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NINTH REPORT  
of the  
STATE ADVISORY COMMISSION  
ON SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

To the  
SIXTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE  
of the  
STATE OF MINNESOTA

January, 1965

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BIENNIAL REPORT TO THE SIXTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

To the Senators and Representatives  
of the 1965 State Legislature  
State of Minnesota

We submit to you our ninth report on school district reorganization.  
This report covers the 1963-1965 biennium, and is made pursuant to  
Provisions of Minnesota Statutes 1961, Section 122.24, Subdivision 1,  
which states:

"On or before January 15 of each odd-numbered year, the Commission shall  
report its activities and recommendations concerning school reorgania-  
tion to the legislature."

Information and data covering the period from July 1, 1947 is included  
and will indicate comparative gains in school district enlargement since  
the passage of the original act pertaining to the reorganization of  
school districts.

State Advisory Commission  
on School Reorganization

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# STATE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

Term Expires  
July 1

Mrs. C. A. Rohrer, Chairman . . . . .	Winona	1965
Representative for Minnesota Congress of Parents and Teachers; Former Grade, High School and College Teacher; Member of Commission since 1947.		
Donald E. Swenson . . . . .	Mankato	1969
Former State Representative, Committee on Education; Former Chairman, Mankato School Board; Former Chairman, Minnesota Citizens Committee on Public Education.		
A. Harold Peterson. . . . .	Chisago City	1967
Former State Representative; Attorney at Law; Former Chairman of School Board, Chisago City; Chairman, Board of Directors, Chisago Lake Hospital; Commanding Officer, Naval Reserve Law Company 9-17, Minneapolis; Captain U. S. Naval Reserve.		
Honorable Karl F. Grittner. . . . .	St. Paul	1965
State Senator, Committee on Education; Former Member House Committee on Education; Principal, Mounds Park Junior High School, St. Paul.		
K. W. Fawcett (Resigned). . . . .	Minneapolis	1969
Businessman; Member Board of Directors, Minneapolis Citizens Committee on Public Education; Chairman, Community School Building Committee; Former Minneapolis School Board Member.		
J. A. Sater . . . . .	Brainerd	1967
Former District Superintendent of Schools; Former Chairman, Legislative Committee, Minnesota Association of School Administrators; Past President, Central Minnesota School Superintendents.		

Term Expires  
July 1

Mrs. Virgil E. Weitgenant . . . . . Minneapolis	1965
Hennepin County Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Former Nobles County Superintendent of Schools; Past President, Minnesota Association of County Superintendents.	
Dr. Karl F. Nolte . . . . . Hibbing	1969
Educational Consultant, Jyring and Whiteman, Architects and Engineers, Hibbing; Member, School Board Independent School District 701, Hibbing; Director, Minnesota School Boards Association; Former Director of Elementary Education, Hibbing Public Schools.	
Clarence E. Mikkelsen . . . . . Glyndon	1967
Farmer and Businessman; Member School Board, Independent School District 155, Glyndon; Chairman, Clay County School Survey Committee; Past President, District 23 School Boards Association.	
Duane J. Mattheis . . . . . Commissioner of Education	
Secretary and Executive Officer of the State Advisory Commission on School Reorganization.	

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## INTRODUCTION

When Minnesota made the transition from territorial status to that of statehood in 1858, the writers of the state constitution recognized that education of its citizens was vital to its future welfare and growth. A definite policy relative to education was set forth in Article VIII of the Minnesota constitution which states:

"It shall be the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools."

In Section 2 the constitution provided for the support of public schools as follows:

"The legislature shall make provisions, by taxation or otherwise, as with the income arising from the school fund, will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools."

As legislatures have met over the years they have been guided by the policies and principles as given in the constitution pertaining to public education.

The equalization of educational opportunities for all children of the state has been one of the basic goals of the legislature. To achieve this objective they have enacted laws for the organization, administration and financing of school districts. In 1911 the consolidation law was enacted which permitted school districts to merge so that larger school districts could be formed. As a result, a number of school districts were merged. The second forward step in the organization of school districts came in 1947 when the legislature enacted the school reorganization law. This procedure provided for the establishment of county school survey committees to study the school districts of the county and to make recommendations for the formation of stronger school districts that could provide for an expanded program of education from grades one through twelve. The reorganization law also gave additional impetus to the use of the consolidation and dissolution procedures in the enlargement of school districts. When the 1963 legislature enacted Chapter 547, relating to the merger of non-operating districts, it was the most far reaching law affecting the organization of school districts since the passage of the 1947 reorganization law. The 1963 act provides for the automatic dissolution of all non-operating districts by July 1, 1965. Approximately 500 school districts will be affected by this law.

The progress that has been made in district enlargement can be attributed to the legislature for the laws that they have passed in behalf of sound school district organization. Under the available procedures the people have improved the organization of their school districts. This will be of lasting benefit to the boys and girls in providing them with a quality program of education in the years to come.



## CHAPTER I

### STATE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

The State Advisory Commission was originally created in 1947 by the enactment of Chapter 421. This Commission has for seventeen years served in an advisory capacity in assisting county school survey committees and citizen groups in their studies relative to the formation of stronger school districts.

#### Commission Membership

The State Advisory Commission consists of nine members as set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Section 122.24. The members are appointed by the State Board of Education to a six-year term on a staggered basis. As vacancies occur in the membership, the State Board of Education is authorized to fill such vacancies by appointment.

The Commissioner of Education serves as the ex-officio secretary and executive officer of the State Advisory Commission. The responsibility of directing the program of school district enlargement has been assigned to the Section Chief of Elementary and Secondary Education. Under his supervision, consultant service is made available to the county school survey committees, local planning groups, school boards and school administrators.

#### Duties of the Commission

The duties of the State Advisory Commission are defined in Minnesota Statutes 122.24, Subdivision 1, as follows:

"The State Commission shall formulate aims, goals, principles, procedures of public school organization in Minnesota. The Commission shall review the tentative reports of the several county school survey committees, and within 90 days after receipt thereof shall make suggestions to the respective committees concerning their reports as may seem appropriate, giving due consideration to the educational needs of local communities and economical transportation and administration, to the future use of satisfactory school buildings and sites, to the convenience and welfare of the pupils, to the ability of the several communities to support adequate schools, to equalization of educational opportunities and to any other matters which, in their judgment, seem advisable. On or before January 15 of each odd-numbered year, the Commission shall report its activities and recommendations concerning school reorganization to the legislature."

The reorganization law under Minnesota Statutes 122.24, Subdivision 16, provides for a hearing before an appeal board composed of five impartial members appointed by the State Advisory Commission to hear the grievances of the people of school districts included in the recommendations as set forth in the final report of the county school survey committee. During the current biennium, no appeals were filed with the Commission.

#### Commission Meetings and Activities

The State Advisory Commission has held eight official meetings this biennium, usually once in each quarter. The printing of two four-leaf annual reports on the progress of school district reorganization was approved by the Commission for general distribution to school administrators, school board members and the public.

The Commission approved the preparation of a guide relating to the preservation of school records and reports to be distributed to all county auditors and county superintendents, and to county school administrators in counties where the office of county superintendent has been abolished.

#### **Reorganization Reports and Conferences**

The Commission received the combined tentative report of the Beltrami, Marshall and Roseau county school survey committees for the proposed reorganization of the entire Gatzke and Grygla school districts and a part of the Skime school district into one large reorganized school district. The Commission reviewed and evaluated the tentative report as submitted at an official meeting with members of the several county school survey committees and interested citizens. Recommendations of the Commission relative to the tentative report were presented to the survey committees.

Members of the Hennepin County School Survey Committee appeared before the Commission regarding problems relating to the proposed enlargement of the Golden Valley school district under the procedure of reorganization, involving a part of the Hopkins and Robbinsdale school districts with Golden Valley.

A proposed plan for reorganization by combining the Felton and Glyndon districts in Clay County was considered by the Commission.

#### **Consolidation Proposals Heard**

The Commission has been requested to evaluate a number of consolidation proposals submitted to the Commissioner of Education. Since the last biennial report, the following proposals were reviewed at hearings held before the State Advisory Commission:

1. Winona County - A proposal for consolidation of the common school district at Utica with Lewiston district was considered with representatives these districts and from the St. Charles district in attendance. The Commission recommended that these communities give further study to the possible merger of the entire area served by the two secondary schools.

2. Swift County - The proposed consolidation involving districts at De Graff, Genson and Murdock was reviewed. The recommendation of the Commission was for a modification of the plat which had been submitted.

3. Crow Wing County - The Commission heard a group of citizens interested in the plat for consolidation of part of the Riverton district with the Crosby-Ironton district, together with school officials from both districts. The Commission recommended that efforts be directed first towards the larger overall consolidation in the area before a piece-meal approach is made, and that further study be made of the area.

4. Meeker County - Representatives from the school boards of the districts at Grove City and Litchfield together with an adjoining closed common school district were heard relative to two plats for proposed consolidations. The recommendation of the Commission was for the rejection of both plats submitted, with the request that the school boards work out a more acceptable proposal for the division of the common school district.



## **Non-operating School Districts**

The provisions of Chapter 547 of Laws of 1963 relating to the closing of non-operating schools was studied by the Commission as it pertains to school district enlargement. Since the passage of this law, members of the reorganization staff have been requested to explain its provisions at special meetings called by school officials in the following counties: Brown, Hennepin, Lyon, Nicollet, Rice, Swift, Wadena and Winona. In addition to these special meetings, members of the staff have discussed the closed school law at the regular county school officers meetings that have been held throughout the state.

## **Merger of Small Secondary Schools**

The Commission is now concerned with the second phase of school district reorganization involving the merging of secondary schools with less than 300 pupils enrolled. During the biennium the Commission in its study of small secondary schools has considered the curriculum offering, teaching staff, pupil achievement, school drop-outs, school facilities, cost per pupil and finances in relation to the size of the school. Studies have been undertaken as to the possible combination of small secondary schools and how they may be encouraged to evaluate their local situation so as to strengthen and improve their educational programs on a voluntary basis.

## **Intermediate Unit**

Representatives of the Minnesota Association of County Superintendents and the Rural Division Committee of the National Education Association appeared before the Commission relative to the proposed formation of Intermediate Service Areas in the State of Minnesota. The committee proposed that such Intermediate Service Areas be composed of several cooperating districts under the jurisdiction of an elected board that would have the power to levy a tax upon the area.

Since the matter of organizing Intermediate Units or Service Areas in Minnesota is a new approach in providing supplemental services to school districts, the Commission was desirous of securing more information relative to the function of the Intermediate Unit and how it is financed. Secondly, the Commission was interested in knowing if the organization of Intermediate Units would have a tendency to retard the program of school district reorganization and the possible merger of districts with small secondary schools.

A questionnaire was prepared and sent to the State Departments of Education Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, New York Washington and Wisconsin seeking information on the status of the Intermediate or Cooperative district organization in their respective states. The states of Michigan and New York have enacted permissive laws for the formation of Intermediate Units or Cooperative districts and Wisconsin and Iowa have proposals pending or effective with the current year for the organization of Intermediate Units or Cooperative Education Service Agencies. It should be pointed out that in both Iowa and Wisconsin the reorganization of school districts had been previously completed through laws which required all territory of each state to be situated in districts maintaining both elementary and secondary schools. Missouri and Washington do not have organized Intermediate Units in existence. A plan for the state of Washington was presented to the legislature and indications are that the proposal was not approved.

Information relative to the financing and support of these units revealed the following arrangements: New York; contractual grants by districts; tax levy and state aid. Michigan; contractual grants by districts and state aid. In Iowa it is proposed that a tax levy be spread over the entire area plus state aids. Wisconsin

proposes to finance its units by contractual grants plus a limited amount of state aid. In all cases the Intermediate Units are governed by an elected or appointed board.

Responses from the States of New York and Missouri indicated that the formation of Intermediate Units tended to retard the merger of small elementary and secondary school districts. From the states of Michigan and New York the opinion was expressed that the Intermediate Unit served a useful function in providing additional services to local school districts. Iowa and Wisconsin had complete reorganization before the new service areas were proposed. In each case the State Department of Education has been assigned the administration of Intermediate Units or Cooperative Service Areas.

Based upon the information received from the several states and from conferences with members of committees interested in the formation of Intermediate Units or Service Areas the State Advisory Commission has at this time made no recommendation, but is continuing its study of the matter.

#### **Activities of Department Personnel**

The Section Chief of Elementary and Secondary Education in the Division of Instruction and the Consultants on District Reorganization have been assigned the responsibility of providing information and guidance to the survey committees, county and district superintendents, school boards, county commissioners and local citizen groups interested in the formation of good school districts. Mimeographed bulletins, circulars and guides containing information relating to all procedures of school district enlargement have been prepared by members of the staff. During the biennium, surveys have been conducted by the consultants in several communities of the state at the request of local school boards and district superintendents for the purpose of assisting them in making studies of possible mergers of school districts in their respective areas. Surveys and studies have involved the possible merger of small secondary schools in the following communities: Odessa-Ortonville; Askov-Finlayson-Sandstone; Claremont-Dodge Center; Beaver Creek-Hills and Tintah-Campbell.

Consultants have participated in the annual county school officers meetings throughout the state for the purpose of explaining the laws relating to several procedures of school district enlargement, including the provisions of Laws of 1963, Chapter 547, as it relates to the merger of non-operating districts by July 1, 1965. During the biennium, a number of conferences have been held in the Department of Education at the request of individual citizens, school administrators and groups who were interested in the merger of their respective districts. Staff members, too, have been called upon to attend hearings and meetings in local communities for the purpose of discussing school problems as related to district enlargement. County Commissioners have requested that the consultants be present at hearings before the county board relative to the dissolution and attachment of school districts. County auditors and county school administrators have been contacted regarding the proper preservation of school records and reports from the discontinued office of county superintendent.

## CHAPTER 11

### COUNTY SCHOOL SURVEY COMMITTEES

County school survey committees were organized on an optional basis under the provisions of Chapter 421, as passed by the 1947 legislature. At meetings held during the fall of that year, the school boards in 62 counties voted to establish survey committees. The school boards in 21 counties voted against the forming of a survey committee. In 1949 legislation was enacted which permitted the 21 remaining counties to vote a second time on the question of establishing such committees and, as a result, one additional committee was organized. A total of 63 counties had functioning survey committees at that time. In 1953 the legislature amended the reorganization law, which permitted counties to abolish their survey committees by a majority vote of the school board members present at such meeting; and as a result eleven survey committees were abolished. The provision of law for the abolishment of survey committees was later rewritten and amended by the 1955 legislature.

When the work of the survey committee has been completed, it may, under the provisions of the present law, request that the State Advisory Commission disband the committee. To date, the State Advisory Commission, by official action, has approved the disbanding of five county school survey committees. There are at the present time 47 officially organized school survey committees in existence. Chart I on Page 9 indicates the counties that have school survey committees as of July 1, 1964. It also shows those counties where the school boards voted to abolish their respective survey committees, together with those counties in which no survey committees were established. Also indicated are counties whose survey committees were disbanded through the approval of the State Advisory Commission. Table I (see below) lists the counties in which there are organized county school survey committees as of July 1, 1964.

TABLE I

**Counties With Organized County School  
Survey Committees - 1964**

County	County	County
Aitkin	Freeborn	Nicollet
Anoka	Hennepin	Norman
Becker	Houston	Pennington
Beltrami	Hubbard	Pine
Benton	Isanti	Polk
Big Stone	Kanabec	Pope
Brown	Kandiyohi	Red Lake
Carlton	Kittson	Roseau
Carver	Lake of the Woods	St. Louis
Cass	Le Sueur	Scott
Chisago	Lyon	Sherburne
Clay	McLeod	Stevens
Clearwater	Mahnomen	Traverse
Crow Wing	Marshall	Wadena
Dakota	Martin	Washington
Faribault	Mille Lacs	

## **Survey Committee Membership**

The reorganization law provides that county school survey committees shall be composed of nine members; five persons elected from the rural districts, and four from the urban districts. The members are elected to a three-year term on a staggered basis. The law further provides that no district shall have more than one member on the survey committee, which may result in a committee of less than nine members in some counties.

## **Formation of New Survey Committees**

Counties not having a county school survey committee may, under present law, vote to establish such a committee upon the receipt of a petition signed by 15 per cent of the school board members of the county, and presented to the county superintendent of schools. A meeting of school board members shall then be called for the purpose of voting on the establishment of a survey committee. If the school board members vote in favor of forming such a committee, then members are elected to serve on the survey committee to staggered three-year terms as provided by law. Chart II on Page 11 shows the organization of the county school survey committees and their duties.

## **Special Survey Committees**

In Cook and Itasca Counties special school survey committees were established on a voluntary basis. When the reorganization law was passed in 1947 these two counties could not form a survey committee composed of nine members since there were only seven districts in Cook County and six in Itasca County. Because the law did not apply to these two counties the school boards decided to form a special survey committee to study the schools of the county and their organization. The Cook County committee made an intensive study of local school problems and recommended that a county unit be formed so as to provide a better program of education for all children in the county at a more reasonable cost to the local taxpayer. In 1949 the people of Cook County voted to form a county unit. The Itasca county committee recommended that the two remaining common school districts be merged with districts maintaining a secondary school. These two districts were dissolved and attached to Grand Rapids and to Nashwauk-Keewatin prior to 1953.

## **Activities of School Survey Committees**

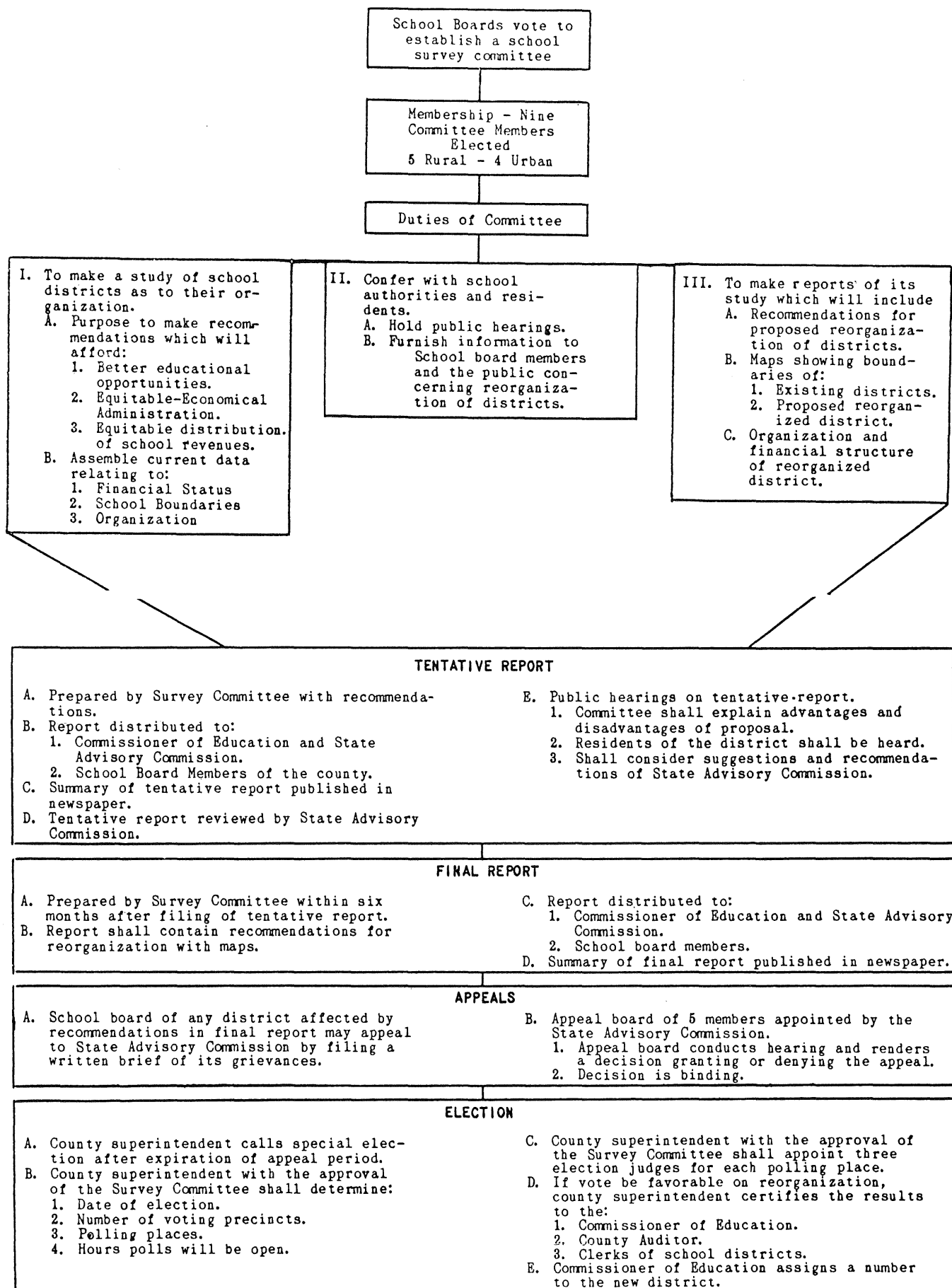
The merger of school districts has now progressed to a point in many counties where most of the school districts have been reorganized into larger school districts that maintain graded elementary and secondary schools. As a result, the survey committees have not been called upon to make surveys and to prepare recommendations for the reorganization of school districts. In some counties the survey committee has served in an advisory capacity to the county board of commissioners in matters relating to the detachment and annexation of land from one school district to another and the dissolution of school districts. During this biennium, the survey committees of Beltrami, Marshall and Roseau counties have worked together in making a study relative to the proposed reorganization of Grygla, Gatzke and Skime school districts into one large district. The Hennepin County School Survey Committee evaluated a study submitted to them by the Golden Valley citizens committee proposing to reorganize a part of the Robbinsdale and Hopkins school districts with Golden Valley so as to form a district which would be coterminous with the village limits of Golden Valley. At the present time, many of the survey committees are on a standby basis and are ready to make studies relative to the reorganization of school districts involving the merger of districts with small secondary schools.

## County Survey Committees



# CHART II

## County School Survey Committees - Their Organization and Duties





## CHAPTER III

### PROGRESS REPORT ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ENLARGEMENT

The program of district reorganization in Minnesota has from the beginning been optional and voluntary. Laws have set forth permissive procedures under which the people could act to strengthen their local school districts. The progress that has been made over the years has been dependent on local initiative and has come as a result of local election.

Under such a voluntary program it is to be expected that the degree of progress will vary in different parts of the state. In twelve counties the reorganization has now given every child resident status in districts maintaining twelve grades or more of schooling, while two counties, by contract, have yet more than 100 small districts each, maintaining only six or eight grades of elementary education. Likewise, under an optional program of reorganization, not all that has been done can be supported as being the most efficient units of school administration. Only as the people recognize the various limitations of their present school organization, and are ready to work with others for an organization that is sufficiently strong, can satisfactory units of school administration be established.

Since the enactment of the reorganization law in 1947 more than 5,600 districts have merged into other local school districts. There were 1,999 school districts in existence on July 1, 1964 as compared with 7,606 in 1947. Since the last biennial report there have been 272 districts merged. Today nearly 90 per cent of all assessed valuation of the state, outside of the three cities of the first class, lies within districts which maintain schools of twelve grades or more. For each 100 pupils in Minnesota schools, approximately 92 are residents of districts which maintain both elementary and secondary schools.

Included in this Chapter are a number of charts and tables that give information of value and interest relating to the progress made. Table II on Page 15 shows the progress of reorganization during the past seventeen years with the reduction year by year since 1947. Table III on Page 15 gives a summary of school district enlargement during the biennium, July 1, 1962 to July 1, 1964.

The map on Page 17 shows the school district enlargement situation throughout the state. The large districts are shown as formed by various procedures during the past, as well as the smaller common school districts that are not yet part of a district which maintains graded elementary and secondary schools.

The Summary Report on School District Enlargement, Table IV on Page 19 gives information relative to the number of school districts and the total reduction by counties for the period from July 1, 1947 to July 1, 1964. On Page 23, Chart III shows the number of school districts in existence by counties as of July 1, 1964.

Fifteen counties with the greatest number of school districts account for 995 districts or approximately half of the total number of districts in the state. These districts are in the following counties:

County	Number of Districts	County	Number of Districts
Stearns	148	Morrison	57
Otter Tail	132	Steele	50
Todd	88	Olmsted	46
Wright	80	Swift	44
Brown	64	Rice	43
Winona	62	Kandiyohi	42
Meeker	60	Polk	40
		Houston	39

The other 72 counties of the state also have about half of the total number of districts. There are 28 counties that have less than ten districts per county.

The following twelve counties have completed the reorganization of school districts to the extent that there are no common school districts in existence and that all pupils residing in these counties are now residents of districts which maintain a complete program of education from the elementary grades through high school:

Anoka	Clay	Cook	Dakota
Faribault	Itasca	Kittson	Koochiching
Lake	Ramsey	Sibley	Washington

Fifteen counties as listed below are nearing this goal in that they have no more than three districts each with elementary schools that are not a part of a district which maintains a program of education from grades one through twelve:

Becker	Carlton	Chisago	Cottonwood	Dodge
Freeborn	Grant	Lincoln	Mahnomen	Norman
Pipestone	Renville	Scott	Traverse	Waseca

The number of districts in the state at the time of this report is approximately 26 per cent of the 1947 total. In 42 counties the reduction in number of districts has been 80 per cent or more. In the four counties of Brown, Meeker, Stearns and Todd the reduction has been less than 40 per cent for each. Chart IV on Page 25 shows the percentage of reduction by counties, and Table V on Page 21 gives the relative rank of counties in the reduction of total number of districts.

Since July 1, 1947 the typical Minnesota school district has grown in size relative to the land area it embraces. This geographical growth has been accomplished by the people of the state through the use of the three optional procedures of dissolution, consolidation and reorganization. The average size of school districts on July 1, 1964 was forty square miles, compared to 10.5 square miles in 1947. Chart V on Page 27 shows the average size of school districts by counties at the beginning of the school district enlargement program in 1947, while Chart VI on Page 29 shows the size of school districts as of July 1, 1964. In comparing these two charts, it is to be noted that there were 67 counties in 1947 where the land area of the average school district was less than ten square miles in extent and by 1964 this number had been reduced to four counties. At the present time forty-one counties have school districts whose average size exceeds 50 square miles as compared to seven counties in 1947. As school districts have increased in size, the tax base, too, has become larger and the pupil population more stabilized.

In 1947 the districts maintaining graded elementary and secondary schools outside of the cities of the first class had about 49.5 per cent of the total assessed valuation, while districts with ungraded elementary schools had about 50.5 per cent of the valuation. By 1962 the per cent of the total assessed valuation in districts with graded elementary and secondary schools had increased to 89.6 per cent, while the assessed valuation had decreased to 10.4 per cent of the total for all the districts with ungraded elementary schools.

During this same period of time the assessed valuation of the districts that maintained graded elementary and secondary schools showed an increase from \$458,677,921 to \$1,435,695,523 or a total gain of \$977,017,602. The districts with ungraded elementary schools experienced a decrease in this period from assessed valuation of \$468,357,555 to \$166,191,833 in 1962. Chart VII on Page 31 illustrates in a graphic manner the shifting that has taken place in the assessed valuation as a result of school district enlargement.

TABLE II

## Reduction of School Districts Year by Year Since 1947

Date	Total No. of Districts	Reduction During the Year	Total Reduction Since 1947 (Cumulative)
July 1, 1947	7,606		
July 1, 1948	7,518	88	88
July 1, 1949	7,479	39	127
July 1, 1950	6,757	722	849
July 1, 1951	6,479	278	1,127
July 1, 1952	6,018	461	1,588
July 1, 1953	5,298	720	2,308
July 1, 1954	4,722	576	2,884
July 1, 1955	4,261	461	3,345
July 1, 1956	3,634	627	3,972
July 1, 1957	3,298	336	4,308
July 1, 1958	3,084	214	4,522
July 1, 1959	2,814	270	4,792
July 1, 1960	2,579	235	5,027
July 1, 1961	2,410	169	5,196
July 1, 1962	2,271	139	5,335
July 1, 1963	2,148	123	5,458
July 1, 1964	1,999	149	5,607

TABLE III

## Summary of School District Enlargement

From July 1, 1962 to July 1, 1964

1. Number of school districts, July 1, 1962	2,271
2. Number merged from July 1, 1962 to July 1, 1964	
By consolidation	67
By dissolution-attachment	205
Total merged	272
3. Number of school districts, July 1, 1964	1,999
4. Number of districts merged since July 1, 1947	
To July 1, 1962	5,335
Since July 1, 1962	272
Total districts merged	5,607
5. Number of districts, July 1, 1947	7,606

Out of each 100 pupils in Minnesota schools today there are approximately 92 who are residents of districts that maintain graded elementary and secondary schools and approximately 8 who are residents of districts that maintain ungraded elementary schools. Since the school district enlargement program has been in effect there has been a significant change in the resident status of pupils enrolled in Minnesota schools. For the school year of 1947-1948 there were 159,578 pupils residing in districts maintaining ungraded elementary schools. Of this number 114,335 pupils were enrolled in the ungraded elementary schools of the state and 45,243 pupils were enrolled as non-resident secondary school pupils. Districts with graded elementary and secondary schools had 322,116 resident pupils during this same school year, or approximately two-thirds of the total enrollment. By contrast, the school year of 1962-1963 showed that 60,753 pupils or less than nine per cent of the total were residents of districts with ungraded elementary schools, of which 34,030 pupils were enrolled in the ungraded elementary schools and 26,723 pupils attended secondary schools as non-residents. For the same year districts with graded elementary and secondary schools had 691,629 resident pupils. As of July 1, 1964, over 91 per cent of the pupils were residents of districts with a complete program of education from grades one through twelve.

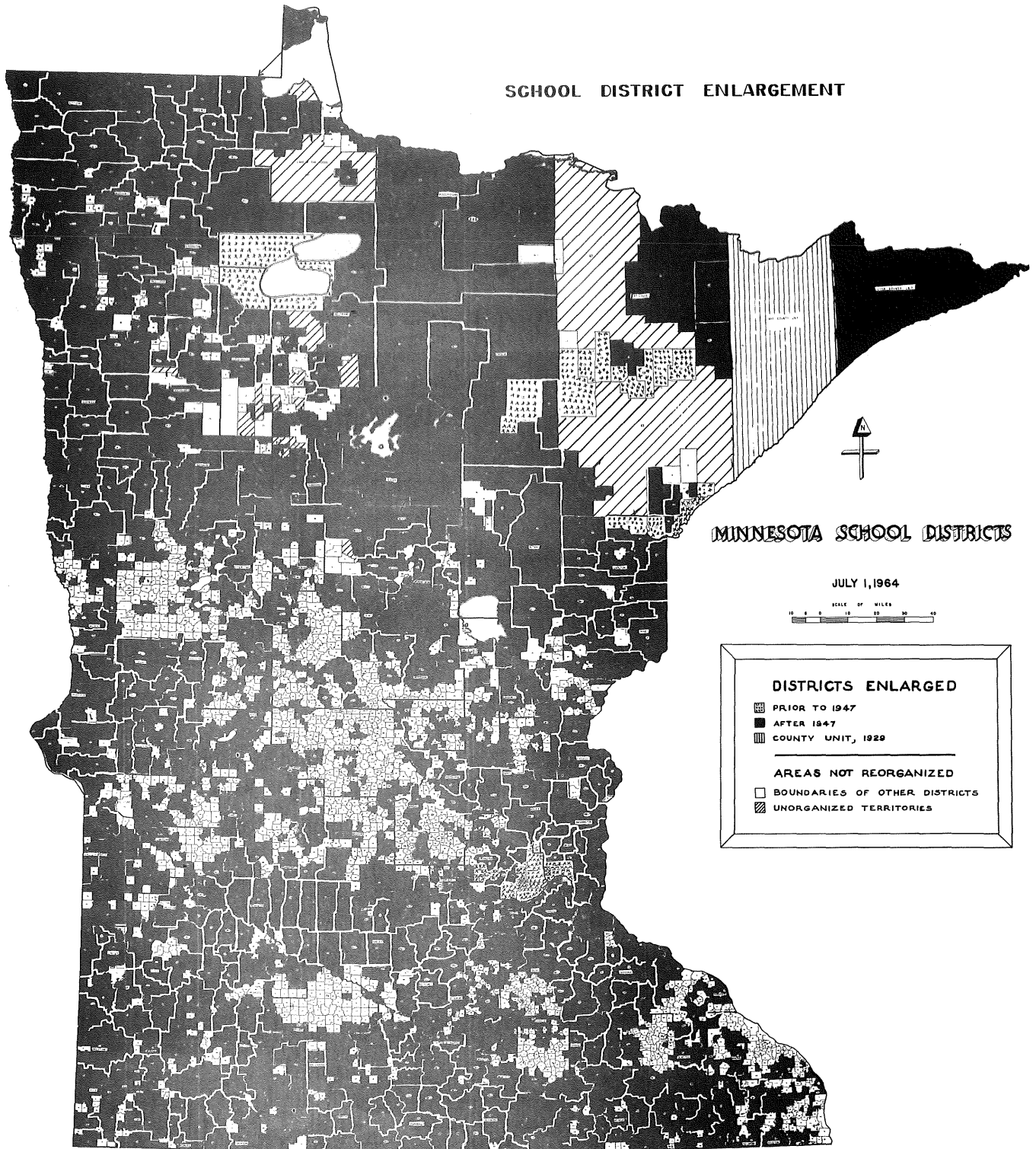
Chart VIII on Page 33 shows how the resident status of pupils has shifted from districts which maintain only ungraded schools to the larger districts with graded elementary and secondary schools.

Another indicator of progress in school district enlargement is the change that has taken place relative to the size of the secondary school. Since the school year of 1940-1941, the trend has been away from the small secondary school with enrollments below 200 pupils and toward the secondary school with enrollments of 300 or more pupils.

Over the past twenty-five years the number of four-year high schools has diminished while the six-year and junior-senior high schools have become more numerous. The median enrollment for the junior-senior secondary school changed from 488 in 1940 to 746 in 1962. For the six-year secondary school the median enrollment rose from 159 to 241 by 1962. The median enrollment for the four-year high school dropped from 109 pupils to 92 in this period of time. Most of the small schools in this group cannot offer a basic minimum foundation program. The programs of education offered in these small schools are limited and narrow in scope.

Chart IX on Page 35 shows that the number of high schools with enrollments below 200 pupils is on the decrease, as indicated by the fact that in 1940 there were 268 schools in this group compared to 126 schools in 1962. The number of secondary schools with enrollments of 300 or more pupils increased from 166 schools to 350 during the same period.

# SCHOOL DISTRICT ENLARGEMENT



MINNESOTA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

JULY 1, 1964

SCALE OF MILES  
0 5 10 20 30 40

## DISTRICTS ENLARGED

- PRIOR TO 1947
- AFTER 1947
- COUNTY UNIT, 1929

## AREAS NOT REORGANIZED

- BOUNDARIES OF OTHER DISTRICTS
- UNORGANIZED TERRITORIES

TABLE IV

## Summary Report on School District Enlargement

July 1, 1947 to July 1, 1964

County	Number of Districts				Number of Districts			Total Reduction	
	7-1-47	7-1-64			7-1-47	7-1-64			
		S	E			S	E		
Aitkin	102	4	6	92	Martin	110	8	4	98
Anoka	57	6	0	51	Meeker	92	5	55	32
Becker	133	4	3	126	Mille Lacs	59	4	18	37
Beltrami	59	4	11	44	Morrison	139	6	51	82
Benton	64	2	36	26	Mower	115	7	9	99
Big Stone	60	5	11	44	Murray	113	4	14	95
Blue Earth	122	8	16	98	Nicollet	62	2	15	45
Brown	82	5	59	18	Nobles	110	5	10	95
Carlton	34	7	3	24	Norman	103	6	2	95
Carver	66	4	13	49	Olmsted	125	5	41	79
Cass	23	7	5	11	Otter Tail	281	9	123	149
Chippewa	87	4	28	55	Pennington	68	2	12	54
Chisago	49	5	3	41	Pine	108	6	25	77
Clay	102	8	0	94	Pipestone	72	4	1	67
Clearwater	56	3	13	40	Polk	213	9	31	173
Cook	7	1	0	6	Pope	90	4	15	71
Cottonwood	76	5	2	69	Ramsey	30	5	0	25
Crow Wing	96	3	14	79	Red Lake	53	3	6	44
Dakota	102	9	0	93	Redwood	112	8	23	81
Dodge	82	5	1	76	Renville	131	10	2	119
Douglas	96	5	28	63	Rice	106	3	40	63
Faribault	118	10	0	108	Rock	68	4	15	49
Fillmore	174	9	11	154	Roseau	79	4	8	67
Freeborn	128	5	1	122	St. Louis	29	17	5	7
Goodhue	155	7	6	142	Scott	67	5	2	60
Grant	71	5	1	65	Sherburne	52	3	6	43
Hennepin	90	16	16	58	Sibley	78	5	0	73
Houston	104	3	36	65	Stearns	203	9	139	55
Hubbard	56	4	9	43	Steele	86	4	46	36
Isanti	68	2	17	49	Stevens	68	4	5	59
Itasca	6	4	0	2	Swift	93	4	40	49
Jackson	104	5	5	94	Todd	143	7	81	55
Kanabec	57	2	10	45	Traverse	60	3	1	56
Kandiyohi	109	4	38	67	Wahasha	96	5	26	65
Kittson	68	6	0	62	Wadena	60	4	18	38
Koochiching	4	3	0	1	Waseca	83	4	2	77
Lac qui Parle	104	5	18	81	Washington	65	4	0	61
Lake	1	1	0	0	Watsonwan	62	3	8	51
Lake of the Woods	11	2	5	4	Wilkin	80	3	26	51
Le Sueur	95	5	14	76	Winona	114	3	59	52
Lincoln	76	5	3	68	Wright	138	8	72	58
Lyon	98	7	11	80	Yellow Medicine	92	6	13	73
Mc Leod	83	6	5	72					
Mahnomen	23	2	3	18	TOTALS	7,606	454	1,545	5,607
Marshall	140	8	15	117					

(S) Districts with Elementary and Secondary Schools

(E) Districts with Elementary Schools Only



TABLE V

Percent of Decrease in Number of School Districts  
by Counties

July 1, 1947 to July 1, 1964

County	Percentage Decrease	County	Percentage Decrease
Freeborn	95.3%	Le Sueur	80.0%
Becker	94.7	Pennington	79.4
Washington	93.8	Yellow Medicine	79.3
Sibley	93.6	Pope	78.9
Traverse	93.3	Kanabec	78.9
Pipestone	93.0	Hubbard	78.6
Waseca	92.8	Mahnomen	78.3
Dodge	92.7	Lac qui Parle	77.9
Goodhue	92.2	Beltrami	74.6
Norman	92.2	Carver	74.2
Clay	92.1	State of Minnesota	73.7
Grant	91.5	Big Stone	73.3
Faribault	91.5	Nicollet	72.6
Dakota	91.2	Redwood	72.3
Kittson	91.2	Isanti	72.1
Cottonwood	90.8	Rock	72.1
Renville	90.8	Clearwater	71.4
Jackson	90.4	Pine	71.3
Aitkin	90.2	Carlton	70.6
Scott	89.6	Wabasha	67.7
Anoka	89.5	Douglas	65.6
Lincoln	89.5	Hennepin	64.4
Martin	89.1	Wilkin	63.7
Fillmore	88.5	Wadena	63.3
Stevens	86.8	Chippewa	63.2
McLeod	86.7	Olmsted	63.2
Nobles	86.4	Mille Lacs	62.7
Mower	86.1	Houston	62.5
Cook	85.7	Kandiyohi	61.5
Roseau	84.8	Morrison	60.0
Murray	84.1	Rice	59.4
Chisago	83.7	Otter Tail	53.0
Marshall	83.6	Swift	52.7
Ramsey	83.3	Cass	47.8
Red Lake	83.0	Winona	45.6
Sherburne	82.7	Steele	41.9
Crow Wing	82.3	Wright	41.3
Watonwan	82.2	Benton	40.6
Lyon	81.6	Todd	38.5
Polk	81.2	Meeker	34.8
Blue Earth	80.3	Stearns	27.1
		Brown	21.9

*Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Lake of Woods, and St. Louis counties, made substantial reductions in the number of school districts prior to July 1, 1947 and are not included in the above list of counties.*

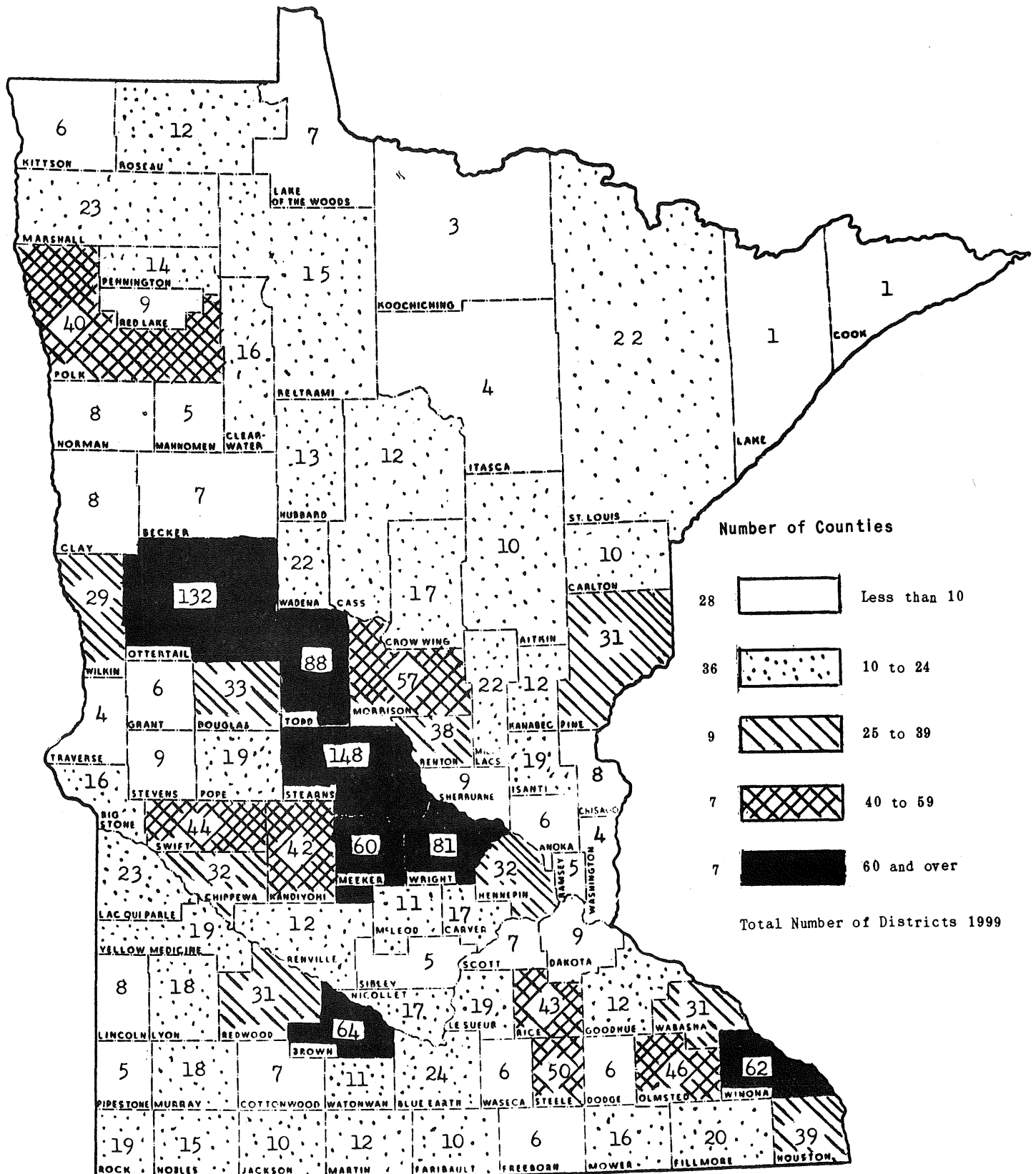
*Fifty-one counties have experienced a decrease in the number of school districts in excess of 73.7% since 1947.*

*Thirty-one counties are below the state average in the reduction of school districts. See Chart IV on Page .*

# CHART III

## Number of School Districts by Counties

July 1, 1964



### Percentage Reduction in Number of School Districts by Counties

July 1, 1964

Number of Counties

Number of Counties	Pattern	Percentage Range
19	Stippled	90% and over
23	Diagonal lines (top-left to bottom-right)	80% to 89%
28	Diagonal lines (bottom-left to top-right)	60% to 79%
8	Grid pattern	40% to 59%
4	Solid black	Less than 40%
5	White	Counties not included in the study*

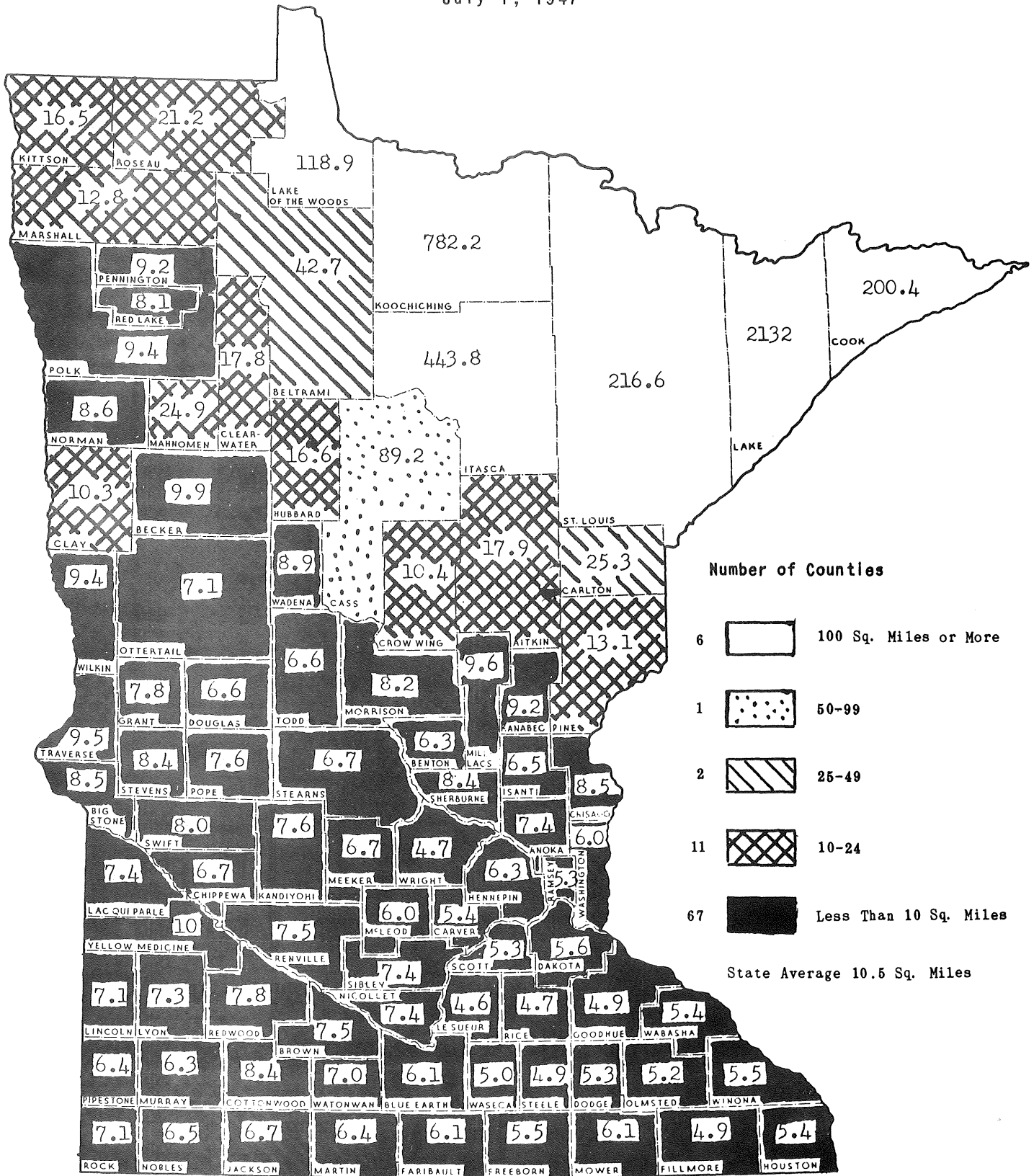
State Reduction 73.7%

- 25 -

# CHART V

## Average Size of School Districts in Square Miles

July 1, 1947



# CHART VI

## Average Size of School Districts in Square Miles

July 1, 1964

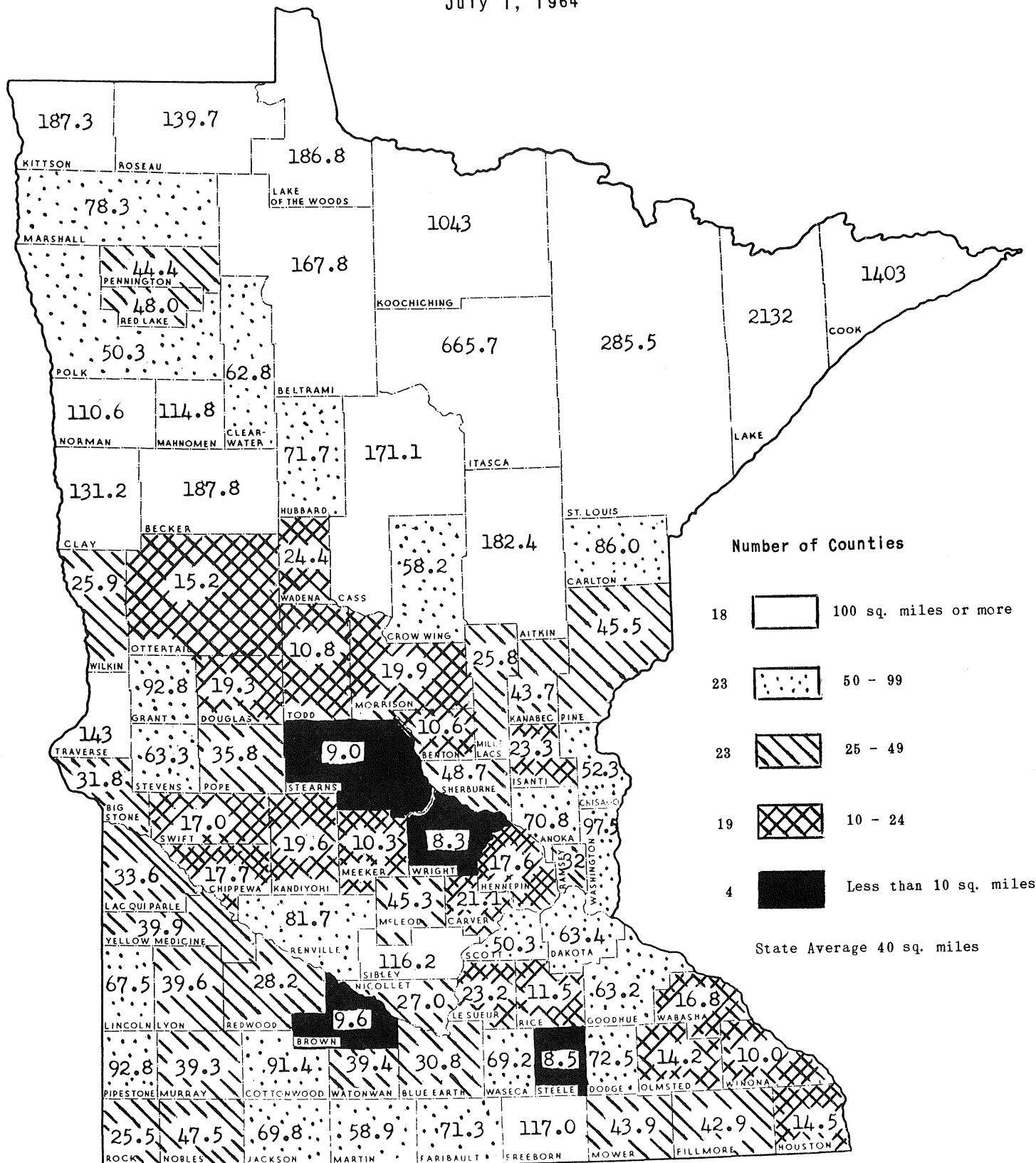
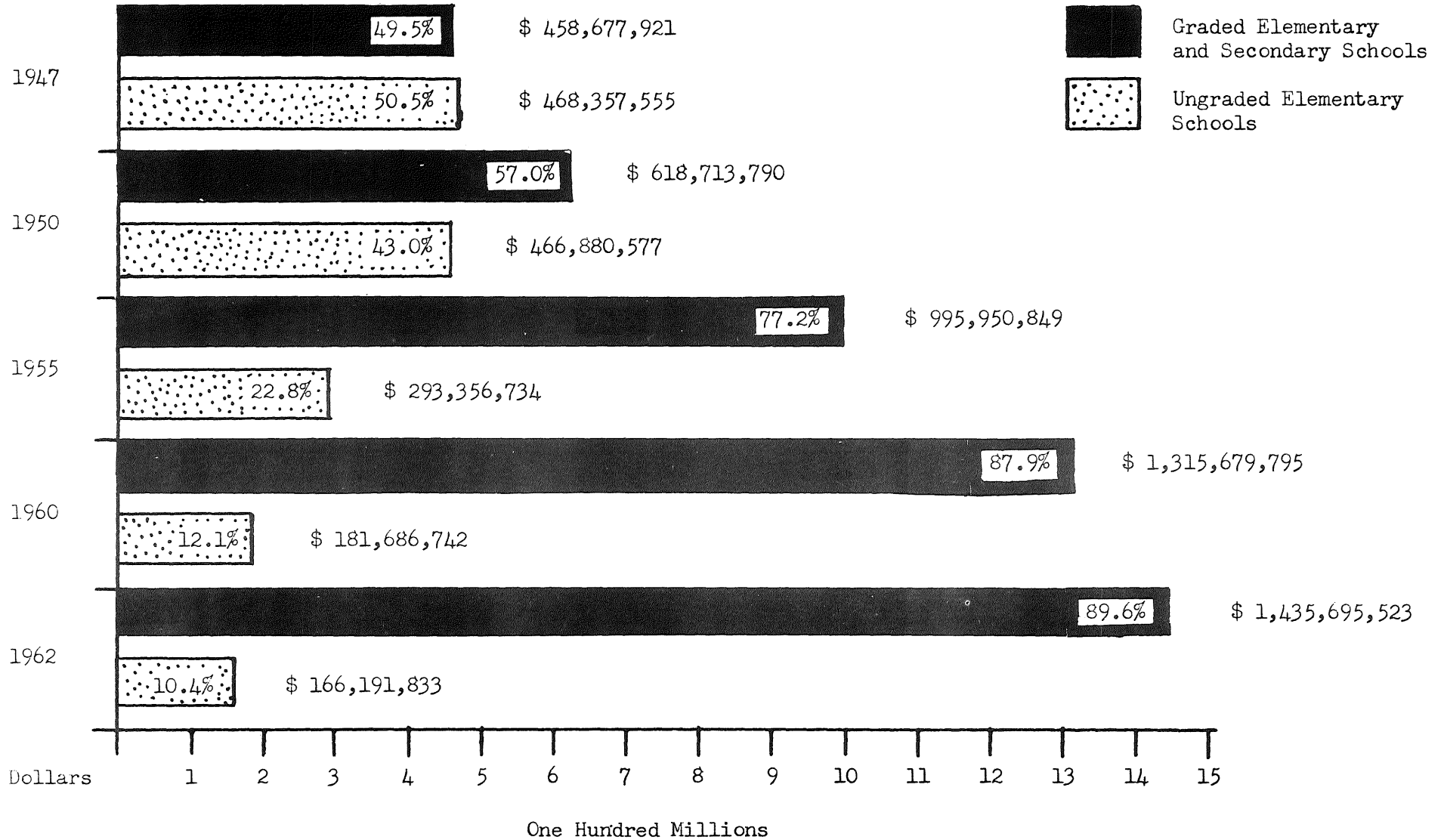


CHART VII

Assessed Valuations Shift  
From Rural to Urban Districts

Districts Maintaining



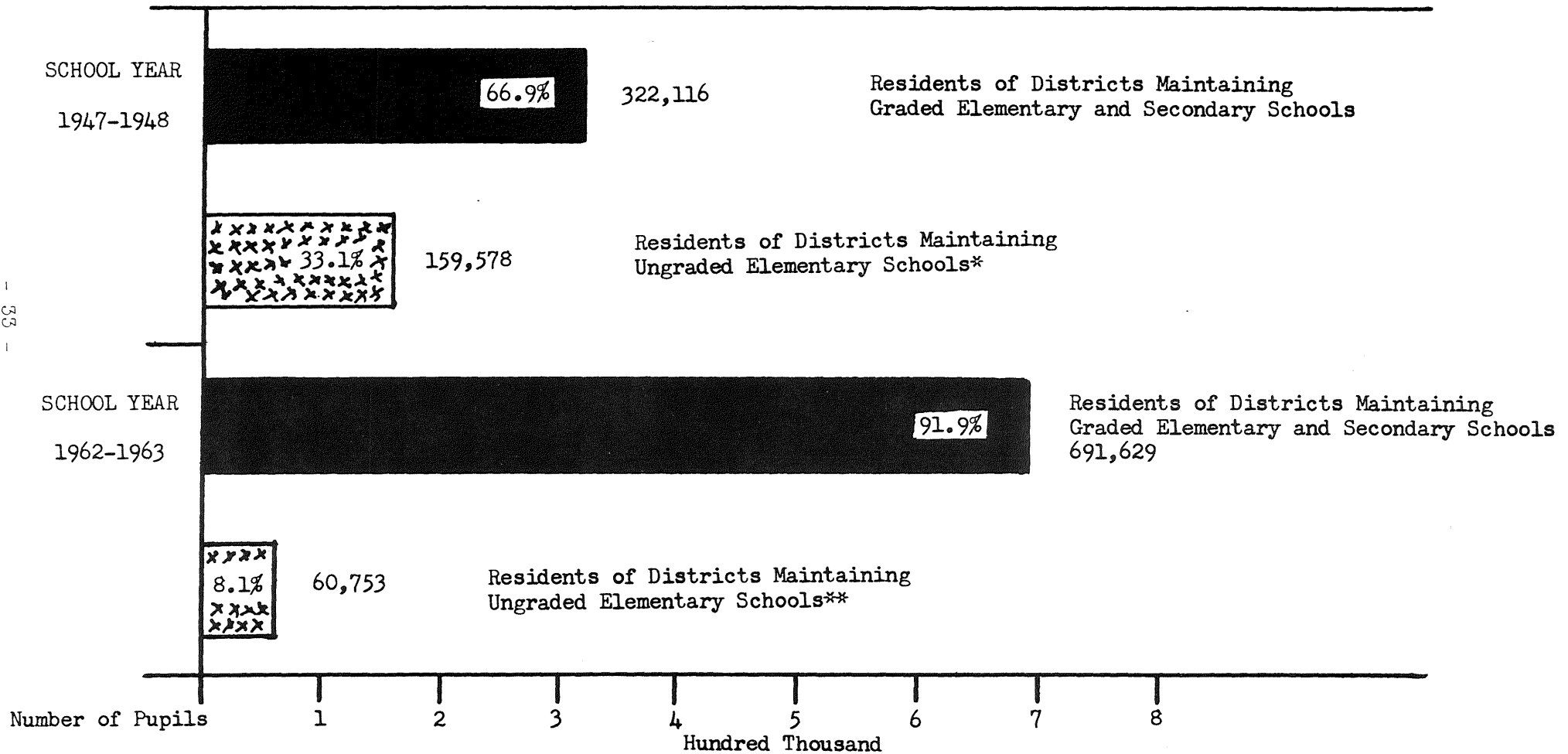
\*Assessed valuations for cities of the first class not included



# CHART VIII

Resident Status of Pupils  
Enrolled in Minnesota Schools

1947-1948 and 1962-1963



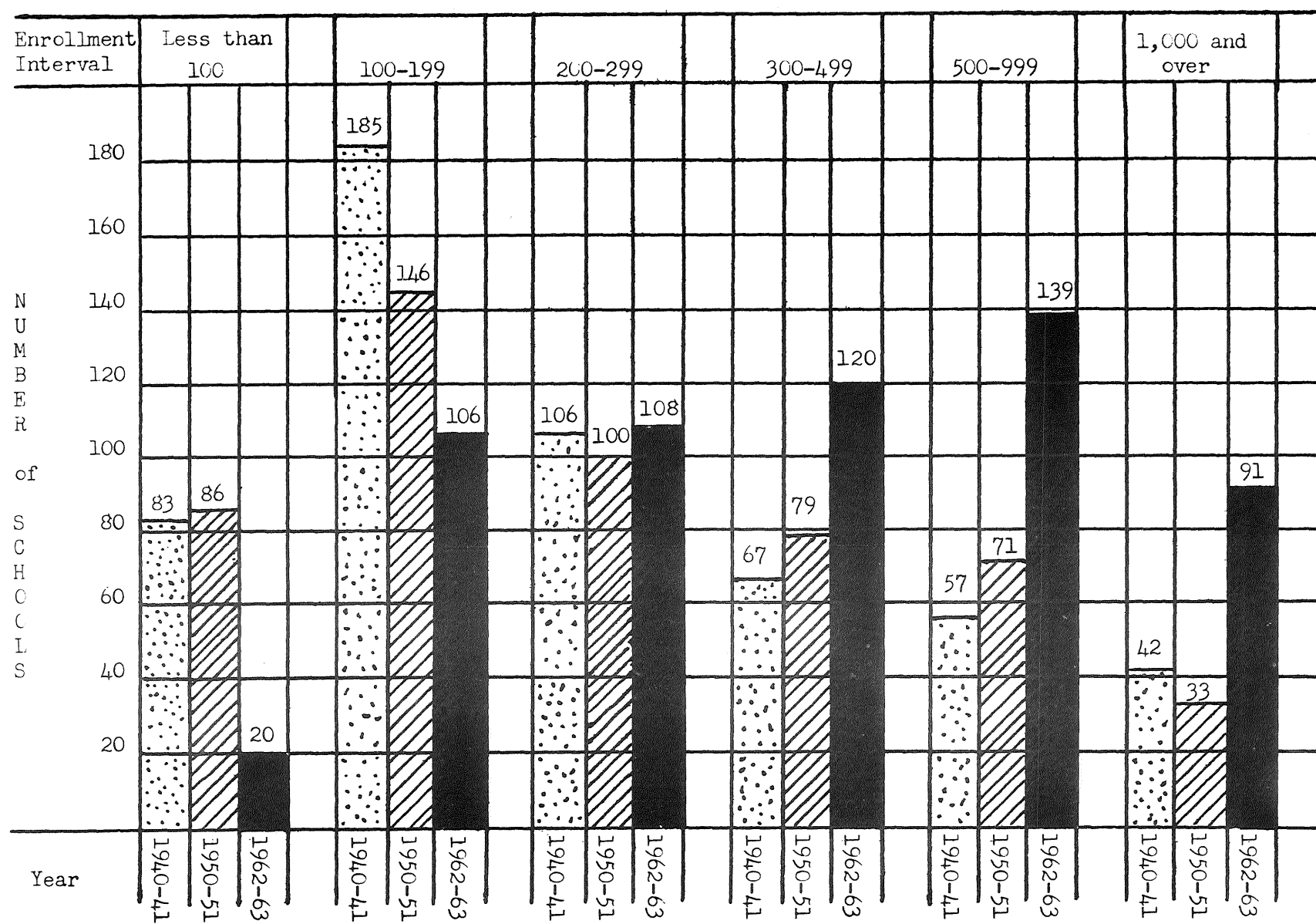
\*Includes 45,243 Secondary Pupils Residing in Districts Not Maintaining Secondary Schools

\*\*Includes 26,723 Secondary Pupils Residing in Districts Not Maintaining Secondary Schools

CHART IX

### Size of High School by Enrollment Intervals

1940 - 1963



## CHAPTER IV

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND REORGANIZATION

The opportunity of a high school education is upheld today as the right of every American child. The economy of the nation, its labor laws, and employment practices follow the point of view that makes completion of the secondary school a basic requirement for every young American. The "common school education" of earlier generations has in reality been extended to include both elementary and secondary schools. The "general and uniform system of public schools" to which the Minnesota Constitution makes reference must be considered in terms of a twelve-year program of education as the minimum.

The State Advisory Commission on School Reorganization has from the time of its creation by the 1947 legislature been guided by this interpretation. In the early 1949 revision of its "Manual for County School Survey Committee" the Commission described the desirable school district as one:

"...sufficiently large to provide an adequate and economical educational program designed to meet the needs and abilities of all children through the secondary school years..."

This view was emphasized by the State Advisory Commission again in the 1960 revision of the manual in the following terms:

"One of the primary aims and goals in the reorganization of the school district system of Minnesota is to have every child a resident of a district offering a unified and comprehensive program of elementary and secondary education with adequate standards and at reasonable cost to the taxpayers. The constantly increasing demands in our social and economic living for more and better education makes any district organization outmoded which does not maintain both elementary and secondary schools for its resident pupils..."

Various recommendations which the State Advisory Commission has made in its several reports to the legislature have indicated that the twelve-year program should be the basis of the reorganization of districts. In its 1959 Report it was recommended:

"That closed school districts be merged with adjacent districts which maintain secondary schools."

In 1961 the Commission called for merging of all territory in the state into districts maintaining graded elementary and secondary schools as follows:

"The Commission strongly recommends that the legislature establish a policy through legislation providing for the inclusion of all territory in school districts maintaining graded elementary and secondary schools by July 1, 1965."

In its Report to the 1963 legislature the same recommendation was made as being "basic to efficient school administration." Included with the Report now being made to the 1965 legislature is the same recommendation, except for the effective date. With more than 90 per cent of both the assessed valuation and the pupil population being situated within the boundaries of districts maintaining both elementary and secondary schools, many citizens are asking why there is delay in making resident status in such districts the right of every child under the general and uniform system of public schools which is to be provided for the state as a whole.

There are a number of noteworthy trends in the district enlargement program that relate particularly to the secondary school. Some of these, even though included in the previous chapter, will bear repetition:

- 1) In twelve counties the reorganization has been completed to the extent that all pupils in the county are residents of districts maintaining unified twelve-year educational programs for both the elementary and secondary periods of schooling. Fifteen other counties are nearing this goal.
- 2) Non-resident secondary school enrollments have been reduced by more than 50 per cent since 1947 as these pupils are now being served on a resident basis in the larger districts.
- 3) The secondary schools have grown larger in enrollment totals, and consequently are better able to provide for the educational needs of all the pupils.

One indication of the broader curriculum and the more comprehensive program of instruction in the larger secondary schools is found in the number of approved special departments in the state. Between 1947 and 1963 the total number of approved special departments increased from 1,051 to 1,656. Table VI shows the number of departments in the various special subject fields for the years indicated.

**TABLE VI**  
**Approved Special Departments**

	1947-48	1962-63	Increase
Agriculture	123	305	182
Business	254	381	127
Home Economics	347	539	192
Industrial Arts	327	431	104
Totals	1,051	1,656	605

Essential in the establishment and maintenance of a good comprehensive secondary school is a district with the combination of sufficient pupil population and taxable valuation to make for efficient administration. The State Advisory Commission on School Reorganization has expressed its belief that for Minnesota the recommended minimum enrollment of 300 pupils in the secondary school is one that is reasonable of attainment. Assessed valuation of approximately one and one-half million dollars has likewise been recommended as a desirable minimum in the enlargement of local districts.

The increased demands being made upon the schools by our rapidly changing social and economic order calls for constant evaluation of the existing organization of the districts maintaining secondary schools. It is evident that Minnesota has many small secondary schools. Are these schools offering a program of education sufficiently broad and balanced so as to meet the interests and needs of all pupils in the district? A number of studies have been made on the relationship between the size of the school and the course offerings and educational services available to the pupil. For a brief summary of a few of these the following excerpt is made from the bulletin of the State Advisory Commission, "Secondary Schools and the Reorganization of Districts," Code XXXII-B77, Revised September, 1964:

"Research Monograph 1963-MI of the National Education Association entitled 'Small High Schools, 1960-61' is a comprehensive study replete with specific nationwide samplings of the characteristics of the small high school. The study classifies as the 'small high school' all those with enrollments of fewer than 300 pupils. Chapter VI, devoted to 'Subject Offerings,' contains much detailed discussion and informative tables on the availability of specific subjects in various fields of instruction. Details of the study show no foreign language courses in 28.9% of the small schools, 76.1% with no journalism course, 51.7% with no speech course, 56.8% with no course in solid geometry, 40.2% with no course in trigonometry, 45.8% with no general business course, 79.9% with no course in office machines, 90.4% with no course in physics, 10.2% with no chemistry course, etc. The survey sought the opinions of the small school principals on consolidation. Fifty-seven percent said consolidation of the small high schools would be wise, 26.5% said it would be unwise, and 16.5% expressed no opinion.

"Research Project No. 13 of the Minnesota Department of Education entitled 'A Foundation Program for Minnesota Public Schools,' 1959, draws the conclusion that 'although it may be possible to offer the basic foundation program in a secondary school with 200 pupils it must be emphasized that an enrollment of 200 pupils is not a desirable minimum enrollment for secondary schools. The desirable minimum should be 300 pupils or more.' In a discussion of the financial aspects of the foundation program the study points to the pupil-teacher ratio as one important factor directly affecting the maintenance cost. The smallest schools surveyed had a ratio of one secondary school teacher for 10.4 secondary pupils, which increased to 17.1 pupils per teacher in the secondary schools enrolling 200 to 299, and to 18.8 in schools with 300 to 399 pupils.

"The Upper Midwest Research and Development Council and the University of Minnesota in a joint Upper Midwest Economic Study entitled 'Education and the Upper Midwest Economies,' January, 1964, examined the impacts of education '(1) as a major employer and spender of funds, and (2) as a developer of skills in employees (investment in human capital).' In a summary of the Policy Issues in Education the study emphasizes that because of the 'pressing need of pupils, parents and employers for high quality and higher standards in education' and with 'the knowledge of the benefits from better schools, investment in this improvement, through consolidation, should continue to receive high priority.' The study recognizes the problems in the proposed consolidation of the 'small, high-cost, limited program high school,' but concludes that citizens 'should be aware of what is being sacrificed for these advantages.'

"A notable study on the 'Relationship between Pupil Achievement and High School Size' was made by the College of Education, State University of Iowa. Using the scores in the Iowa Tests of Educational Development in the various subject area some interesting findings were made. In a report on the results, Dr. Leonard S. Feldt of Iowa states, 'In every major area the average achievement of ninth grade students in the largest schools is consistently higher than that of students in the smallest schools... The averages for Grade 12 show the same trend as for Grade 9, highest achievement in the largest schools, lowest achievement in the smallest schools. But what is more important, in each area the discrepancy between achievement in large schools and achievement in small schools has increased between Grades 9 and 12.'

"The American Institute for Research and the University of Pittsburgh began a study in 1958 with a survey of the talents of representative high school students, and a follow-up study of their subsequent education and use of the

talents in their careers. Noting the great variation of learning from school to school in every state, Dr. John C. Flanagan, of the University of Pittsburgh, pointed out that 'seniors in larger schools tended to make higher scores in physical science and mathematics than did twelfth graders from the smaller schools.' He concluded that 'this difference may be because many of the small schools participating in the project had only limited course offerings at the advanced levels in these subjects.'"

The State Advisory Commission is cognizant of comparative per-pupil cost figures in Minnesota schools. These appear to be highest in those districts which maintain small secondary schools with limited educational programs, then leveling off to the lowest point for districts with secondary school enrollments of 300 to 400 pupils, and rising again for the districts with larger secondary schools with a corresponding increase in educational services and course offerings. State aid under the Minnesota Foundation Program is paid on a per-pupil-unit basis without regard to the adequacy or the quality of the course offerings. A study of Minnesota secondary schools to determine the cost factor and the state aid in relation to the adequacy of the educational program would be helpful in determining the proper course of action. Minnesota boys and girls are deserving of the best in public school education, and the finances of the state should be so allocated as to properly aid the good educational programs.



## CHAPTER V

### THE NON-OPERATING DISTRICT

In 1963 the Minnesota legislature took a forward step in the reorganization of school districts, when it enacted Chapter 547 relating to the non-operating or closed school district. The law provides for the automatic dissolution of all non-operating school districts which have not voluntarily merged with a district maintaining a classified school by July 1, 1965. People interested in the formation of stronger school districts have given their support to this type of legislation and are of the opinion that it is a step in the direction of attaining the basic objectives of school district reorganization, namely, having all the area of the state within districts which maintain a comprehensive program of education from grades one through twelve that can meet the needs and abilities of all children.

TABLE VII

#### Number of Non-operating Districts

From 1933 to 1964

Year	Number Closed	Year	Number Closed
1933	296	1953	1,708
1938	501	1958	872
1943	1,239	1963	560
1948	2,418	1964	513
1949	2,616		

As early as 1911 the legislature had given authority to the school board of any district to provide for the instruction of its pupils in an adjoining district. Later amendments provided more specific direction to the authorization to "discontinue the schools of its own district or of any grades or departments in said schools." Table VII on this page shows the trend over the past thirty years in the number of school districts that have discontinued the operation of their school and have contracted for the instruction of their pupils on a tuition basis in adjoining or nearby school districts. Up to 1949 the number of non-operating districts increased each year. Since then the number has been on the decline as a result of school district enlargement.

A number of factors contributed to cause school districts to close over the years. One of the primary causes was the shift in population from the rural to the urban areas of the state. From 1900 to 1960 the urban population increased from about 34 per cent to 62 per cent of the total, while the rural population has declined steadily from about 66 per cent to approximately 38 per cent in 1960. Between 1935 and 1960 the number of farms in the state decreased from 184,203 to 145,662 or a percentage loss of 20.7 per cent. These factors caused a decline of enrollments in the ungraded elementary schools. School boards of districts with small enrollments found that the costs per pupil were exceedingly high, and as a result decided that it was more economical to close the school and pay tuition and transportation to another district. The matter of replacing the wooden frame one-room schools that had been built many years ago became of vital concern to the school boards and people of the districts. Rather than expend money for a new building or modernization, the school boards in many districts elected to close their schools.

Another factor which accelerated the closing of schools was the acute shortage of teachers. Many of the better teachers left the ungraded schools for positions in the graded elementary schools of the larger school systems where the overall working conditions were more favorable. Among other reasons for the closing of rural schools was the desire of parents for a better education for their children, which could be obtained in districts that maintained graded elementary and secondary schools.

The enactment of Chapter 547 by the 1963 legislature had the support of the leading educational organizations of the state. Prior to 1963, Minnesota was one of the few states that permitted districts to exist on a non-operating basis. The nearby states of Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin had enacted laws before 1963 which provided for the automatic merger of non-operating districts.

The Minnesota law provides that on July 1, 1965, all districts which do not maintain a classified school are automatically dissolved. Exceptions are made for districts holding contracts with special school districts and for districts in which 75 per cent of school age children are attending an existing private school maintaining elementary and secondary education within the district. The attachment of the territory of the dissolved district is the responsibility of the county board upon an advisory vote of the people. Title to the property of the dissolved district passes to the district to which attachment is made, and the attached territory automatically assumes its proportionate share of the bonded and outstanding debt. Districts in which schools are closed after July 1, 1965, will be dissolved automatically upon the discontinuance of the schools. Prior to July 1, 1965, the non-operating districts may be made a part of a district with a classified school by the procedures of consolidation, dissolution and attachment or detachment and annexation of lands.

No definite trends have been established as to what effect Chapter 547 has had upon the merger of non-operating districts. Of the 123 districts that were merged with other districts during the school year of 1962-1963, forty-two were closed. There were 149 districts that became a part of another district during 1963-1964; of this number fifty-eight were closed. Of the 272 districts merged during the biennium, 100 were closed or non-operating districts.

It is significant to note that only six non-operating districts have reopened their schools since the passage of Chapter 547 in 1963. The six districts are located in the counties of Brown, Lyon, Otter Tail, Todd, Wabasha and Wright. The four schools that reopened for the school year of 1964-1965 had elementary enrollments ranging from three to six pupils. The fact that so few districts reopened their schools indicates that the remaining non-operating districts have accepted the provisions of the law and are planning to merge with an open and operating district.

For the school year of 1963-1964 there were 513 districts with closed schools, approximately 30 per cent of all the common school districts in the state. Chart X on Page 43 shows the number of closed school districts by counties. The map shows that twenty-five counties had no non-operating districts within their boundaries. Seven counties with twenty or more non-operating districts had 199 non-operating districts or about 39 per cent of the state total. For the state as a whole about 31 per cent of the districts are closed, having approximately 11.5 per cent of the total enrollment of the districts maintaining ungraded elementary schools. The average closed school district in 1963-1964 had an enrollment of less than eight pupils. Chart XI on Page 45 shows that 187 of the 513 closed schools had public school enrollments of five or fewer pupils and 366 had no more than ten pupils per school. There were 46 districts that had no public school pupils. Within this group of districts, nine had no pupils of elementary school age and in thirty-seven districts all pupils were enrolled in parochial schools.

The legislature is to be commended for the enactment of Chapter 547 providing for the transition of non-operation districts into districts that are maintaining schools.






### Counties with Closed Districts

School Year 1963-1964

Number of Counties

Number of Counties	Shading Pattern	Description
25	White	No Closed Districts
30	Stippled	1 to 4
13	Diagonal lines (top-left to bottom-right)	5 to 9
12	Diagonal lines (bottom-left to top-right)	10 to 19
7	Solid black	20 or More

Total Number of Closed Districts 513

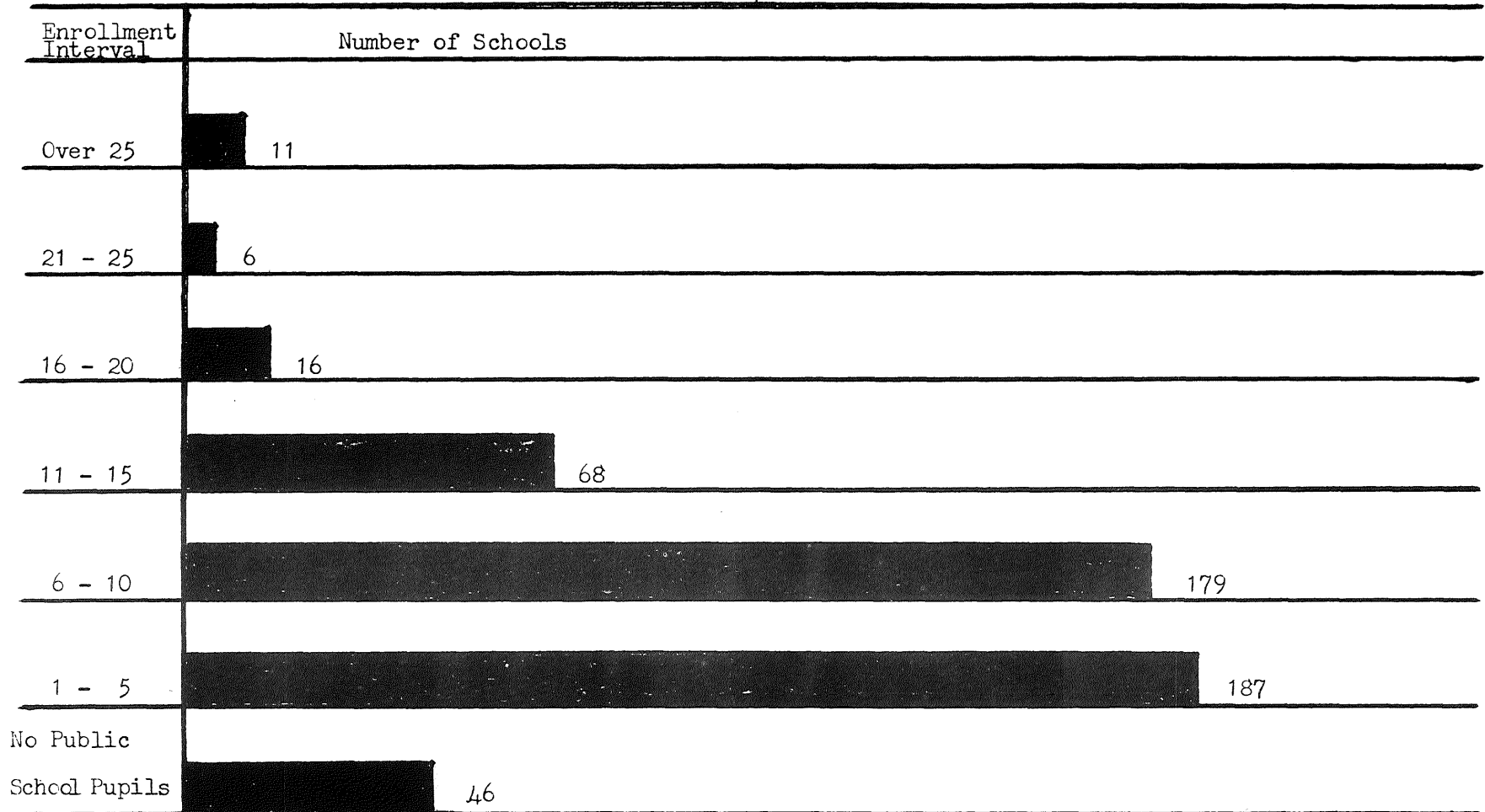
25		No Closed Districts
30		1 to 4
13		5 to 9
12		10 to 19
7		20 or More

Total Number of Closed Districts 513

# CHART XI

## Grouping of Closed School Districts by Elementary Enrollments

School Year 1963-1964



## CHAPTER VI

### LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The State Advisory Commission, since its formation in 1947, has given consideration to the statutes and the procedures as they relate to the entire program of school district enlargement. Recommendations have been made to the legislature at each regular session for the purpose of clarifying and improving laws that pertain to school district boundary changes. County superintendents, district superintendents, school boards and county boards who have worked with the procedures of reorganization, consolidation, dissolution and detachment of land have made suggestions to the Commission regarding the enactment of new laws or amendments to existing laws relating to all phases of district organization.

The State Advisory Commission on School Reorganization herewith submits the following recommendations for consideration by the 1965 legislature of Minnesota:

#### 1. Merging of All Territory in the State into Districts Maintaining Graded Elementary and Secondary Schools.

The Commission strongly recommends that the legislature establish a policy through legislation providing for the inclusion of all territory in school districts maintaining graded elementary and secondary schools.

In the 1960 revised "Manual for County School Survey Committee," the Advisory Commission set forth the "Aims and Goals of Public School Organization" as follows:

"One of the primary aims and goals in the organization of the school district system of Minnesota is to have every child a resident of a district offering a unified and comprehensive program of elementary and secondary education with adequate standards and at reasonable cost to the taxpayer."

#### 2. Claims Against Discontinued School Districts.

It is recommended that a law be enacted which will authorize the county auditor to levy a tax against the territory of any discontinued school district at the time of its dissolution, consolidation or reorganization to pay the outstanding liabilities of such discontinued district as may be represented by school district orders not paid for the want of funds and unpaid bills.

Some districts fail to levy a sufficient amount to operate the school or to pay the costs of tuition and transportation, and consequently there are unpaid bills at the time of attachment. When such districts are attached to other districts, the district to which attachment is made must, under present laws, assume the outstanding liabilities.

In some closed school districts the school boards and the people are not making a tax levy for the current year, knowing that the district will be automatically dissolved on July 1, 1965, and attached to adjoining districts.

#### 3. Composition of Districts.

It is recommended that the law be amended to define a school district as composed of adjoining territory, and that provisions be made for attaching existing islands to the district that surrounds each so that all territory of a district will be contiguous. The county board has been given the responsibility for administering

the laws relating to the procedures of detachment and annexation of land from one school district to another and the dissolution and attachment of school districts. In the administration of these procedures certain lands have become isolated from the parent district and completely surrounded by another district. The proposed amendment should continue the present exception under which an entire district may have been made part of the non-contiguous district which maintains a secondary school within the same area.

#### 4. Duties in Procedures of Consolidation.

It is recommended that Minnesota Statutes 122.23, Subd. 2, be amended to assign to the county auditor the duties and services relating to consolidation specified for the county superintendent in the counties where the Commissioner of Education is required to render the services of the county school office.

At the time of this report forty-one counties have discontinued the office of county superintendent. In eight counties the duties imposed by law upon the county superintendent are being performed by the Commissioner of Education. This places the Commissioner in a unique position relative to the procedure of consolidation. Under the present law, he must prepare the plat, approve, modify or reject the plat, receive the petitions for the election on consolidation, call and conduct the election and issue the Order of Consolidation. It would be more appropriate to have the plat for consolidation prepared and the election arrangements made at the local level, with the duties assigned to the county auditor's office. This will provide for the proper separation of the duties and responsibilities between the local and the state level.

#### 5. Study of Small Secondary Schools.

It is recommended that the legislature give consideration to the study of the secondary schools by an appropriate agency to determine the cost factor and state aids in relation to the adequacy of the educational program, and to define a minimum foundation program of education. Criticism has been made that the small secondary school is not efficient or economical in its use of the educational dollar, that it is characterized by high per pupil unit costs, limited number of courses offered, small staff of teachers of which several may be teaching outside of their major field of preparation, and with a small number of pupils per class. All pupils in the state should be assured of educational opportunities up to some prescribed minimum which will meet their future needs.

#### 6. Transportation Aid and County Levy for Transportation of Non-resident Pupils.

The Commission recommends that M.S. 124.22, Subd. 3, and M.S. 124.51, Subd. 5, be amended so that only districts not maintaining a classified secondary school shall be subject to the pupil transportation levy of a county and that the transportation aid reimbursement for non-resident secondary pupils to the county shall not exceed \$60 per pupil per year nor 80 per cent of the total cost including actual depreciation. The change proposed in transportation aid would make for uniform state aid payments for both non-resident and resident pupils.

Under the present law the county levy for the transportation of non-resident secondary pupils is spread against all property of the county. Districts which are already paying their share for resident-pupil transportation should not be subject to the transportation levy for non-resident secondary pupils.

7. Special Equalization Aid to Counties for the Non-resident Tuition Fund.

The Commission recommends that M.S. 124.51, Subd. 4, second paragraph, be repealed relating to special equalization aid paid by the state to certain counties for the payment of secondary non-resident tuition.

When districts are merged with districts maintaining a classified secondary school they no longer are subject to the county levy for the tuition of non-resident secondary pupils. As the total of assessed valuation for the support of the county tuition fund becomes smaller, the tax rate generally goes up. This has encouraged districts to merge with districts that maintain a complete program of education. However, the county tuition equalization aid retards the reorganization program by granting additional aid to those counties whose tax levies for tuition is more than 150 per cent of the average for the state. Included are often counties in which relatively little reorganization has taken place. Since the equalization feature is part of the state foundation aid program in the first place, there is no valid reason for a second equalization. For the school year of 1962-63 tuition fund equalization aid in excess of \$91,000 was paid to ten counties.

8. Maintaining Status Quo Prior to Effective Date.

It is recommended that the following be included as a part of the statutes pertaining to all procedures relating to boundary changes:

"No change shall be made in the boundaries and no property or other assets shall be disposed of in any manner or in any district or portion of district included in proceedings of boundary change under any law after the final or interlocutory orders of the county board or the orders of consolidation or reorganization of the county superintendent have been issued and prior to the effective date of such order."

The status quo of school districts should be maintained relative to the boundaries and assets of districts being merged during the interim between the issuance of the official orders by the county board and county superintendent and the effective date of such orders.

9. Detachment of Lands.

It is recommended that M.S. 122.21, Subd. 2, be amended to give the county board authority to detach lands from any district that is not operating a school and to eliminate the two-year waiting period as now set forth in law.

10. Change of School District Boundaries by the County Board.

It is recommended that the legislature study the possibility of creating an independent agency to pass upon the proceedings of dissolution-attachment of districts and detachment-annexation of land.

An independent and separate agency could pass upon the merits of any boundary change on an objective basis. In some instances the county boards now use the county survey committee for helpful advice. The formation of stronger districts with regular boundary lines could result also in better planning of transportation routes.

There is a conflict of interest between the procedures of consolidation, reorganization, dissolution and detachment of lands. The Department of Education is directly involved with the procedures of consolidation and reorganization while the county board has jurisdiction over the procedures of dissolution and detachment of

lands. Because there are two separate agencies involved in procedures relating to boundary changes it is difficult to coordinate the organization of good school districts.

#### 11. Compulsory Attendance.

The Commission supports the proposed amendment to M.S. 1961, Section 120.10, Subd. 3, relating to compulsory attendance whereby a child must have completed the studies ordinarily required in the tenth grade before such child is eligible for exemption. The amendment would also repeal the provision under which a work excuse may be granted between April 1 and November 1.

The problem of pupil drop-outs before the completion of school at the secondary level is of vital concern to the school and community. In 1958 there were 10,078 pupils enrolled in the ninth grade that failed to graduate in 1961. This represents a 20 per cent rate of drop-outs in the state. If pupils are required to attend school through the tenth grade, the percentage of drop-outs could be reduced. When a child is absent from school for a long period during the school year, it often discourages him from completing his secondary school education, thus adding to the drop-out problem.



## CONCLUSION

Minnesota has made definite progress since 1947 in the merging of school districts. At the present time there are less than 2,000 school districts in existence, as compared to 7,600 districts in 1947. During this period 5,600 school districts have been merged, making a state-wide reduction of over 73 per cent in the number of school districts. Nearly all of these are now a part of a district with a complete program of education from grades one through twelve. There were, however, as of July 1, 1964, more than 1,500 districts with over 30,000 children not a part of a district maintaining classified graded elementary and secondary schools. The pupils enrolled in these schools should have the same educational opportunities that other children have as residents of the larger school system, maintaining both elementary and secondary schools.

The 1,500 districts that are not now a part of a district with a complete program of education have less than 5 per cent of the pupils and 10 per cent or less of the assessed valuation of the state. It would appear that the time has now come for completing the first objective of school district reorganization. To accomplish this objective, legislative action should declare the policy for the state that all school districts shall maintain a complete program of education from the elementary grades through the secondary level, and should make provisions for placing all territory and taxable valuation in such districts.

In the first phase of school district reorganization, emphasis has been given to the merger of districts into larger independent districts that maintain graded elementary and secondary schools. Consideration should now also be given to the merger of districts with small secondary schools enrollments. Schools with small secondary enrollments cannot maintain educational programs that meet the recommendations outlined for a basic minimum foundation program. Because of the limitations of teaching staff and enrollment, it becomes very difficult to provide an adequate program of education which will meet the needs of the students in this modern day world.

An extensive study should be made relative to the possible merger of small secondary schools in order to improve the educational programs and financial structure of the districts. To accomplish this phase of school district reorganization and to attain equal and uniform education opportunities for all children in the state of Minnesota will require the cooperation of all people concerned.