unless a high school has a graduating class of at least 100, that school is too small to offer a sufficiently diversified curriculum to meet the needs of all its pupils and the needs of our nation.

More than half of our 23,000 high schools do not meet the minimum criterion of a graduating class of 100. In fact, 30 per cent of our high school pupils attend high schools too small to do an adequate job.

Citizens should face this situation realistically and resolutely. The small high school should be eliminated by district reorganization. When persons say that geography will not allow consolidation of high schools, we should be sure that it is not human nature that is the prohibiting agent (8:9).

Kreitlow made a study in 1960 of five reorganized schools in Wisconsin. He was convinced that the reorganized schools provided greater opportunities and produced higher academic results for pupils than for five carefully matched groups in unreorganized districts (21:3). A follow-up study was made five years after the groups tested graduated from high school. Kreitlow reported that at all levels the reorganized group scored higher than the non-reorganized group, except at grade level one in reading achievement
where the non-reorganized group rated slightly higher than the reorganized group (20:44).

In summary, Kreitlow stated that the first 15 years of the study show that reorganized districts offer more educational opportunities and that their students show greater achievement and mental maturity than those in non-reorganized districts. However, the findings on personal and social behavior indicate that the reorganized districts need to encourage student participation in school activities as do non-reorganized districts (20:45).

Washington State has a problem with school district organization. The Washington State Planning Council in its report of 1938 analyzed the situation this way:

The present unplanned district system, one that has grown like "Topsy," necessitates the operation of many uneconomic units, excessive transportation, and unnecessary duplication of facilities and services. Upwards of one million dollars is expended annually that could be better used (39:20).

Bills have been presented in several recent legislatures but because of political pressures no action has been taken even though the legislature has full power to organize or reorganize school districts to serve the best interests of education (38:24).

II. REORGANIZATION IN WASHINGTON STATE

Washington became a state in 1889. At that time there were over a thousand school districts which had been
organized earlier by the territorial government.

The early school districts were established in a haphazard manner. Pioneer settlers took advantage of the richest and most accessible areas, locating their schools conveniently and drawing the boundaries of their districts without reference to the other settlements about them. As a result, some of these early districts extended for miles along fertile valleys; others reached back into the hills to include valuable timberland; and still others, established later, composed irregularly shaped leftover fragments of territory (30:50).

As the number of settlements in the state increased, the number of districts increased correspondingly. By 1900 there were 2,022 districts and by 1910 the total reached a peak of 2,710 (30:51).

Legislation to aid school district reorganization had been passed several times in the history of Washington. One of the first was a law passed in 1901. This permitted two or more elementary districts to form a separately organized union for purposes of operating a high school.

Provision was made early for district consolidation in Washington. A 1903 law permitted consolidation of two or more districts by order of the county superintendent after a public hearing. A new law was enacted in 1915 permitting formation of consolidated units upon a favorable
majority vote in each district concerned. For a number of years afterward there was considerable consolidation activity, 304 consolidated districts having formed by 1921 school year. By 1931-32 the number had grown to 406.

Although some consolidations were good-sized mergers, the great majority resulted in the formation of administrative units that were still too small to maintain satisfactory school programs at reasonable cost (35:299).

By 1937 there were 1,609 districts of all types--15 first-class, 315 second-class, and 1,279 third-class. Of the total number, 292 maintained both elementary and high schools, 46 were union high school districts and 1,317 were organized for elementary purposes only. Of the latter, 829 were one-teacher districts, 175 of which were not operating schools. Almost 70 per cent of the one-teacher districts that were maintaining a school had an average daily attendance of fewer than 14 pupils.

Washington's school district reorganization program grew out of a series of studies and surveys conducted during the late 1930's, resulting in the development of widespread recognition of the need for improving the school district system. Reorganization legislation was enacted in 1941, establishing a pattern of redistricting procedures which have been successfully used in other State Programs started since that time. By 1945, when
the legislation expired, the number of districts in the State had been reduced by more than three-fifths, with improvements in district organizations having been made in most counties and completed in several (35:303).

For two years after expiration of the 1941 act, the State had no reorganization legislation except the old consolidation laws. However, in 1947 new legislation was enacted, establishing the reorganization program on a continuing basis.

The legislature enacted a new proposal for reorganization in 1955. This act established county reorganization committees. After studying the existing school districts, these committees were to prepare and submit to the State Board of Education a comprehensive plan for changes in the organization and extent of the school districts of the county. The approval of the proposed plan by the State Board was required. To become effective, a proposal must be passed by a 60 per cent majority of all the votes cast in the election (35:310). If no changes were necessary, the committees were to indicate so to the State Board of Education.

The Washington State Legislature Interim Committee on Education, in 1962, reported that county committees on school organization in many counties of the state had ceased to function. They met at infrequent intervals or
not at all and failed to initiate proposals and plans for school district reorganization even when such action was necessary (3:34-35).

III. ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE REORGANIZATION MOVEMENT

The peak number of school districts in Washington was reached in 1910 when there were over a total of 2,710. This number had been reduced to 1,609 by 1937. According to the Washington State Research Council there were 540 school districts in Washington in 1954. Eighty-seven operated only a single room. Twenty-four districts operated no school (4:20). By 1966, the number of school districts in the State of Washington had been further reduced to 365.

Despite this tremendous reduction in the number of school districts, Strayer stated that if the programs of school district reorganization were carried to completion, the school population could be served by 280 districts (30:54).

The Reorganization statute encourages non-high districts to unite with high school districts which serve them. This would give the people in these districts a voice in the management of the high school which serves their boys and girls and the educational program could be improved.
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF STUDY GROUPS

The Washington State Legislature, in 1959, authorized an interim study of educational problems within the state by legislators, educators, and lay citizens during the year 1960 (18:4). Recommendations of five subcommittees were presented to the public at special hearings throughout the state. The reactions of the public were added to the recommendations of the subcommittees and the complete package was presented to appropriate legislative groups for their consideration.

Subcommittee II dealt with school finance and organization. On August 15, 1960, this subcommittee submitted their report containing thirteen recommendations. Four of the recommendations were concerned with school district reorganization and were stated as follows:

Recommendation 10. That the State Legislature take appropriate action to require that by January 1, 1963, every school district will be offering a minimum of instruction through the twelfth grade.

Recommendation 11. That the State Board of Education should be authorized as the approving agency for the location of all new high school building sites in second class districts and those third class districts existing until 1963 and in first class districts where the location of the school may impinge on the rights of neighboring districts.

Recommendation 12. That the County Committees on School District Reorganization (or Regional Committees recommended in this report) should be granted whatever authority may be necessary to accelerate the program of reorganizing high school districts to serve the best interests of the children, the state and the people.
Recommendation 13. That the present County Committees for School District Reorganization be terminated and in their place there be established Regional Committees for School District Organization with powers to expedite the establishment of school districts large enough to provide all essential educational services now accepted as an integral part of public educational responsibility (4:57-58).

Despite the strong recommendations of the subcommittee, the legislative session of 1961 took no positive action to accelerate reorganization in Washington State. The answer to the inaction of the legislature was to be found, possibly, in the subcommittee's report when it mentioned that about four per cent of the pupils of the state live in districts operating only elementary schools (4:57) and "... those districts most amenable to combination have done so and those which remain will, in general, resist redistricting." (4:57). Busy legislators could not be expected to become excited over the prospect of forcing a small number of reluctant districts into unwanted redistricting action.

Washington State was cited as an example of good school organization in that the number of districts were reduced from 1,792 in 1931-32 to 412 in 1959-60, or 77.0 per cent decrease as compared to a national average decrease of 68.1 per cent over the same period (4:57).

Although commendable results have been achieved in many areas throughout the state, there is yet much to be done to complete the program of improving school district
reorganization. Reorganization should be continued to include all of the districts in the State, making it possible to offer all pupils the increased educational opportunities that are now offered in the satisfactorily organized districts. Some special problems that confront the program of further school district improvement relate to non-high district territory, unnecessary small high schools, and the relation of the county superintendent to the enlarged district organization (30:69).

V. NON-HIGH DISTRICTS

A disproportionate high percent of Washington school districts still operate only the first eight grades or in a number of cases, only six grades. The residents of these districts have provided little, if any, of their share of the cost of high school facilities their children use. Presently, these districts have nothing to say about how the high school is administered. Most of these districts could be made a part of a consolidated district with resulting educational enrichment (38:25).

VI. FUNCTION OF A LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

A local school administrative district comprises an area served by a single system of administration and under the jurisdiction of one board of school directors.
The essential function of a local school district in Washington, as an agent of the state, is to provide educational opportunities for the children and youth living within its borders (40:5).

Local school administrative units are creations of the state. The legislature may at any time enlarge school districts, alter their boundaries, or abolish them altogether. The formation or maintenance of a school district is not an inherent right of the people of a locality. Local district organization results from certain powers and duties granted to a community by legislative act for purposes of conducting schools only so long as sound programs of education are maintained (30:50).

The existence of a district, or its continuation with territorial limits as now defined, is defensible only so long as it (a) can provide acceptable educational services and facilities for all school children residing within its boundaries, without waste or unnecessary expenditures of public funds (either local or state) and without unfair financial advantages for its residents; and (b) does not impede attainment of the same objectives by other districts (30:51).

VII. CRITERIA FOR SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Grieder and Rosenstengel suggest that the minimum
enrollment for a six-year elementary is 150-175 pupils. This would be approximately twenty-five pupils per teacher unit with no teacher assigned more than one grade. For an eight-year elementary school a comparable number would be 200-250 pupils. The minimum number of students in a senior high should be 350 (15:14).

The National Conference on the Financing of Education meeting in 1933, agreed on the following as a criterion for an efficient school district. Districts which had an overall attendance of less than 1500 were deficient in their educational program, and the smaller they were the greater was the deficiency (19:68).

Johns and Morphet in 1952 listed the following as a standard for the minimum size of satisfactory school districts. An elementary school should have at least 240 pupils. There should be 245 pupils enrolled in a junior high. A senior high school should have at least 175 students enrolled (19:78).

The Washington State Planning Council, as a result of their survey of Washington's common school system, came to the following conclusions regarding the size of school districts. The elementary attendance area for a six-year school should be large enough to provide about thirty pupils to a grade under one teacher. In a secondary school with grades seven through twelve, the attendance
area should not have less than 250 pupils, except in areas too isolated to provide for large attendance units. They also recommend that elementary students should not ride more than forty-five minutes and secondary students not more than seventy-five minutes one way on a school bus to school (39:30).

VIII. ADVANTAGES OF LARGER DISTRICTS

One of the great advantages of a larger district is the equality of educational opportunity. A larger district could provide educational opportunity that meets the interest, needs and abilities of all the students. Further, a larger district will be more attractive to the teacher and will secure and keep highly trained teachers. The teachers can teach in their area of specialty. Working conditions are usually better and there is, in most cases, a higher salary schedule (34:93).

Strayer said that one important result of reorganization into larger units was the possibility of providing improved educational services. Almost without exception there was improvement in the supervision of instruction, and in facilities available for health, libraries, physical education, music, art, lunch or cafeteria and guidance programs (30:60).

Grieder and Rosenstengel have concluded that there were several educational advantages to be gained by
reorganization into larger school districts. In larger school districts teachers could be assigned to teach in the area in which they are best prepared. Larger districts could also provide visual aids, libraries, playgrounds, and well-kept school plants that small districts may not be able to provide. The needs and capacities of senior high school students could better be met in a larger high school (15:20).

There are definite financial advantages to be gained by reorganization into larger districts. Larger district reorganization reduces the inequalities in ability to raise current school revenue that exist when there are many small districts of varying wealth. The burden of support is then more equally divided among the people (30:60). Some other financial benefits include lower per pupil cost, more efficient use of equipment, the purchase of supplies and equipment in large quantity can save much money, and greater economy in administration and leadership.

IX. WEAKNESSES OF SMALLER DISTRICTS

School districts vary greatly in the amount of taxable wealth per pupil available for supporting educational programs. Most small districts have a taxable wealth inadequate for this purpose. It is not uncommon
in many states for the richest district within a county to have 20 to 50 times as much wealth as the poorest county (34:84).

At a meeting of the National Conference on the Financing of Education in 1933, three conclusions regarding the financial ability of small school districts were reached: (1) These small school districts cannot give a widespread offering to its pupils at an economical cost; (2) They could not economically furnish adequate administrative and supervisory services which are necessary to facilitate operation of the school program; (3) Small districts could not furnish adequate financial resources to support a satisfactory educational program (19:68).

In addition to the above weaknesses, small districts could not economically afford adequate professional leadership (19:69). They do not make efficient use of administrative personnel because too much time is spent on duties other than professional work.

Per-pupil expenditures in the small districts was higher than in larger districts. In small districts they were not able to assign an optimum number of pupils per teacher. For example, in Washington it was found that in high schools with fewer than fifty pupils the cost per pupil was two-thirds higher than in high schools having
150-399 students which, in turn, had higher pupil costs than schools of larger size (13:84).

X. PROBLEMS OF REORGANIZATION

The resistance to school district reorganization by citizens of the local districts was stated in much of the literature as an important obstacle to larger administrative and attendance units.

The Washington Research Council listed the obstacles to school district reorganization as follows:

1. Misunderstanding or lack of understanding,
2. Resistance to change,
3. Personal interests,
4. Fear that the elementary school will be closed,
5. Reorganization will result in centralized government control,
6. School district organization is a matter of local concern only.

The National Education Association noted, among other things, that unwieldy laws and procedures obstructed moves to form larger school systems and state laws sometimes made concessions to the small local units.

The American Association of School Administrators pointed out that fear was the greatest deterrent to the successful transition from the small local school unit to the larger unified district. Fear that taxes would be raised, the school plant would be moved away from the neighborhood, the children would be injured in transporting them to far distant centers, and the community itself would suffer as a result of school district reorganization.
were among the reasons listed (1:10).

Other fears are that local continuity will be destroyed. Many feel that the community itself will be seriously weakened or destroyed through school reorganization. Whether these fears are well grounded or purely imaginary makes but little difference when the votes are counted. If sound school district reorganization is to be effected through the ballot, the people must be convinced of its advantages so that they are willing to set aside personal interests, concerns, and prejudices in favor of a better educational program for their children (1:10).

XI. RESEARCH ON THE 6-6 PLAN

There are many studies which give statistics, trends, opinions, and advantages and disadvantages of the 6-6 plan. These studies cover from the mid-1800's to the present time. Several studies are investigated in this paper.

The first study here indicates that the six-year high school is not a new innovation nor an outdated one (16:10).

A six-year high school was urged by a committee on college entrance requirements in 1899. It was a joint committee representing the Department of Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education of the N.E.A.
The committee was formed at the N.E.A. meeting in 1895.

In its report, in 1899, the committee expressed itself in favor of a unified six-year high school course of study, beginning in the seventh grade.

The committee said "the seventh grade, rather than the ninth grade, is the natural turning point in the pupil's life, as the age of adolescence demands new methods and wiser direction. Six years of elementary and six years of high school, or secondary, trades form symmetrical units."

**TABLE I**

**NUMBER OF VARIOUS TYPES OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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<thead>
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<th>Type of School</th>
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<td>2,372</td>
<td>2,653</td>
<td>3,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior-Senior High (7-12)</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>3,287</td>
<td>6,203</td>
<td>6,360</td>
<td>8,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior High (10-12)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>1,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular High (9-12)</td>
<td>43,421</td>
<td>16,460</td>
<td>15,523</td>
<td>13,797</td>
<td>10,168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I (16:19) compares the junior high organization with the traditional high school organization.

Statistics published by the United States Office of Education show that in 1942 the schools which have reorganized became predominant.
1. Fifty-seven per cent of the secondary schools in the United States were of the reorganized type.

2. Seventy-five per cent of the secondary pupils in the United States were enrolled in reorganized types of secondary schools.

3. Fifty-four per cent of all seventh and eighth grade pupils in the United States were enrolled in reorganized types of secondary schools.

4. Separate junior high schools--81%--are found in communities of 10,000 or more.

5. Junior-senior or six-year high schools--77%--are found in areas of less than 10,000 population.

The second study was reported by Jerold L. Reece. Conclusions and recommendations of the study were as follows (26:23-24):

1. There was no significant difference in achievement of 696 ninth grade pupils in the three-year plan, as compared to 314 ninth grade pupils in the six-year plan. It stated that this agrees with the research in the last 40 years. It also stated that previous research on the 8-4 plan to either the 6-3-3 or the 6-6 plan shows no plan is superior.

2. Results of the questionnaires, 1084 ninth grade students, 781 parents, and 159 teachers show a preference for the three-year plan, but no serious criticism to the six-year plan was made.

3. The study urged that a separate junior high school be used, but if a district had small enrollment, small teaching staff, and limited facilities and financial resources, a six-year plan could just as well be used.
Some implications for improvement of education of seventh to ninth grade pupils in the six-year plan follow (26:27-28):

1. Help make the 7-9 grade students feel a part of the school.

2. Assign teachers to grades 7-9 that are best suited to this age.

3. Give 7-9 graders the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of activities.

4. Improve opportunities for 7-9 pupils to develop leadership.

The main purpose of the third study was to ascertain trends away from the 8-4 plan (6:285).

1. There has been a trend away from four-year high schools since 1931, and it is continuing.

2. There has been an upward trend in six-year high schools from the late 1920's to 1950 and the trend is continuing.

3. Three-year senior high schools leveled off during the 1940-1950 period and began a slight upward trend in the 1950's.

4. Three-year junior high schools leveled off in the 1940's.

5. Three-year and six-year high schools were found in all enrollment groups, but a tendency for larger enrollment groups to go to the 6-3-3 plan and the smaller to go to the 6-6 plan was noticed. Advantages to the 6-6 program seem to disappear with an enrollment of about 900.

A further study by Long in 1958 indicates that the advantages of a 6-6 plan over an 8-4 are (22:158-160):

1. The scheduling in small schools would be improved.
2. More subject areas would be offered for all grades resulting in a more balanced program.

3. The district would operate more economically.

4. There would be more opportunity for grouping the students by grade level and abilities.

5. The utilization of the staff would be improved.

6. The resource facilities and labs would be used to a greater advantage.

7. The curriculum for seventh and eighth graders could be expanded to include shop, home economics, foreign language, and other electives.

8. Courses of study could be more unified through continuous textbook series.

9. Students and teachers could develop better understanding and rapport because of the additional time spent together.

10. The counseling opportunities could be improved.

11. The teachers could concentrate more on their own field of specialization rather than having to teach in areas where they might be inadequately prepared.

12. The problems of articulation from junior high to high school would be decreased.

The same study indicates the following disadvantages of a six-year high school are:

1. Younger pupils might not be able to cope with the sophistication of older students.

2. The activities of the older students might not be compatible with those of younger students.

3. The leadership of the school might be dominated by the older students.

4. The rules for younger students are not always good for older students.
5. There might be a tendency to neglect programs for younger students.

Some of the disadvantages can be alleviated according to a study made in 1955 by Grieder and Romine (14:222). They are:

1. House the seventh and eighth grade students in a different area from the ninth through twelfth grade students.

2. Different student councils could be established.

3. Separate activities could be organized.

4. Different lunch periods could be arranged for the different grade levels.

The factors affecting reorganization are many. The existing facilities must be considered, but the plan of organization should be developed in terms of the education program to be served (9:72). The plan that makes the best use of personnel and facilities and gives the best instructional program for the children of the district should be selected. The dividing line should be made on pupil needs, not on tradition (17:99).
CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

I. EARLY HISTORY

The pioneer towns of the Upper Skykomish Valley emerged in the 1880's and 1890's. The building of the Great Northern Railroad through the Upper Skykomish Valley in the early 1890's assured the towns of continued life.

Sultan was founded in 1890 and was incorporated in 1905. Index was founded in 1890. Startup was dedicated in 1890, and Gold Bar was plotted in 1900.

Many of the descendants of the early pioneer families continue to reside in the towns founded by their forebears.

The Schools. Each town in the Upper Skykomish Valley made efforts to provide schools for the children. An idea of the early educational problem may be gathered from the following account of the first school in Sultan, in 1889:

The first roll call contained 17 names, half of whom were Indians and half-breeds. Contrary to common opinion, people were neither better nor worse in those days than now, as shown by official records of that time. It seems the owner of the school house, who lived in a leanto, took exception to some pupils kicking his dog around and for revenge removed the doors and windows and loaded the stove with gunpowder.
The explosion wrecked the classroom and stove, but fortunately no one was injured. Although a peace bond was assessed and a fifty dollar fine meted out, the teacher carried a rifle the rest of the term (31:6).

During the 1890's and 1900's many one room schools dotted the valley, offering education through the eighth grade. By 1908 Sultan had high school facilities (31:7). Startup, Gold Bar, and Index later offered high school courses to students who had finished the eighth grade (31:58).

Startup and Sultan soon after 1916 formed the Sultan Union High School, but Gold Bar maintained its own high school until 1933 (32:11). Gold Bar then made an arrangement with Sultan Union High School to educate their high school pupils. Gold Bar became a non-high district and continued to maintain its elementary school for pupils in grades one to eight. Index retained its high school pupils until 1942 when they followed the example of Gold Bar and became a non-high district and sent their high school pupils to Sultan Union High School (31:58).

II. THE PEOPLE AND THE TOWNS

Index. Index, by 1960 was the smallest of the Upper Skykomish Valley towns having a population of less than two hundred people. The town has a picturesque setting with the north fork of the Skykomish River running
beside the town. Majestic mountain peaks and sheer rock cliffs surround the town. One section of town has stately old houses with well-kept lawns. Another section is more nondescriptive with unpainted houses and falling buildings along with newer structures.

The people of Index are friendly and closely knit. Many of the old established families still live there and a pioneer spirit of community endeavor exists. Most of the employed people work in the forests, the quarries, on the railroad, or at a cement plant which is located nearby.

The 1960 census listed the population of Index as 158 people. The town had a drop in population from 1950 to 1960 of 53 persons. Elementary school enrollment also declined from 37 pupils in 1950 to 29 in 1960-1961.

**Gold Bar.** Gold Bar enjoyed a slow but gradual population and school enrollment increase from 1950 to 1960. The 1960 census credited the town with 315 people. Most of the business establishments cater to highway travelers. Motels, trailer parks, restaurants, and gasoline service stations, as well as a modern grocery store, provide work and income for some of the residents. The predominate occupation is logging, although many small raspberry farms are located inside and outside the town. Some workers commute to Everett, Seattle and other cities.

**Startup.** The town of Startup contained less than
300 people and the entire district served by the school had a population of less than 400 in 1963 (34:7).

The town's few business establishments depend largely on highway patronage. Some dairy farms and many raspberry farms are located within the school district. Like other Upper Skykomish Valley towns, logging and farming are the major means of earning a living. Some workers commute to nearby towns where they are employed.

**Sultan.** Sultan had a population of 821 in 1960, an increase of seven from 1950. However, school enrollment increased from 410 to 647 during the same period of time. Home construction in the Sultan School District outside the city limits accounted for the school enrollment growth.

In addition to the restaurants and service stations, which are largely dependent on highway trade, Sultan has a bank, a drug store, hardware store, lumber yard and other business enterprises. A weekly newspaper, *The Valley News*, serves Sultan and the other towns of the Valley with local news and information. *The Valley News* took an active role in all the reorganization elections. Churches, lodges, and farm organizations located in Sultan draw membership from neighboring towns.

The Upper Skykomish Valley is classified as semi-rural. This writer, having lived in the area, has noticed
a friendly rivalry among the towns. The people inter-mingle and cooperate on matters other than schools. In Index, Gold Bar, and Startup the schools are the centers of community life. To a lesser degree, Sultan schools serve the same need. Each community is proud of its schools and the citizens usually are satisfied with the caliber of education being offered to their young people. Local citizens are proud of the efforts and sacrifices they have made in past years to build and improve their educational facilities.

III. EARLY REORGANIZATION EFFORT

The citizens of the Upper Skykomish Valley have made only one attempt to reorganize their schools from 1923 to 1961. A possible reason for this is that the people of the local districts were generally content with the organization of their elementary schools. The county committee, while recognizing the needs for a larger attendance unit in the Valley, maintained a hands-off policy insofar as initiating school district mergers for that area.

One attempt was made to merge the districts of the Upper Skykomish Valley in 1947. A fire had destroyed the Sultan Union High School building in that year. Following the fire a team of representatives from the State
Department of Education studied the available school facilities in the elementary school districts served by the Sultan Union High School. Temporary housing was set up for the high school students at the vacant Civilian Conservation Corps buildings located in Sultan.

The state survey team recommended that Sultan High students be sent to the Monroe High School building. This proposal was acceptable to the Monroe school board but was rejected by the Sultan school directors.

The problem of obtaining bonding capacity to provide funds for rebuilding the high school at Sultan prompted a consolidation proposal by the Sultan board members to include Sultan, Startup, Gold Bar, and Index. This merger was supported by the county superintendent of schools and the state board of education.

A public meeting was held in Gold Bar, in 1947, to sound out the public opinion on the proposed merger. Spokesmen from Index and Gold Bar rejected vigorously any consolidation of their elementary schools. Ward Bowden, editor of The Valley News in Sultan, was also against the merger. Bowden gave as his reason for opposing the proposed reorganization that the State Board of Education is forcing the consolidation move upon the small districts of Index and Gold Bar (37:1).

Lack of public support, as determined by the opinions
expressed at the Gold Bar public meeting in 1947, precluded any attempt to bring the reorganization of Sultan, Gold Bar, and Index school districts to a vote of the people. Animosity generated in 1947 lingered over the Upper Skykomish Valley districts and discouraged any further efforts toward consolidation of schools in that area until 1961.

IV. RECENT REORGANIZATION EFFORTS OF MONROE AND UPPER SKYKOMISH VALLEY SCHOOLS

Three efforts were made to reorganize the schools of the Upper Skykomish Valley in Snohomish County, Washington, between 1961 and 1963. Following an intensive study of their schools in 1961 and 1962, the electors of Monroe School District Number 402, Sultan School District Number 314, Startup School District Number 42, Gold Bar School District Number 84, and Index School District Number 63 went to the polls on April 10, 1962, to decide the issue. The proposal was defeated by the voters in Sultan, Startup and Gold Bar school districts and was passed by the voters of Index and Monroe school districts. Washington State law required a majority in each component district voting on the issue to pass a reorganization measure so the proposal was soundly defeated.

A second election was held on May 28, 1963 in an
effort to unite the school districts of Sultan, Startup, Gold Bar and Index. A second proposition on the ballot provided for the formation of a new school district composed of Sultan, Startup, and Index in the event that Gold Bar voters turned down the first proposition. Both propositions failed.

A third election was held to reorganize Startup and Sultan school districts on October 29, 1963, Startup and Sultan were component districts of Sultan Union High School. This election received a favorable vote in both districts. The new district is called Sultan School District Number 30.

V. HISTORY OF SCHOOL DISTRICT #30

Original districts. What is now School District #30 was originally three separate school districts. Each had its own boundaries, school board, budget, and staff. There was, however, much cooperation between the districts.

Startup District #42 was a non-high district. It had a three-member board, and was administered by a head teacher. The school contained grades one to eight, and was staffed by four teachers, including the head teacher. Each teacher taught two grades.

Sultan District #314 was also a non-high district.
It had a school board of five members, and a superintendent-principal administrator. It had twelve teachers on the staff. It also contained grades one through eight. Each teacher taught one grade except where combination rooms were necessary.

Sultan Union High School District #402 contained only a high school and was an entity unto itself. Its area comprised the combined areas of Sultan District #314 and Startup District #42. Its board was made by combining the boards of the two grade school districts.

The high school district handled the transportation for all three districts and the music teacher was shared by all three districts. The students from Gold Bar and Index also attended the Sultan Union High School even though they were not part of the Union high school district.

District #30, buildings and organizations. The organization is basically K-8-4. However, the eighth grade goes to the high school a few blocks away for one period a day. The students have their choice of Home Economics, Wood Shop, or Spanish I. They also have a junior high athletic program taking in grades 7-9.

In order to use existing facilities to the best advantage, the arrangement of grades is a bit unusual. There are two rooms at all grade levels, 1-8, and morning
and afternoon sessions of kindergarten.

Grades 1 and 2 are housed in a new four-room cluster on the Sultan Grade School grounds. Kindergarten and grades 3, 4, 7, and 8 are in the old Sultan Grade School building. This building needs replacing. There is a new gymnasium on these grounds also.

The 5th and 6th grades are housed in the old Startup Grade School building. This building needs replacing. There is a fairly old, but very good gymnasium at Startup. Much new housing is needed in the grade school.

The high school buildings are quite good, but they have some very noticeable deficiencies. The shop areas are practically non-existent, and there is no special music area. The band and chorus meet in regular class rooms or on the stage in the gymnasium. (The same is true at the Sultan Grade School). At least four new teaching stations and an auditorium are needed.

Gold Bar, District #84, buildings and organizations. The organization is 1-8. The school was built in 1914 and has five teaching stations. The building is old and needs replacing. There is an old gymnasium that also needs replacing.

Index, District #63, buildings and organizations. The Index school is ten years old and has two teaching
stations and a small gymnasium. The building is in good condition and used frequently for social activities.

**Location and enrollment.** The Upper Skykomish Valley at the present time consists of three school districts. Sultan High School and elementary school are located north of the center of town. The 5th and 6th grades are located at Startup three miles east of Sultan. The enrollment of the Sultan School District, including elementary and high school, is about 725, approximately 500 being in the elementary school. Gold Bar Grade School is located about six miles east of Sultan and has an enrollment of 106. Index Grade School is located fourteen miles east of Sultan and has an enrollment of 19.

**Classroom size.** The Washington State Planning Council states that an elementary school should have at least twenty-five to thirty pupils per grade. Table II illustrates that many classrooms in the Upper Skykomish Valley do not meet this standard. Fourteen situations exist where this standard is not met. Sultan is the only school that meets this standard.
TABLE II
NUMBER OF PUPILS PER GRADE IN EACH DISTRICT
1966-1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Bar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grieder and Rosenstengel state that the ideal condition in an elementary school is to have one teacher teach one grade (15:14). However, in the town of Index, one teacher teaches grades 1-2-3 and the other, grades 4-5-6. The elementary school (grades 1-8) of the Gold Bar school district has four teachers, each teacher teaching two grades.

The number of teachers could be reduced by reorganization. Table III illustrates how the teachers in the Upper Skykomish Valley are distributed throughout the three schools that now exist.
### TABLE III
NUMBER OF PUPILS PER GRADE AND NUMBER OF TEACHERS PER GRADE IN THE UPPER SKYKOMISH VALLEY 1966-1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gold Bar</td>
<td>Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criteria for the size of elementary schools. The Washington State Planning Council has recommended that an elementary school should have an attendance of at least 200 to 250. They also recommend that a teaching load of twenty-five to thirty students per teacher is satisfactory. Table IV shows that Gold Bar, with 26\% pupils per teacher and Sultan, with 27 pupils per teacher, comes within this standard. Index is far below this standard, with 9\% students per teacher.
TABLE IV
ENROLLMENT PER TEACHER IN EACH SCHOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Enrollment per Teacher</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Bar</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>26-1/2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9-1/2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finance. The districts have had difficulty in raising money locally for schools for the following reasons: (1) the assessed valuation of the districts is low, (2) moderate and low priced housing, (3) few industries, (4) a lot of logged over land, (5) the districts have a high per cent of retired people, and (6) nearly 30% of the families in Snohomish County who have incomes under $3,000 are located in the Upper Skykomish Valley (31:23).

Table V shows the assessed valuation and millage rate of each district.
**TABLE V**

**ASSESSED VALUATION AND THE MILLAGE RATE IN THE UPPER SKYKOMISH VALLEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Valuation</th>
<th>Millage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Bar</td>
<td>$700,860</td>
<td>33.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>$480,050</td>
<td>28.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan</td>
<td>$2,597,535</td>
<td>28.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost per pupil. Charles Fitzwater (13:58) concludes that it is less expensive to operate a school when it has a sufficient number of students. The smaller schools with less than 50 students are usually the most expensive to run and create the greatest burden on the tax payer.

Table VI illustrates this point. Index, with the lowest school population, has an average cost per pupil of $925.11. This is higher than $730.75, which is the state average for schools with less than 50 pupils (38:46). Gold Bar is next, followed by Sultan. Sultan, with the larger pupil enrollment, has the lowest per-pupil cost.
TABLE VI

AVERAGE ANNUAL COST PER PUPIL
FOR THE YEARS 1964-1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Bar</td>
<td>$437.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>$952.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan</td>
<td>$418.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would appear that the average cost-per-pupil would be lowered if all these schools were reorganized into one district.

Specialists in the school program. There is a definite lack of special services in most schools in the Upper Skykomish Valley. The schools are all served by a speech therapist, county nurse, welfare assistant, and a psychologist who are available only at certain times during the week.

Table VII illustrates which other special people are available to these schools. Sultan is the only school that offers band, vocal music, library, and a full time special education teacher. Gold Bar and Index are visited by the guidance director once a week.
TABLE VII

SPECIAL TEACHERS AND/OR PROGRAMS THAT NOW EXIST IN THE UPPER SKYKOMISH SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Teachers</th>
<th>Gold Bar</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Sultan</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal Music</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highway conditions. The condition of the roads must be considered when discussing reorganization. Most of the roads traveled by the buses are either asphalt covered or concrete. All other roads are well graveled. The County does an outstanding job of keeping the roads in good condition and very few days of school are missed because of bad weather.
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of this thesis was to determine if there is a need for reorganization in the Upper Skykomish Valley and if reorganization is necessary, this study will propose a plan by which this reorganization can be carried out.

Summary. When the existing conditions in the Upper Skykomish Valley school districts are examined against the expert opinion of the Washington State Planning Council, there appears a definite need for reorganization of the school districts in this area. This study has identified the following reasons for reorganization: (1) Index and Gold Bar both have combination classrooms, with more than one grade level in the same room, (2) most of the schools are severely limited by the number of special teachers and special services available, (3) Index does not meet the minimum requirement for the number of pupils per classroom, (4) some of the school buildings need replacing, (5) some of the districts cannot give adequate subject offerings, and (6) the annual cost per pupil is quite unequal.
Conclusions. Based on the evidence presented in this paper, the writer concludes that in order to provide the best educational program possible for the boys and girls in the Upper Skykomish Valley, reorganization is essential. The benefits to be derived from reorganization are:

A. The advantages to the students
   1. Pupils from Index, Sultan and Gold Bar would be able to go through their high school education with a better chance of scholastic success.
   2. The scheduling of classes would be made easier.
   3. By attending a six-year secondary school the students would have the advantage of a constant curriculum.
   4. The larger school would provide greater opportunities to group students according to their abilities and achievements and to offer special services to each group.

B. The advantages to the teachers
   1. There would be a better balance of class loads.
   2. Each teacher would be required to make fewer preparations.
3. A larger student body would permit improvement and expansion of the counseling and guidance programs.

C. The advantages to the administration

1. Reorganization would result in more effective administration.

2. More efficient use of district funds would result by decreasing the number of school districts because:
   a) volume purchasing would result in savings in the cost of supplies and equipment
   b) less clerical help would be needed
   c) budgets and financial accounts of the several districts would be combined
   d) building maintenance costs would be reduced with the closing of some buildings

3. With reorganization the school facilities could be more effectively used.

D. The advantages to the communities

1. The local tax burden would be more equally distributed.

2. All members of each community would have equal voice in the operation of the school.
Recommendations. The criteria set forth by the Washington State Planning Council will be the basis for the proposed 6-6 plan of reorganization in the Upper Skykomish Valley. The recommendations of the council are as follows: (1) the elementary population should be large enough to provide 30 pupils under one teacher from kindergarten through grade six, (2) the minimum population of the school should be 200, (3) in a secondary school with grades seven through twelve the attendance area should not have less than 250 pupils, and (4) elementary students should not have to walk in excess of one mile nor should they be forced to ride a bus more than 45 minutes one way and secondary students should not ride more than 75 minutes one way on a school bus to school (39:20).

The conditions of the existing buildings must be kept in mind when planning for reorganization. The building at Index is the smallest and has the least number of students. It would be advisable to close this building and turn it over to the town for a community center.

The Gold Bar building is old and badly in need of repair. This building would also be closed.

The Startup building would be kept on a standby basis until additional facilities can be added to the
Sultan building. When this happens, this building would also be closed.

The Sultan elementary building would remain until a new plant is constructed. It is an old building and needs replacing.

The high school buildings as stated before are in good condition. Recently the voters of Upper Skykomish Valley passed a building program which would provide funds to construct and equip a music building, an industrial arts building, six classrooms and a workroom.

The new addition would provide facilities for a junior-senior high school at Sultan. The building should be completed and ready for use for the 1968-69 school year.

From the evidence given and the research presented in this study it appears that the reorganization of Gold Bar, Index and Sultan school districts would result in a more satisfactory educational program. The problem then would be—should the district change from the traditional 8-4 plan to a 6-6 program? Using district history and research trends as criteria, it would seem that the 6-6 plan would be the logical choice.


