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A Study of the Need for School District Reorganization in the Southeastern part of Thurston County, Washington

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A STUDY OF THE NEED FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION
IN THE SOUTHEASTERN PART OF THURSTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

A THESIS

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Master of Education

by
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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEMS AND TERMS DEFINED

The need for reorganization of small districts by merging with other districts is becoming greater as educational requirements are mounting. The growing complexity of and changes being made in America's way of life, such as: the progress being made in industry, the forward leap into space made by science, the need of man to solve the big problems caused by a lack of brotherhood, and many other problems, place an unprecedented burden upon schools trying to meet educational needs. A bulletin from the state superintendent's office speaking about a need for school district reorganization, states that:

Residents in rural areas have become more aware of the deficiencies of small school programs, as well as concerned with their economic inefficiency. And state wide, there has been a greater demand for quality programs on all levels since Sputnik (1:1).

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The reasons for this paper are (1) to study the literature to determine the qualities of adequate school districts; (2) to make a study of three small school districts and one larger district with the idea of a possible merger for the three smaller districts; and (3) if deemed advisable, recommend a plan of reorganization.

Reasons for this study. Some understaffed and underfinanced schools demonstrate that the districts are too small to cope with the educational problems caused by a rapidly advancing civilization. The

administrative units are not able to develop constructive programs which will meet the needs of most of the students. The state has laws that grant the local school districts the power and duty of developing educational programs. The people of the district should not expect less than the standards set forth by these laws. Administrative units have no right to offer educational programs of lower standards than those demanded by the people (16:50). Reorganization is one way that the small school district may work toward a more constructive educational program.

PROCEDURE

In this study it was necessary to review some of the literature pertaining to school reorganization. The literature deals with problems and facts relative to small and large districts including: (1) Why does a small district have trouble in reaching academic standards? (2) Why do small districts have a struggle financially? (3) Why do larger districts offer a wider variety of courses? (4) Why do larger districts hire and keep the better teachers? (5) Why do larger districts usually have fewer financial problems? (6) How do smaller districts reorganize effectively? (7) What are the problems encountered in past reorganization efforts; and why did they fail or succeed?

It was necessary to make a study of three schools in the southeastern part of Thurston county to determine the number of students enrolled, number of teachers, teacher loads, courses offered, pay scale for teachers, district valuation for tax purposes, the tax load, and cost per student. Most of the information came from school boards,

local school administrative staffs, county school superintendent and staff, state school superintendent and staff, and some residents of the districts.

After this information was collected and analyzed it was compared with the literature that had been reviewed. This enabled the writer to compare what the experts in the field say with what the facts show in the districts studied.

The study was limited to the literature from experts in the field of organization, the three schools in the southern part of Thurston county, and one larger district adjacent to these three.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature and interviews. Chapter 3 is a study of the three districts. Chapter 4 contains a summarization and a recommended reorganization that seemed to be needed.

TERMS DEFINED

Reorganization. Reorganization is the merging of two or more school districts to form one school district.

School district. A school district is a political subdivision of the state, established by acts of the state legislature. It is the territory under control of a single governing body which is the board of directors.

Administrative unit. An administrative unit is an incorporated school district consisting of all the area under a single system of local rule and controlled by a local board of education.

County committees. County committees are committees reestablished by the legislature in 1947, to study school district organization and recommend needed reorganization.

Per pupil valuation. Per pupil valuation is the assessed valuation of a school district divided by the number of pupils.

Small school. A small school district is a school with less than 2000 students in grades K through 12.

Pupil-teacher ratio. Pupil-teacher ratio is the number of students divided by the number of certified personnel.

Chapter 2

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

We are living in a rapidly changing world. The ability or lack of ability of our schools to meet the demands placed upon them by ever changing civilization will influence every man, woman and child. Goslin said:

The study of education is today in a state of ferment. With the expansion of educational horizons in American society, specialists of various sorts--historians, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists--are to an ever greater extent joining with professional educators in inquiries into the nature of our educational ideas and institutions. Together, these scholars are enhancing the vitality, authority, and inspiration required of education concepts in a revolutionary era of social change and scientific discovery (7:1).

Fitzwater says:

If our way of life were static, its needs unchanging with no changes in our culture and economy, and with no population growth or mobility, then perhaps there would be no need for making changes or adaptations in school district organization.

But our way of life is highly dynamic. Rapid social and economic changes are among the most significant characteristics. These changes, along with increased understanding and acceptance of responsibility concerning the educational needs of young people for effective living, have made it imperative that school districts be kept adapted to current conditions (6:53).

HISTORY OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

Early in the history of this state many small districts were organized. A bulletin from the State Superintendent's office states: From 1854, when the common school system was established by the Territorial Legislature, to 1910, a total of 2710 school districts had been

organized in this state. The first legislation relating to reorganization was a law enacted in 1903 permitting the county superintendent to merge two or more districts after a public hearing. In 1915 a new statute permitted reorganizing upon a favorable majority vote in each district.

The first reorganization statistics were recorded in 1920, when it was reported that 304 districts had merged. This activity continued through 1937, when the total number of districts had been reduced to 1609. Responding to legislative concern in that year, the Washington State Planning Council undertook a comprehensive study of school district organization in the state. The council's recommendations resulted in legislation in 1941 creating reorganization committees in each county charged with presenting suggested mergers to a state committee on school district organization. While reorganization plans approved by both committees had to be submitted to a vote of the electorate involved, only a favorable majority of the total vote cast in the entire area was required for merger. This area vote principle, abetted by energetic county committees and the state committee succeeded in reducing the total number of districts to 723 by 1945. The legislature that year, succumbing to pent up pressures, refused to re-enact the 1941 statute. In 1947, the basic provisions of the present law were adapted. These transferred the duties of the former State Committee on School District Organization to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education, re-established committees on school district organization in each county, and most importantly required a favorable majority vote in each district to consummate reorganization of districts. However,

the number of school districts continued to decrease each year. By 1949, the total was 586; in 1954, 534; in 1959, 433; in 1964, 385; and in 1969, 331. Table I (15:1).

In recognition of the fact that county committees on school district organization had operated without specific legislative direction after 1945, the 1955 legislature ordered the preparation of long range plans by each committee within an 18-month period. The current comprehensive plan for school district organization was developed as a result of that legislation (Chapter 395, laws of 1955). The overall state plan represents a compilation of plans for each county. The statute directed that county committees were to give consideration to the following criteria in the preparation of their plans:

- a. The equalization of the educational opportunities of pupils and economies in the administration and operation of schools through the formation of larger administrative units or school districts.
- b. The equalization of the tax burden among school districts through a reduction in disparities in per-pupil valuation.
- c. The convenience and welfare of students.
- d. The geographical features of an area.
- e. The inclusion of each non-high school district in the high school district which enrolls its high school students.

TABLE I

SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION PROGRESS
PERIOD 1910-1969

<u>Year</u>	<u>School Districts</u>	<u>Intervening Years</u>	<u>Reduction in School Districts</u>	<u>Average Reduction Per Year</u>
1910	2710			
1937	1609	27	1101	41
1941	1353	4	256	64
1945	723	4	630*	157
1949	586	4	137	34
1954	534	5	52	10
1959	433	5	101	20
1964	385	5	48	10
1969	331	5	54	11

*The reduction of 630 school districts was accomplished during the effective period of the basic school district reorganization law, 1941-1945, which provided for area vote.

Concurrently, the State Board of Education implemented the statutory provisions with a statement of principles and policies which should be used by county committees in discharging their responsibilities.

- a. The local school district is the unit for administration and operation of common school education. Continuing changes in organization of school districts is necessary to meet changing social and economic conditions.
- b. With very few exceptions, all school districts should be unified districts; that is; districts that educate all pupils residing within their boundaries from a kindergarten through high school and in certain cases, through extended secondary school or junior college.
- c. Such unified districts should comprise a natural geographical area within which all school services can be administered and operated successfully by a single board of school directors.
- d. Some small schools must necessarily be operated in remote or isolated areas.
- e. An overall comprehensive plan for each county should be the primary objective, but separate proposals for specific changes may be submitted from time to time while this objective is being accomplished, providing such proposals are in harmony with the overall plan.
- f. The formation of a new unified school district does not necessarily mean the closing of elementary schools located in the former non-high school districts. "Neighborhood

Elementary Schools" should be retained "where the enrollment is sufficient to permit effective operation or where failure to do so would require long-distance transportation for a considerable number of young children" (5:2).

DISADVANTAGES OF SMALL DISTRICTS

At the beginning of the present century, roads were poor and the train was the only way of rapid transportation. The bus and the automobile were not yet developed. The children who did attend school usually walked or rode horseback. They attended schools that were within two or three miles of their homes because of a lack of good transportation. The schools of that day provided an education that satisfied most of the students. Our society of today is so changed from that of seventy years ago that small schools in most cases cannot satisfy the educational needs of today's students. Those early schools did not offer such things as physical education, home economics, shop, and other special classes. Occasionally music, art, and other cultural subjects were taught, but they were rudimentary at best (10:3).

The schools of the early pioneer were considerably different than our schools of today. It is interesting to note in passing the conditions that caused the small school to be developed. Edward E. Eggleston, in his Hoosier Schoolmaster, described the conditions in the district school which developed in Indiana. One-room log schoolhouses, often erected at a raising bee, were typical. These were patterned after the district school which had developed in the New England towns. The courses of study in these schools, which were ungraded, consisted of reading, writing, and ciphering. The pioneer lad walked to the nearest

school. His fee was usually paid partly in produce. Families boarded the teacher, the number of days he stayed in each home being computed on the basis of the number of pupils in the family (3:1).

One of the disadvantages and inequities of small schools can be found in this statement by Barr:

The rural or suburban families even help materially to create the wealth of the city but in many cases their children do not receive the kind of education they will need later to make a living in the urban areas. In order to learn to live with the peoples of this shrinking world, children living in rural areas must be exposed to an education which helps them understand and live with their neighbors (3:11).

A White House Conference on Education says that small school districts are usually deficient in several different ways:

1. They offer too narrow a curriculum, especially in high school.
2. They have unusual difficulty in getting good teachers.
3. They cost too much per pupil.
4. They make it practically impossible to tax local resources fairly for school purposes.
5. They make it difficult to locate school buildings in relationship to centers of wealth and children living areas.
6. They complicate state systems of school finance.
7. They impede economical and efficient transportation of pupils (11:351).

It is difficult for the small school district to perform essential services that are deemed necessary for today's schools. Cooper said:

Small rural school districts are placed at a disadvantage in providing supervision of instruction, administering the school transportation program, and purchasing school supplies and equipment. The services of school psychologists are unknown to most rural children.... Library

services seldom extend beyond children's contacts with books in the classrooms, study halls, and during their brief visits to a centrally located library. Children of superior mental ability, with their progress geared to a slower moving group average, pass through the successive stages of annoyance, boredom, and frustration and frequently become problem cases because the small neighborhood school lacks the vision, facilities, personnel, and fiscal ability to meet their needs (5:250).

According to Barr and others the small school actually causes a demand for poorly trained teachers. He says:

Small schools are free to bargain for, and actually to create a demand for, poorly educated teachers. They often shrink from furnishing these teachers with laboratory equipment, maps, and other necessary teaching materials. Thus the teacher-preparing institutions sometimes find that their best-trained teachers do not wish to work in such schools (3:11).

ADVANTAGES OF LARGER DISTRICTS

Some of the more important advantages that a larger school district has are (1) more adequate facilities, (2) better supervision of instruction, (3) a well balanced curriculum, (4) a more equitable taxation. Probably the most important benefit would be equalization of educational opportunity.

Griender and Rosenstengle say that there are several advantages to be gained by reorganizing into larger districts. The larger districts are providing more visual aids, better libraries, more modern school buildings, and better equipped school playgrounds. Small districts cannot do as well as the cost is too high in proportion to the use. The improvement of instruction can be administered more successfully in larger districts. Larger schools usually have a higher average daily attendance, more comprehensive curricula, better paid and higher qualified teachers, better administrative and supervisory services (8:20).

A better utilization of school plant facilities is possible in the larger school districts. The pupil-teacher ratio can be more easily kept at the recommended levels. This proper ratio between teacher and student gives the taxpayer more value for each tax dollar that goes for schools. Grieder and others state:

Financial economy and efficiency in the best sense are indubitably promoted by sensible district reorganization. Few reorganized districts require less money than the former districts, and nobody with any sense advocates reorganization on the grounds of actual money savings.... Better returns for the school tax dollar are believed to result from reorganization. Pupil-teacher ratio can usually be increased when small schools are combined, which means a decrease in expenditure per pupil. In rural schools, the pupil-teacher ratio in some states is substantially less than twenty children to one teacher. A widely recommended ratio is twenty-five to one.

Waste in the use of school plants can be reduced. Such units as laboratories, shops, home economics rooms, and gymnasiums are not usually used anywhere near practical capacity in small schools and small districts. It is wasteful to permit such facilities to be idle most of the time. A large number of small schools entails considerable investment in heating plants, and equipment of many kinds totaling much more than the requirements for fewer and larger schools. Some equipment, such as audio-visual apparatus, tools, and library books, can be used to far greater extent by attendance centers which are parts of large administrative units (8:21).

University of Wisconsin research men began, in 1949, a research program to find an answer to the question of how much good reorganization and consolidation might do. They wanted to know; did reorganization change educational programs in such a way as to improve learning opportunities for students, did actual school achievement rise, and what was the relationship between achievement and the cost of education. They were trying to find out if the reorganization of small school districts into larger districts had been effective in meeting the goals set for reorganization. Kreitlow, speaking of this study, found the following results:

Newly reorganized districts were chosen to represent varying levels of good reorganization, based on such criteria as number of pupils, buildings, size of community, tax base, bus transportation, a community with common interests, and so forth. Non-reorganized communities were then matched with reorganized districts as to wealth, population size and distribution, topography, type of farming, nearness to the city, and total area. A unique aspect of the study is its long time nature. In the first year, first grade pupils were the key group. These same boys and girls were again the key group when they reached grade six and nine.

Have greater opportunities in reorganized districts resulted in more actual learning? First graders in both types of districts started with the same range of intelligence, and in the first year of reorganization there were some achievement-test advantages for youngsters in non-reorganized districts. For example, boys in the non-reorganized districts had higher reading scores. But when these boys and girls reached the sixth grade, the situation reversed. There was consistent superiority in achievement favoring youngsters in reorganized districts. There was an advantage in reading, and in arithmetic, and both boys and girls in reorganized districts had significantly higher test scores in science. When they were tested as ninth graders, the measurable differences of achievement evident at the sixth-grade level persisted (13:55).

WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT?

A most important problem that faces administrators of small districts is the problem of reorganizing in such a way as to improve educational programs. Nearly everyone wants good schools for his community, and for his children. The characteristics of an adequate program of educational opportunities are known and can be described. The means are available for providing them. People who really want good schools can have good schools. If the nation is to have good schools, modification of present educational organization can and must take place in hundreds of hamlets, towns, villages, and suburban communities.

This nationwide concern about the quality of education must focus on the local district. It is here that policy is formed that gives direction to the educational program. It is at this point that action is taken to employ teachers, construct buildings, provide books, and equipment, determine course offerings, and establish goals that pupils and teachers strive to meet.

If the school district fails to provide the teachers and equipment needed, if its operational procedures lead to needless waste of financial resources and poor use of instructional equipment, if it offers too little too late to the youth it is expected to serve, if the geographical area served imposes insurmountable obstacles, then it is not contributing what it should, and change should be initiated.

There are few educational responsibilities with more far-reaching importance to the people of a state than the establishment of a sound structure for administering the schools of the local district. How to keep that structure adapted to the changing needs of our society has been a persistent problem in American education. It is also one in which much progress has been made (1:8).

The results of school district reorganization may be viewed in a number of ways. Sometimes results are measured in terms of the number of local districts eliminated by incorporating their territory into larger units. Results may also be measured by increases in the number of new districts having certain characteristics of size or other features commonly associated with adequate local administration units. Such methods have practical value in evaluating organization and assessing its progress. Their validity rests on the conviction that

larger districts have a potential for providing the scope and quality of services required in a modern program of education more effectively and economically than is possible by smaller districts.

The citizen who seriously questions whether his school district should be reorganized should assess what is happening in his school to his children and his community with his own and his neighbor's tax dollars. His perspective and his observations will be clearer and more revealing if he looks at the school district from these points of view says the NEA Research Team:

1. Is it securing and keeping high-quality teachers?
2. Is it constructing and equipping the kind of buildings teachers and pupils need to do effective work?
3. Is it providing educational opportunities that meet the interests, needs, and abilities of all the pupils; that encourages the weakest to do his best; and that stimulates and challenges the strongest until he develops his full potential powers?
4. Is it employing high-quality administrative and supervisory leadership that holds the respect and confidence of pupils and teachers in the community and keeps the educational program in tune with the times?
5. Is it employing efficient use of equipment, personnel, and financial resources of the school district?
6. Is it giving parents an opportunity to work to good advantage in helping to plan and direct the educational program?

These are some of the basic functions of the school district. If any district of the community is failing to do the job for which it was

created in an efficient, effective manner, then serious consideration should be given to reorganization (11:10).

A question that comes up is "What is an adequate school district?"

In answer to this question the Washington State Superintendent's office answers this way:

Anyone who reflects on the current educational scene in Washington can see that all children are not being given equal opportunity to obtain a good education. A large part of the blame for this situation must rest with those school districts which are unable to provide satisfactory educational opportunities.

In attempting to identify adequate districts, it might be well to begin by referring to a study by the AASA Commission on School District Reorganization which states that inadequate school districts may be characterized by any or all of the following limitations:

1. Barren, meager, insipid curricula, particularly at the secondary level.
2. Inability to attract and to hold high-quality teachers and administrators.
3. Inability to construct the school plants needed.
4. Needless waste of manpower through unjustifiably small classes and low pupil-teacher ratio.
5. Unreasonably high per-pupil expenditures for the quality of educational programs provided.
6. Inefficient use of financial and other education resources.
7. Poor location of buildings.
8. Inequality of the burden of school support.
9. Absence of many needed specialized educational services that add quality to the education program (2:23).

It would then seem logical to conclude; that an adequate school district permit none of the above inadequacies to exist. Specifically,

certain criteria by which the adequacy of school districts might be measured could include the following:

1. The district educates all pupils resident therein from kindergarten (or first grade) through high school.
2. The district has a minimum of 2000-2500 pupils enrolled. This is the minimum figure recommended in most of the literature written on reorganization. It is derived in part from Dr. James B. Conant's thesis that a high school graduating class should not contain fewer than 100 students. This would require a high school of 500. This size high school, in turn, would necessitate an overall district enrollment of 2000-2500 students.
3. The district has a competent staff of teachers, administrators, supervisors, and other workers, each qualified to do his particular job well and all functioning at a high level of efficiency.
4. The schools of the district are properly located to meet community needs, with consideration given to the convenience of children, and bringing together enough pupils to insure good instruction at a reasonable cost. For each elementary school at least one teacher should be provided for each grade level (most experts suggest a minimum of three teachers per grade). For each high school there should be not fewer than 100 pupils of each age group, with a four-year high school having a minimum enrollment of 500.

It is recognized that island, isolated or remote situations prevent total adherence to recommended minimums. The variety of conditions in Washington topography, population density, road conditions, severe weather, etc., dictate that some high schools must be retained even though they will never have a sufficient enrollment to permit economical operation of an acceptable program. In recognition of this fact and the desirable goal of providing equal educational opportunities, these necessary high schools should receive supplementary state grants to insure equality.

5. The district has a sound basis for financing and administering its program. Unfortunately, disparities are great among districts with respect to their capacity to raise local funds, both for maintenance and operation and capital improvement purposes. For example, during the 1968-69 school year, while the state average assessed valuation per pupil was \$7,705, the districts ranged from a low of \$2,354 in Coulee Dam to \$126,220 in the Benge District. In that same year the districts cited below had the following assessed valuation per pupil:

Seattle	12,756
Tacoma	6,681
Snohomish County	5,844
Spokane County	6,770 (15:7)

WHEN IS A SCHOOL DISTRICT TOO SMALL?

Robert Wilson said: There is general agreement among students of school administration that a school district should be large enough to employ at least 40 teachers and enroll at least 1200 pupils in grades one through twelve.

California law makes 10,000 pupils the desirable minimum enrollment for newly formed districts, and only in unusual situations permit the formation of new school districts with less than 2000 pupils. Pennsylvania school laws recommend a minimum of 1600 pupils per district, and the county committees responsible for making school district reorganization plans and proposals in Wisconsin are strongly encouraged to make 800 pupils in grades one to twelve the minimum for new districts.

A school district with a total enrollment of 800 pupils will have about 200 pupils and from 8 to 10 teachers in the four year high school. Simple arithmetic shows that a school of this size cannot have a very wide range of course offerings. In a work schedule that calls for instruction in several different subject matter fields and four different grade levels, the time of 8 or 10 teachers is about all used up in meeting basic minimum requirements. There is little opportunity for:

1. Advanced courses or accelerated programs that challenge gifted pupils and develop their full potential.
2. Remedial work that corrects deficiencies and helps slow learners over difficult places.
3. Course offerings to meet the special interests and to develop the unique abilities that can be expected in a school that serves children from every level and segment of community life (20:168).

One needs only to examine casually the enrollment in the public high schools of this country at this time to see that many of them fall far short of this minimum standard. Of the 23,746 high schools in the country now:

13,146 enroll less than 200 pupils

7,117 enroll less than 100 pupils

2,720 enroll less than 50 pupils.

Current reports that high school children are looking for snap courses and are avoiding physics, chemistry, trigonometry are frequently based on data from small districts where those and other equally important courses cannot be offered regularly and in many instances not at all. The big trouble isn't spineless kids and soft teachers as some people who are not well informed would have us to think. The real trouble is outmoded school district organization--school district organization that is now called upon to provide services, to perform functions, and to operate programs that were scarcely dreamed of when it was established.

In too many instances children are deprived of educational opportunities they need and want because districts cannot employ the teachers and provide laboratory facilities for a good college entrance program. In too many instances children are deprived of good vocational preparation because the school district cannot purchase the shop equipment and secure the specialized instructors needed for a high quality program of vocational education.

Meeting minimum requirements, staying on the accredited list, and offering enough courses to meet college entrance requirements are the goals that the school district with inadequate financial resources,

meager school plant facilities, and a teaching staff too small to do all that needs to be done, strives so hard to meet. The school board, the superintendent, the principal, the teachers, the parents, and most of all the children themselves may want a high quality program--the best there is in music, art, mathematics, science and vocational education--but it is difficult to weld without a forge or anvil, or to perform chemical experiments without a laboratory (20:168).

Roald F. Campbell and others speaking of the rural schools as being too small to be effective state that farm people should do something to alleviate these ineffective schools. Along with farm mechanization have come improved transportation and communication. Most farm roads are now hard surfaced so as to accommodate the automobile at all times. Aided by the impetus of the rural electrification program of the 1930's, most farms now have electric current. This, in turn, has meant that radio and television are as common in farm homes as they are in city homes. Many farmers hold jobs in industrial plants and sometimes drive 30 to 50 miles to such plants, thus are only part time farmers. Good roads also encourage many city people to move to the suburbs and retain their jobs in the city. In short, it is becoming more and more difficult to determine the division between rural and urban areas.

All of these forces and the resultant movements of people affect schools and school organization. Most notably people in farm areas are less in number. These people often find reorganization of local school districts essential if an adequate educational program, particularly at the high school level, is to be provided. These reorganizations would

not be possible if it were not for school bus transportation, but good roads make that feasible. Even with these local school reorganizations, it is difficult to form a rural high school district attendance area with more than two or three hundred pupils. With such an enrollment, and ordinarily with the financial resources available in such an area, provision for a complete educational program is an impossibility.

Campbell goes on to suggest that an intermediate unit of some kind may be the most feasible way of complimenting the limited programs of the component local districts within such a unit (4:124).

HOW THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IS INVOLVED

The school administrator is in a unique position when a group of communities or neighborhoods is seriously considering reorganization of several small districts or administrative units into a larger school district. The superintendent is usually regarded as the spokesman for the district on important educational matters. On legal matters of wide interest in the community, the judge's opinion is usually thought of as the truth, when religious questions are raised, the minister is listened to; but when school matters are discussed, the school administrator is listened to by the entire community. People may violently disagree with the points of view he expresses, but at least they want to hear what he has to say, and to have the advantage of his ideas in making up their own minds.

The position of the superintendent in a school district reorganization program is seldom easy. Not infrequently people get worked up to a high pitch of excitement; emotions boil over; feelings run high and are easily injured; and tempers are not always kept under control.

Unquestionably there is a great temptation for the county superintendent, who was elected by popular vote, or for the local superintendent, who likes to keep things rolling along at an even keel, to be noncommittal or take the position that the people better leave well enough alone, at least for the present time. But "on the fence" or noncommittal position is impossible for the administrator who gives the educational interests of the children in the community top priority.

The difficult and almost impossible positions in which administrators are sometimes placed prevent forward-looking superintendents from taking stands they want to take and giving leadership they want to give to school district reorganization programs. Where school district reorganization has been successful, the leadership of both county and local superintendents have been one of the main factors in a successful reorganization effort. Every community handicapped by weak, inadequate districts should expect strong leadership from their school superintendents and should support them in exercising that leadership (20:169-170).

DIFFICULTY OF REORGANIZATION

The people of America have a long tradition of localism. This is probably a product of our settlement and our long frontier experience. In a sense, localism was formalized in the separation of powers represented by dual federalism in 1789. As a people, they believed strongly that the federal government should have limited powers and that other powers were reserved for the states and the people. There was a disposition for the people to rely upon government for no more than was necessary and to expect the individual citizens to do the rest.

If local government could do a particular job, that function would not have shifted to the government of the colony or state. In Massachusetts the towns were required to support schools. The concept in early United States history was one of local action. This tradition of localism was carried across the country as the pioneers moved westward. Frontier society reinforced individual initiative and local effort.

The American tradition of localism, so necessary in our early history, is becoming a thing of the past. The frontier society is gone and in its place we have an urban, industrial society which poses many problems which are not local in scope. Most of our major problems such as poverty, unemployment, civil rights, mass transportation, communication, and educational opportunity require local, state, and national effort if they are to be solved. This shift in the nature of our problems make it imperative that we are in a position to receive the benefits that come from reorganization. We must recognize this movement from local to larger units if we are to solve many of our educational problems (20:521).

Resistance to change, common to all individuals, is shown by those who feel that a school district that has met assigned needs in the past needs no change. Many times small rural districts are known to favor retention of the small school. The time has apparently passed when the small school can satisfy the demands of today's economy and way of life.

Personal interests may be another hindrance to school reorganization. Perhaps for some who serve as school directors, this represents

their major or only civic responsibility. They are apt to view with unfavorable reaction the likelihood of their area being incorporated into another administrative unit. School administrators or teachers in some areas are opposed to reorganization, fearing that their situation may be changed in a reorganization. There is sometimes mentioned the fear that the local neighborhood will lose their elementary school. Another fear sometimes mentioned is that reorganization will result in centralization of government control. Still another fear mentioned is that school district organization is a matter of local concern only. This erroneous assumption ignores the fact that about 62 percent of all current operating revenue is provided by the state and in the case of some districts this share has exceeded 95 percent. State support for building construction is also given up to 90 percent of project costs in some districts (19:16-17).

The local school district is the most common and best known form of local government. It is close to the people and probably America's finest experience with democratic government in action. Taking the necessary steps to have it dissolved and absorbed into a larger unit through the process of school district reorganization is not easy. Memories of childhood experiences in the neighborhood school and deep satisfactions gained from transacting the schools affairs are sometimes translated into resistance to reorganization. The American Association of School Administrators has stated that this resistance is often expressed in the form of fear that:

1. Local control will be destroyed.
2. The school plant will be taken out of the neighborhood and the children transported too far away from home.

3. Vested interests, personal and financial, will be weakened seriously.
4. Parental influence on the children will be weakened seriously.
5. School taxes will increase.
6. The level of services will decrease.
7. The close relationships between the home and the school, which have been long maintained in the smaller unit, will be destroyed.
8. The community itself will be seriously weakened or destroyed. (1:11).

Whether these fears are well grounded or purely imaginary makes little difference when the yeas and nays are finally counted. The crux of the matter is that if sound school district reorganization is to be effected through the free will of the people, the people themselves must be so firmly convinced of the advantages that they are willing to give it priority over their personal interests, prejudices, and fears.

Chapter 3

CONDITIONS AT PRESENT TIME

The two basic purposes for reorganization are to bring the optimum number of students together with the best qualified teachers, and to make it possible to have available the financial and physical resources needed for a good educational program. Chapter 3 deals with a study of enrollment, personnel, transportation, and cost of operation of the Yelm, Rainier, Tenino and Tumwater districts.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

The largest district, Yelm School District, lies in the extreme southeast corner of Thurston County, a small corner extending into Pierce County. The Yelm District includes two small towns; Yelm with a population of 550 and McKenna with a population of about 100. These two small towns are about one mile apart. The town of Yelm has the larger part of the school buildings, McKenna having only a small elementary school.

The smallest district, Rainier School District, lies directly to the west of the Yelm District, being a long narrow district north to south. Rainier, a town of 311 population, is the only town in this district. The school plant is located here five miles west of the Yelm school.

The Tenino District lies west of the Rainier District and it is also a narrow district north to south. The town of Tenino is the only

town in this district, lying seven miles west of the town of Rainier. It has a population of about 900.

Tumwater District, which is used for a comparison, lies to the north. Figure I shows these districts and their relation as to location. Tumwater is a larger town with a population of over 5000, with a heavily populated area outside the urban area. If Yelm, Rainier and Tenino were consolidated, the pupil population of this new district would approximate that of Tumwater.

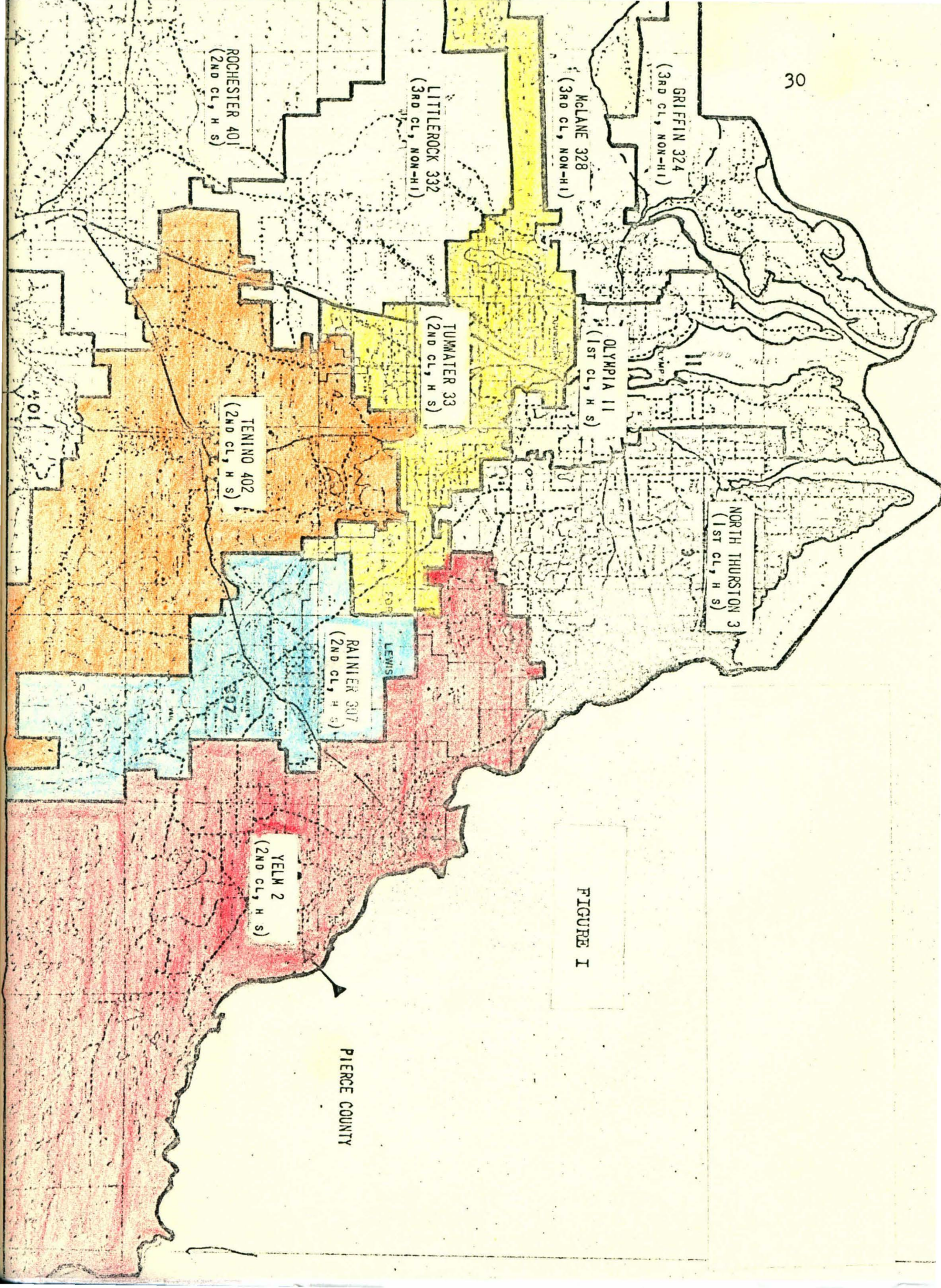
THE TUMWATER DISTRICT

Tumwater is a school district governed by a school board of five members. Included in this district is the city of Tumwater with a population of 5200 and several small communities with a combined population of about 4000. In October, 1969, the district had a student enrollment of 2476 with an average cost per student of \$399.03. Five schools are within the district; one high school, one junior high, and three elementary schools.

Tumwater District had a total of 107 certificated personnel with a continuous certified personnel of 85.50, showing a quite stable staff. The 1969 salary average was \$9,473 an increase of 15 percent over the previous year. The teacher-pupil ratio was 23.44 for 1969-70. The assessed valuation of the district was 18,473,734 with a per pupil valuation of 7,312.

TRANSPORTATION

All of the districts operate buses to pick up students at all levels. Tumwater operates 16 buses, Yelm operates 19 buses, Rainier operates 5 buses, and Tenino operates 10 buses. The cost per student



in transportation costs show a wide variance, from a cost of \$153 at Tumwater to a cost of \$348 at Rainier. See Table II.

TABLE II
SCHOOL COSTS PER STUDENT 1968-69

	Cost per pupil Without transportation	Cost per pupil With transportation
Yelm	\$474.03	\$645.69
Rainier	\$460.73	\$808.81
Tenino	\$409.12	\$597.00
Tumwater	\$399.03	\$552.75
State Average		\$662.33

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

The trends in total enrollment seem to be going up. In the years of 1965 through 1969 Yelm has gained about 300 students, Rainier has gained only 39, Tenino has gained 108, and Tumwater has gained 424. It will be noted that the Rainier school district has changed very little over the past five years, while Tenino and Yelm are making slow growth. Table III shows these trends.

TABLE III
ENROLLMENT TRENDS FOR YELM, RAINIER, TENINO
AND TUMWATER DISTRICTS FOR 1965-1969

	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	5-year gain
Yelm	972	1035	1096	1228	1275	303
Rainier	204	228	235	232	243	39
Tenino	706	704	734	785	814	108
Tumwater	2052	2174	2275	2378	2476	424

We find, according to the Thurston County Planning Commission, that a considerable growth will probably take place in the southeast part of the county in the Yelm District, and more slowly in the other two districts. If the Yelm District grows as projected, a new high school will probably be a necessity by 1975 (18:3).

INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL

TABLE IV
PUPIL TEACHER RATIO IN THE YELM, RAINIER, TENINO
AND TUMWATER DISTRICTS 1969-70

School	Number of Certified Personnel	Enrollment	Pupil teacher Ratio
Yelm	63	1232	22.83
Rainier	17	237	14.83
Tenino	41	773	19.03
Tumwater	107	2371	23.44

(17:2)

If we consider the state advised ratio of 25 to 1 to be the correct teacher-pupil ratio, we can see that the two smaller schools are quite low. Table IV shows that Yelm has 63 certified personnel. The administrative office includes one superintendent, one assistant, and two secretaries. The high school has one principal, one assistant, two counselors who do part time teaching, one counselor secretary, and 19 classroom teachers.

Yelm Junior High has nine classroom teachers. The Yelm Elementary School has one principal, one counselor who also acts as administrative assistant, one secretary, and eleven classroom teachers. The McKenna Elementary School which is part of the Yelm School District has fourteen teachers. The school system also has two librarians and one reading specialist.

Rainier has a total of 17 certified personnel. The administration consists of a superintendent, one secretary in his office, one principal and his secretary. This school has one librarian and 15 classroom teachers for grades K through 12.

Tenino has a staff of 41 certified personnel. The administrative staff consists of a superintendent and his secretary. The high school staff includes a principal and his secretary, one counselor, one librarian, and fifteen classroom teachers. The Tenino Elementary School has one principal with two secretaries, and 21 classroom teachers.

Tumwater has one superintendent, one assistant superintendent, and three secretaries in the administrative office. The high school includes a principal, one vice principal, and two secretaries. They also have two counselors, and one librarian. The teaching staff includes

34 instructors. Tumwater Junior High has a principal and one secretary. They also have one counselor and one librarian. The teaching staff consists of 14 teachers.

Tumwater Schools include three elementary schools. The Michael T. Simmons staff consists of a principal, one secretary, one playground supervisor, one librarian and a teaching staff of 22 teachers. East Olympia Elementary is a small school that recently consolidated with the Tumwater Schools. Its staff consists of a principal, who also teaches, and three certified teachers. The Peter G. Schmidt Elementary School has one principal, a secretary, librarian, playground supervisor, and a staff of 22 teachers.

We can see by Table II that small schools find themselves at a disadvantage financially, in that they generally cost more per pupil to operate and in return offer fewer services and educational opportunities than the larger school districts. In Chapter II of this study it was pointed out that usually the smaller the school the higher the cost per pupil with fewer services.

Yelm, Rainier, and Tenino school districts find themselves faced with a great many inadequacies, especially the Rainier District. Enrollment is too small to insure a varied and rich curriculum. Fully certified teachers are more difficult to hire, and usually teacher tenure is of a shorter duration. Also teacher wages are less in the smaller districts. Table V shows a comparison of average teacher salaries in the districts studied.

TABLE V
COMPARISON OF CERTIFIED PERSONNEL SALARIES 1969

School	Average Salary
Yelm	8,680
Rainier	8,028
Tenino	8,455
Tumwater	9,473

Some phases of the educational program in these districts are slighted because of inadequate plant facilities. School services such as guidance, counseling, and reading consultants are not always available. The curriculum is weak in some areas. The cost per pupil is too high in relationship to the educational opportunities offered.

Chapter 4

SUMMARY AND PROPOSED CHANGES

SUMMARY

This study was made for the purpose of (1) researching and reviewing pertinent literature to determine the qualities of an adequate school district; (2) to study the small districts to determine whether reorganization may be needed; and if reorganization was needed to propose a plan of consolidation that would benefit the smaller schools.

The complexity and changes being made in America's way of life are to be found on every side. The progress of industry, science, medicine, religion, and many other fields make it necessary for education to adapt to current conditions. The will to adapt or not to adapt to these circumstances will be an important factor in the quality of education of the future.

A century or so ago the pioneers established many small school districts to meet a need of those pioneer days. Today those schools would be very inadequate. There are not many of those one teacher schools left. They have served their purpose, but there are a great many schools that are inadequate in the quality of education and services performed. Small school districts must offer limited curricula because of limited finances. They have difficulty in hiring qualified personnel and retaining good teachers. Special services such as guidance, counseling, psychological testing and other services are usually on a limited basis. The amount and quality of education costs far more per student in a small school. The benefits received for the tax dollar is considerably lower.

Some of the more important advantages that the larger school has are (1) more adequate facilities, (2) better supervision of instruction, (3) a well balanced curriculum, (4) a more equitable taxation, and probably most important (5) equalization of educational opportunity. Larger districts can more easily hire specialists such as nurses, psychologists, music, art, and counseling and guidance people. Standardization of teaching materials and the mass buying of school supplies make a considerable saving, and also does away with much confusion if the school is large enough to afford an expert in this field.

The larger districts offer more actual educational opportunities to all of the students. A student with a special ability or skill can more easily find courses to develop these special skills or abilities. The student who finds it necessary to work in the daytime may find greater opportunity in a school that has night classes.

Larger districts can more adequately utilize buildings and plant facilities such as laboratories, shops, gymnasiums, library, and audio visual services.

Through permissive legislation and the changes made in the reorganization laws the state of Washington has reduced the number of districts from 2710 in 1910 to 331 in 1969. The state says that the goal should be 210.

There are many who object to reorganization programs because they feel that: (1) Local control will be destroyed; (2) the school plant will be taken out of the neighborhood and the children transported too far from home; (3) vested interests, personal and financial, will be

weakened seriously; (4) parental influence on the children will be weakened; (5) school taxes will increase; and (6) the level of services will decrease. Some of the people have said, "This school was good enough for me, so why can't it be considered good enough for my kids."

Three small schools in this study have smaller enrollments than the state recommended. Each school is crowded for space, both as to building space and classroom space. One school is building additional classroom space. One school had a major fire and is now trying to ready classroom space for the fall opening of school. The smallest school has only 17 teachers, including the principal, who are making a commendable effort to operate a school of only 290 students in grades K through 12. It is impossible for these teachers to provide a well balanced curriculum under these circumstances. Several are teaching a variety of classes, and they cannot provide the coverage that 40 or 50 teachers might. The superintendent is doing the best that is possible under the circumstances, but he cannot work miracles. In the three smaller schools, costs ran from \$45 to \$250 higher per student than Tumwater, a bordering district.

REORGANIZATION PROPOSAL

Based on the review of the literature and recommendations of the State Department of Instruction, the following criteria are offered as a basis for recommended reorganization of the three small schools (Yelm, Rainier, Tenino):

1. The new district should have a minimum of 2000-2500 students in grade K through 12.
2. The district should have a competent staff of teachers.

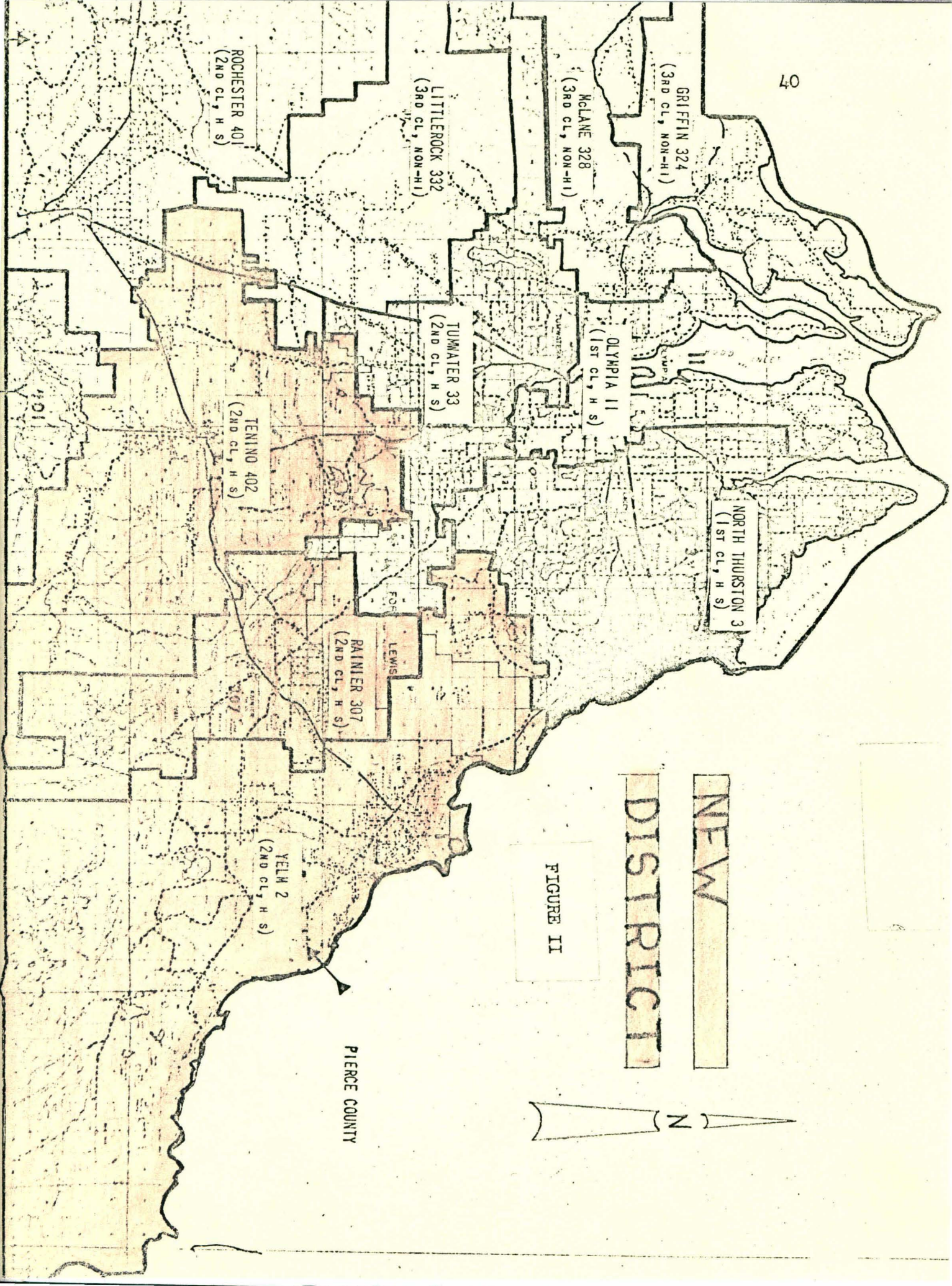
administrators, supervisors, and other workers, each qualified to do his particular job well.

3. The schools of the proposed district should be properly located to meet community needs, with consideration given to the convenience of the children.
4. The proposed district should bring enough children together to insure good instruction at a reasonable cost.
5. The district should have a sound basis for financing and administering its program.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that Yelm, Rainier, and Tenino reorganize by forming one district. Figure II, page 40, shows the proposed district.

The buildings and facilities of all the districts would continue to be used. At present the high school buildings in all three districts are inadequate. Since a new high school has been proposed in the larger district, it is suggested that the new high school be built to accommodate all three districts. The present high school in Yelm could be used as a junior high, and the present school buildings in the rest of the newly formed district could be used as elementary schools.

There would be many advantages to this reorganization, some of which are: (1) one administrative unit, (2) more efficient purchasing, (3) better opportunity for teachers to teach in their field of preparation, (4) more and better guidance, counseling, and testing, (5) enlarged curriculum, (6) more supervision of instruction, and (7) better utilization of buildings and facilities.



NORTH THURSTON 3
(1ST CL., H S)

OLYMPIA II
(1ST CL., H S)

McLANE 328
(3RD CL., NON-HI)

GRIFFIN 324
(3RD CL., NON-HI)

LITTLE ROCK 332
(3RD CL., NON-HI)

TUMWATER 33
(2ND CL., H S)

ROCHESTER 401
(2ND CL., H S)

TENINO 402
(2ND CL., H S)

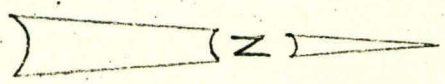
RAINIER 307
(2ND CL., H S)

YELM 2
(2ND CL., H S)

PIERCE COUNTY

NEW DISTRICT

FIGURE II



CONCLUSION

This study has shown that it is difficult for the small school district to offer the quality of educational program that is needed to meet the demands placed upon American schools by the fastly changing design of living. If the people of the state's communities would accept the idea that the schools of the communities are creatures of the state, and that all of the people in the state are responsible for education, then it may not be too difficult to reach the goal of equality of educational opportunity.

The writer of this study finds a great many questions unanswered which show a need for further study.

1. Could legislation be passed that would improve the present reorganization laws?
2. Should the attitude of the people in the district be taken into deeper consideration?
3. What is the optimum size for a school district?
4. Is there a greater loyalty in our smaller schools?
5. Are there fewer discipline problems in smaller schools?

These and many similar questions go unanswered.

At this time in our American way of life there are many advantages for the student who is a member of a larger school. He must develop his abilities, skills, and understandings to the greatest degree possible if he is to take his proper place in modern society. If schools are allowed to exist where there could be stronger and more efficient educational systems, then the people of the state are allowing a luxury that

can be ill afforded (19:16). We must give our young people the advantage of the best education possible, if they are to meet the challenge that faces them. United States Senator Jackson states:

We will be called upon to do in 30 years what our forbears did in 300 years (12:4).

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