A STUDY OF LARGE SCALE STUDENT SHARING PROGRAMS
BY SMALLER IOWA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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by
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The problem. The purpose of this project was to study an apparent trend in the state of Iowa for neighboring school districts to enter into sharing agreements whereby entire grades from one school attend classes in another district. By discovering the reasons for this recent relationship between districts, it may be possible to predict what the future direction of school district size and configuration may be in Iowa. The impact of recent legislation with regard to financial incentives for small school districts to share students, teachers, administrators and facilities will also be determined.

Procedure. The subjects for this study were the board of education presidents, superintendents, and secondary principals in those schools in Iowa who were involved in whole grade sharing programs during the 1986-87 school year. Each of these subjects was asked to respond to a survey instrument relating to facts, feelings and opinions with regard to their school and whole grade sharing.

Findings. Whole grade sharing programs came about primarily for two major reasons: the loss of enrollment in the local school district and the desire to maintain or improve curricular offerings for students. It was the opinion of school administrators that the sharing programs would eventually lead to reorganization of the two districts into one school district. It was also the opinion of all groups surveyed that the attitude of both the student and adult populations toward the sharing program was very positive.

Recommendations. As a result of this study, it would be recommended that those very small school districts in Iowa seriously consider exploring the possibility of developing sharing agreements with neighboring schools. A positive influence on curriculum offerings results from such arrangements. The positive attitude of the people involved indicates that such programs can be a viable alternative to the problems of declining enrollment and curriculum curtailment due to number of students and teachers available.
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

The State of Iowa has long held a reputation as one of the top states in the nation in the field of education.\(^1\) In the last two decades we have seen the decrease in school population impact greatly the educational systems in the state. The primary thrust of this impact has been the declining enrollment in a large number of schools.

Information from the Iowa State Department of Education serves to point to the severity of the problem of declining enrollment in Iowa schools. In 1969 the public schools of Iowa had a peak enrollment of 738,919 students. In the fall of 1985 the enrollment had declined to 485,586 students.\(^2\) In a seventeen year period student enrollment in Iowa public schools declined by 34 percent.

The schools most affected and threatened by declining enrollment and dwindling financial resources have been those

\(^{1}\)Terrel Bell, Educational Excellence, Planning for the Future (Des Moines, IA: Iowa Association of School Administrators), cassette.

\(^{2}\)Dr. Leland Tack, Consultant, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines, Iowa, personal communication, 20 October 1986.
smaller school districts in the rural areas. All Iowa schools have faced financial problems in recent years but schools of under 300 enrollment have seen their very existence threatened. The State legislature has mandated that Area Education Agencies prepare plans for the reorganization of school districts with fewer than 300 students.

The problem is not only one of finance and enrollment, it is also a problem of educational quality. As enrollment has gone down there have not been sufficient numbers of students to offer viable educational programs. This situation has caused community problems in several small districts. Many parents want changes that they believe will improve the quality of education. They want their children to be a part of larger attendance centers. Others in the community steadfastly hold to the idea that their community should have their own K-12 school program.

During the 1950's the state of Iowa went through a reorganization period and many of the very small districts joined to form new school districts. Those were difficult times for many communities as heated and sometimes bitter disputes took place as to who would be a part of what reorganized district and where would the schools (and especially the high school) be located.

Declining enrollments and financial resources are causing the consolidation or reorganization issue to again
be explored as the vehicle by which the small school curriculum and quality of teachers can be preserved. One detering factor in school reorganization that must be considered is our past history in this venture. Although many educational improvements undoubtedly resulted from school reorganization, it would appear there continues to be public sentiment in opposition to reorganization.

Reorganization may be a term that many people in smaller districts do not want to hear. However, not wanting to hear about or face a situation does not solve the problem. In recent years many smaller districts have explored a variety of possibilities and more and more are beginning to take action to address the problem of declining enrollment and limited financial resources. One of the trends that seems to be emerging is that of shared services involving total class or grade sharing.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to ascertain why and how entire grade sharing programs are taking place.

Significance of the Study

There are currently ninety school districts in the state of Iowa with enrollments of fewer than 300 students in grades K-12. These schools may very well be motivated, or forced, to become involved in alternative methods to their current educational delivery systems. This study will give
those schools interested a background of information as to how other schools have handled this very current problem.

Research Prediction

It is predicted that the results of this study will show that schools have entered into whole grade sharing programs for all of the following reasons: Loss of enrollment, financial reasons, improvement in curriculum and as an alternative to reorganization.

It is further predicted that financial problems and declining enrollment will be the two most significant problems that have led to sharing programs.

Limitations of the Study

The most serious limitation of this study is the relatively small number of schools involved in whole grade sharing programs in the state of Iowa. At the present time there are twenty school districts involved in such a program. While this is a limiting factor, it is anticipated that the response to the survey will be very high.

Definition of Terms

Small schools - Those in the state of Iowa with less than 300 enrollment in grades K-12.

Whole grade sharing -- Involves sending all students from one or more grade levels to another district for a large portion of the educational program.
A review of the literature found no published studies in Iowa or elsewhere as to the reasons why school districts enter into whole grade sharing programs. There is some literature available which discusses the possible benefits of sharing programs as a method of improving the educational opportunities for students in small and/or rural areas.

Reviewing the literature does find that sharing students or services between local school districts in one form or another does take place in various parts of the country. Whole grade sharing programs, however, are not very common. In a paper presented in 1983, whole grade sharing is referred to as a "unique" sharing program. This paper refers to a sharing program in two rural Minnesota districts which have remained individual governmental units but the programs and students are together. This is the type of sharing program that is now used by several of the smaller school districts in Iowa. In reviewing the

literature related to this topic it soon becomes obvious that the state of Iowa is not alone in having small rural districts. In a paper presented at the National Conference on Building Partnerships for Quality Education in Rural America, Dr. James Jess, superintendent at CAL Community School of Latimer, Iowa, presented the following statistics:

Over one fourth of America's school age youngsters are educated in two thirds of our nation's public school systems that are located in areas described as rural. These school systems serve youngsters who live in the open countryside and in communities with fewer than 2,500 people. . . . Despite their great diversity, collectively rural schools share some unique commonalities. First, most rural districts are small in size. Nearly 75 percent (11,837) of our nations 15,641 school districts enroll fewer than 2,500 students; over half (8,362) enroll fewer than 1,000 students; and over one fourth (4,223) enroll fewer than 300 students. Second, rural school districts are sparsely populated with 10 to 50 persons per square mile. Third, rural school districts are likely to be isolated a greater distance from any major urban center. ¹

In looking at school size in one state other than Iowa, Barker and Logan present the following information:

Texas has more independent school districts than any other state in the nation. Of the state's 1,100 districts, 82.5 percent enroll fewer than 2,500 students and almost 60 percent (657 districts) enroll fewer than 1,000. According to statistics from the University Interscholastic League (1984), 757 or two thirds of Texas' public high schools enroll fewer than 650 students each.

In fact 329 (28.6 percent) of the state's high schools have fewer than 135 students and an additional 217 (18.9 percent) enroll less than 275.¹

In looking at enrollment figures for the state of Iowa as reported for the 1984-85 school year, we find that out of 436 public school districts only thirty-four, or 8 percent, have an enrollment of 2,500 or more. At the other end of the enrollment spectrum eighty-one schools, or 18 percent, have K-12 enrollments of less than 300. Seventy-five percent of the public schools in Iowa have a K-12 enrollment of less than 1,000 students.

In reviewing the literature concerning alternate methods of educational delivery one soon comes to understand that there are many who are strong advocates of the small school and who believe that because of their size they do in fact do a better job of educating students. Dr. James Jess points out that policies that encourage consolidation should be reconsidered in view of recent research findings and task force recommendations.² The argument used is that big schools provided more courses and greater opportunities whereas small schools could offer only the general basics and place too much emphasis on student participation in


²Jess, 2.
extracurricular activities. Contrast that with the Nation at Risk which calls for strengthening graduation requirements which would include that all students granted a diploma should be required to take at least the following curriculum in high school: (a) four years of English; (b) three years of mathematics; (c) three years of science; (d) three years of social studies; and (e) one-half year of computer science plus two years of foreign language for the college-bound students.

Most of the literature reviewed in this area points to the problems caused by small and ever declining enrollment. Such problems are those subjects that generally fall into the category of electives falling prey to financial cutbacks and being eliminated from the curriculum.¹

Another area of concern is that those teachers who have concentrated their academic preparation and experience in specialized subject areas will be required to teach subjects that are not in their major area of preparation and for

which they have little interest and do not feel qualified.¹

There is also a very real concern that the small school districts with their more isolated living conditions and their history of lower pay for teachers may find it difficult, if indeed not impossible, to find qualified teachers in certain teaching areas, especially in the fields of science and mathematics.²

In an article entitled Shared Services for Rural and Small Schools, Sarah Hanuske discusses the reasons why school districts are interested in the sharing concept.³ She points out the fact that school revenues based on enrollments are not adequate as school populations decline and costs continue to rise. Other reasons given are to improve educational opportunities, meet required offering mandates and to keep the local school open. Hanuske states: "Sharing allows small communities to keep their schools, and, in the case of high schools, their identity


³Sarah Hanuske, Shared Services for Rural and Small Schools (Las Cruces, NM: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1985).
and vitality. ¹ This article also points out that in the past most sharing has been in the area of athletic competition. Now these schools are becoming involved in academic cooperation.

A review of the literature would seem to indicate that local school boards are attempting to address the problem of declining enrollment and its ramifications by turning to solutions other than school district reorganization.² The concept of sharing students is one of those alternatives.

At the present time the researcher could find nothing in the literature discussing large scale or whole grade sharing programs in the state of Iowa. It is known that there are such programs in the state. It is the purpose of this paper to examine these programs as to how and why they came into being.

¹Hanuske, 3.
²Bruss and Bryan, 2.
CHAPTER 3
Procedure and Methods

The purpose of this study was to investigate the whole grade student sharing programs currently in operation in the state of Iowa. A questionnaire was constructed that would seek demographic information and school officials' opinions concerning the whole grade sharing programs from schools where those programs are currently operating.

Subjects

The subjects contacted for this study were all of the Board of Education presidents, superintendents and secondary principals of those schools involved in whole grade sharing programs. A listing of those schools involved in whole grade sharing programs was obtained from the Department of Administration and Finance of the Iowa Department of Education.

Instrument Used

The survey instrument used was designed by the researcher (Appendix A). The design of the survey was to focus on a narrow range of information and perceptions concerning the whole class sharing arrangement. The questions asked for the number of students involved, the configuration of the sharing arrangement, miles traveled and
solicited information as to how the program came about. The instrument also sought input as to the advantages and disadvantages of the program as currently viewed by the board presidents, superintendents, and principals.

Survey Method

The method used for the survey was to mail the questionnaire to all board presidents, superintendents and principals of the schools identified by the State Department of Education. This survey was accompanied by a letter of introduction (Appendix B). This letter introduced the researcher, explained the purpose of the survey and requested the cooperation of those receiving the questionnaire. Approximately one month after the initial mailing, a follow-up letter (Appendix C) was mailed to any who had not responded to the survey request. If there were still those who had not responded, a personal telephone call was made to ask for their cooperation in filling out the survey questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this project involved descriptive statistics. Results are reported in the percentage of respondents who selected the various possible alternative responses.

The demographic information was reported as the stated facts of the respondents. Information was also reported as to whether or not there was a difference in the perception
held with regard to whole grade sharing on the part of principals, superintendents and board presidents.
CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter will discuss the results of the forty-nine returned questionnaires that qualified by their position of school superintendent, school board president or secondary principal, as identified by the Department of Education, as representing or being associated with the twenty school districts engaged in using a whole grade sharing plan in the state of Iowa for the school year 1986-1987. The responses concerning demographic and program information categories will be presented by either a percentage of the responses and, where appropriate, by frequency of the response.

A total of fifty-three questionnaires were sent to all school districts involved with a whole grade sharing plan in the state of Iowa. Forty-nine questionnaires were returned to the investigator, reflecting an overall response of 92 percent.

The response from the superintendents was 100 percent. The secondary principals also responded; however, seven of the smaller school districts did not have principal positions separately but had the school superintendent also serve as the principal. Sixteen board presidents of the twenty responded to the questionnaire at an 80 percent
Five of the twenty schools surveyed were "sending only." They only sent some of their students to another school but did not provide classes for students from another district. Therefore, five of the twenty school districts were "receiving only" schools and thus did not bus students from their schools to another district. Ten school districts were involved in both sending and receiving of students.

It was interesting to note only two school districts were involved in a sharing program that involved students below the sixth grade. Ninety percent of the schools involved in a sharing program do so at the sixth grade or higher level.

The largest number of students from one school district being bused to another district was 178. The smallest number sent to another district was twenty-eight.

The question regarding staff reduction was answered by superintendents who reported that 49.97 teachers were reduced among the twenty schools. A total of 4.3 teachers were added which made a net reduction of 45.67 teachers among the twenty schools involved in whole grade sharing.

There were differences of opinion among superintendents, principals and board presidents as to how much influence legislative incentives had on the decision to utilize a sharing agreement.
The question regarding the adult population's acceptance of a sharing plan found all the respondents in closer agreement that the sharing program worked out very well in most situations.

Other data derived from this survey provided information relative to the following research questions which the study was investigating.

**Demographic Results**

**Sharing Programs in Iowa**

1) Your position

Sixteen respondents indicated they were serving as president of the board of education for their school district. Twenty respondents identified their position as being that of superintendent of the school district. Thirteen respondents reported they served as principal for their school district.

As was noted earlier, seven school districts were using superintendents in the capacity of school principal also. These people responded to the questionnaire in their role as superintendent only.

The data showed that 100 percent of the superintendents and principals answered the survey questionnaire. Sixteen board presidents returned the survey instrument. Four did not respond to the first or a second letter and questionnaire. A total of 80 percent of the board presidents did respond. An overall total of 92 percent of
the fifty-three questionnaires were returned to form this investigation. All returned questionnaires responded by answering the first question of the survey instrument.

2) Do You Represent a Sending or Receiving School?

Five of the twenty schools surveyed reported they were "sending only" schools. These schools were only sending some of their students to another district but were not providing any instructional services for their sharing exchanges. Five of the twenty schools reported they were "receiving only" schools. These schools only received students to be instructed but did not send any of their students to the sharing school.

The remaining ten schools were identified as both "sending and receiving" schools for students. An agreed plan for exchanging students at different levels had been developed and put in place by the two districts.

All respondents answered the question.

3) Grade Levels Sent From Your District.

Only one of the twenty school districts surveyed sent kindergarten students from their district to another school in a sharing program. The data also revealed only two school districts share students in grades one, two, three, four and five. At the sixth grade level, six school districts sent students to another district in a sharing arrangement. The seventh and eighth grade levels had nine schools sharing students. In grades nine, ten, eleven and
twelve, ten schools sent students to a neighboring school for instruction. All of the superintendents responded to this question. At the present time it is unusual to find students below the seventh grade in a sharing program in the state of Iowa. The kindergarten class is the most unlikely to be found involved in being sent to another school district.

4) Number of Students Sent to Another District.

The greatest number of students sent from any one district to another was 178 students. The fewest number of students sent to another district was twenty-eight. The average number of students sent to another district was 77.6.

All of the superintendents answered this question.

5) Grade Levels Received by Your District.

One school district received students for a kindergarten program from another school district. At grade levels one, two, three, four, and five only two school districts received students from a neighboring school district for instructional purposes. At grade six level, three schools received students from another district. Again at grade levels seven and eight, nine school districts received students from another school district. At grades nine, ten, eleven and twelve, ten schools received students from an adjoining district. All of the school superintendents responded to this question.
6) Number of Students Received by Your District.

The greatest number of students received from another district was 178 students as reported by the school superintendents. The fewest number of students received by a district was twenty-eight. The average number of students a receiving school provided for was 78.4 students. All superintendents responded to the question.

7) Was There Reduction or Addition of Professional Staff in Your District as a Result of Sharing?

Fourteen superintendents selected the "yes" response that their school district had either experienced a reduction or addition of professional staff as a result of sharing students with another school district.

Six school superintendents chose the response "no". This indicated there had been no reduction or addition of any professional staff members caused by the sharing program.

The fourteen superintendents who had experienced either a staff reduction or addition reported 47.97 teaching positions were eliminated by the sharing programs. The mean figure in those schools was 2.4 teaching positions which had been eliminated.

Those superintendents who needed to hire additional teaching staff as a result of a sharing program cited a total of 4.3 staff members were added to the existing faculty.
The survey did not attempt to determine how the staff members were reduced. It was also not determined why staff members were added.

All superintendents answered this survey question.

8) Please Rank the Reasons (in your opinion) That Your District was Interested in Sharing Students.

The survey allowed choices as to what the superintendents believed was the primary reason the school district they represented had been interested in a sharing program.

Seven superintendents, or 35 percent, viewed the loss of enrollment as their first choice of responses. Five superintendents, or 25 percent, thought the financial reasons were the first item causing them to consider sharing students with another district. Another 35 percent, or seven superintendents, specified the main objective had been to improve curriculum. Finally one superintendent stated the sharing program had been an acceptable alternative to reorganization as the primary reason the district was willing to share. This represented 5 percent of the total twenty superintendents surveyed. No superintendent marked any other reason than the ones listed by the survey instrument.

The superintendents of seven schools selected the second response in order of importance as being loss of enrollment. This accounted for 35 percent of the
superintendents' answers. Six superintendents, 30 percent, identified financial reasons as being the second most important consideration in adopting the sharing concept for their school district. Seven of the chief administrators, or 35 percent, believed improvement in curriculum was the second leading influence in those decisions to share with another district. No chief administrator viewed sharing as an acceptable alternative to reorganization as a second reason their district considered a sharing plan.

Twenty-five percent of the superintendents, or five of them, specified the loss of enrollment as the third reason their district was interested in sharing students. The same percentage was reported by five other superintendents who believed financial reasons were the third reason for the district to be interested in a sharing arrangement. Twenty percent, or four of the superintendents, included improvement in curriculum as the third most important reason for sharing students. Twenty-five percent, or five superintendents, stated the sharing program had been viewed as an acceptable alternative to reorganization as the third most important incentive to share.

Finally, the considerations viewed as fourth, or least important of the reasons listed, for being willing to share were as follows: one superintendent indicated loss of enrollment in his district was the fourth reason for sharing. This represented 5 percent of the twenty
superintendents to whom the questionnaire had been sent.

Fifteen percent, or three of the chief school administrators, considered financial reasons to be the fourth reason a sharing plan had been implemented in their districts.

One superintendent, or 5 percent, selected improvement in curriculum as the fourth reason the district had become involved in sharing.

Forty-five percent, or nine superintendents who contributed to this investigation, marked the fourth reason for being interested in sharing had been that the plan was an acceptable alternative to reorganization.

All superintendents ranked the reasons their district had been interested in sharing as the survey directed. We will also look at board presidents' responses as to why they felt their district was interested in becoming involved in a sharing program.

In the view of six board presidents, or 38 percent of those answering the questionnaire, the primary rationale for using a sharing program had been because of loss of enrollment in their local school district.

Interestingly, no one who served in a school board president capacity viewed financial reasons to be the primary reason for adopting a sharing program. However, eight of the board presidents, or 50 percent of those who participated in this investigation, reported improvement in
curriculum as the primary motivation in the sharing plan. Two board presidents, or 13 percent, reported they felt sharing was an acceptable alternative to reorganization as the primary motivator in their district. Again, no board president provided evidence of any other reason for implementing a sharing plan in their school district.

The second ranked reason for implementing a sharing program as evaluated by nine school board presidents, or 56 percent, was the loss of enrollment. Two school board presidents, or 13 percent, viewed financial reasons to be the second reason for sharing. Five school board presidents, or 31 percent, thought improvement in curriculum was the second reason for a sharing plan in their district. None of the school board presidents believed sharing as an acceptable alternative to reorganization was the second most important reason for the plan in their district. None of the school board presidents mentioned any other reason for utilizing the sharing plan in their school district.

The third ranked reason by school board presidents as to why their district was interested in sharing was perceived by one board president, or 6 percent, as being a loss of enrollment. Seven school board presidents, or 44 percent, cited financial reasons as the third reason for developing a sharing plan. Only one board president felt improvement in curriculum was the district's third reason
for sharing while six board presidents believed sharing provided an acceptable alternative to reorganization as their third reason for sharing.

The fourth reason school board presidents ranked as the consideration given to being interested in a sharing plan was for financial reasons according to six board presidents, or 38 percent in this survey. Two board presidents selected improvement in curriculum as their fourth reason for sharing. Finally, six board presidents, or another 38 percent, felt a fourth reason for sharing was that it was an acceptable alternative to reorganization. No board president listed any other reason for using a sharing program than the ones listed in the survey instrument.

The perceptions of the principals of the sharing schools as to why the district they worked for was interested in a sharing program resulted in the following data.

Five of the principals, or 38 percent surveyed, responded to this question by expressing an opinion that loss of enrollment was the primary or major reason their school had been interested in a sharing program. Three principals, 23 percent, felt the first reason for sharing had been for financial reasons. Five principals, or another 38 percent, responded to the ranking of reasons by selecting the first reason as that of improving the curriculum. The response that sharing had been an acceptable alternative to
reorganization was not selected as the number one reason by any of the principals.

According to the principals in this survey, the second reason the school district had been interested in sharing plans was as follows:

Seven principals, or 54 percent, believed the loss of enrollment had been the second reason for their school's interest in sharing. Eight percent of the principals, or two principals who responded, believed financial reasons had been the second reason for their district's interest. No principal felt the second reason was that improvement in curriculum was an attractive area. Three principals, or 23 percent, chose as a second reason the fact that sharing might be an acceptable alternative to reorganization.

The third reason school districts considered when embarking on a sharing exchange between schools as perceived by the principals are as follows:

One principal in the investigation marked the third reason as being the loss of enrollment of pupils in the district. Four of the principals, or 25 percent, felt interest was stimulated by financial reasons. Four other principals cited the desire to improve curriculum in the school district as their third reason. No principal felt the third reason for their district's interest was an acceptable alternative to reorganization. The group of principals did not specify any other reasons that their
district might have considered to spur interest in a sharing program.

A fourth reason for interest in a sharing program was listed by two principals as that of financial reasons. One principal felt the interest was due to its improving the curriculum. Three principals felt the sharing was attributed to it being an acceptable alternative to reorganization would be the fourth cause in their opinion.

All principals ranked the reasons according to their personal opinion as to why their school district had been interested in a sharing plan.

9) Did the Financial Incentive Provided by the Legislature Positively or Negatively Influence Your Decision to Enter a Sharing Agreement?

Eleven superintendents replied the financial incentive provided by the legislature had positively influenced their districts to make a decision regarding a sharing agreement. One superintendent believed that the legislative action had a negative influence on the district he/she represented. Eight superintendents were of the opinion such legislative action had no influence in making their decision to use a sharing contract with a neighboring school.

Eight of the board presidents, or 50 percent, indicated the financial incentive provided by the legislature had been a positive influence in beginning a sharing program. Eight other board presidents, the other 50 percent, disagreed and
said the legislative action had been of no influence on their sharing decision.

The vast majority of the principals, 84 percent, or eleven out of thirteen, selected the response that the legislative action made a positive influence on the district decision to share in a whole grade sharing plan. Two principals stated the legislative action had no influence in their district with regard to sharing.

10) Would Your Sharing Program Have Taken Place Without the Financial Incentives Put in Place by the Legislature?

Sixteen superintendents, or 80 percent, replied that their school district would have entered into a sharing program without the financial incentive provided by the legislature. Four superintendents, or 20 percent, responded to the question that they did not know whether or not the sharing program would have occurred without financial incentives from the legislature.

Thirteen school board presidents answered the question by saying their district sharing would have taken place without legislative incentives. The school board presidents of three districts did not know if the sharing agreement would have taken place without motivation from the legislature.

The principals of eight districts selected the response "yes." This indicated the principals felt the district
would have adopted the sharing arrangement without incentives from the legislature. One principal expressed an opinion that the financial incentives had been a negative influence in bringing about a sharing plan. Four principals indicated that they did not know if the district would have embarked on a sharing program without incentives.

All respondents answered the question.

11) What is the K-12 Resident Enrollment in Your District?

The K-12 resident enrollment in the sharing districts studied were cited as 705 students for the highest number enrolled in the district and 118 students for the lowest number of students enrolled. The average K-12 enrollment for the twenty districts involved in whole grade sharing programs was 303 students.

All superintendents, principals and board presidents answered this questionnaire item.

12) How Many Miles Between Your Main Attendance Center and the Main Attendance Center of the School With Whom You are Sharing?

The greatest number of miles between the main attendance center and the main attendance center of the school with whom they were sharing was found to be 14.5 miles. The lowest number of miles between the main attendance centers was five miles. The average distance between attendance centers was 9.35 miles. There were seven
schools that were seven miles apart between main attendance centers in the school districts using sharing plans. All superintendents, principals and board presidents answered this question.

13) Was There an Increase or Decrease in Curriculum Offerings for the Students From Your District Who Attend Another Center?

Fifteen of the respondents in this survey stated there had been an increase in the curricular offerings for the students from their district who attend another center. No one responded that the sharing arrangement had resulted in a decrease of curricular offerings.

All respondents answered this item on the questionnaire.

14) Do You Think That Your Sharing Program Will Ultimately Lead to Reorganization Between Your District and the District With Whom You Share?

The superintendents of the twenty schools surveyed answered the question in the following manner: Sixteen superintendents responded "yes," they predict the sharing program will ultimately lead to reorganization between the districts engaged in a sharing program at this time. Three of the district superintendents responded "no," they did not foresee the two involved schools successfully moving toward reorganization. One superintendent wrote in the response that he/she did not know if the two districts would emerge
as one district in a reorganization plan or not.

Only one-half of the board presidents reported by stating that "yes," they do believe the sharing program will lead to reorganization between the school districts. Six board presidents answered "no," they did not think reorganization would happen between their schools involved in a sharing program. Two board presidents also expanded the questionnaire by adding "don't know" to the "yes" or "no" choices.

The principals in thirteen school districts indicated it is their opinion the sharing program between the districts would ultimately lead to reorganization. However, one principal reported he/she did not concur that reorganization would happen between the current whole grade sharing districts with whom he/she is associated.

15) In Your Opinion What Has Been the Attitude of the Students From Your District With Regard to Your Sharing Program?

Nineteen of the twenty superintendents surveyed felt the attitude of the students toward the whole grade sharing program has been "excellent." Only one of the twenty superintendents selected the response "reluctant acceptance" as the students' attitude toward the sharing program.

The assessments of student attitude by board presidents produced quite similar results. Fifteen of the presidents chose "excellent" as describing student attitudes toward a
sharing program. One board president felt the word "fair" summed up the students' acceptance or attitude of their whole grade sharing program.

The principals viewed the students' attitudes very positively by responding 100 percent that the students' attitudes were "excellent."

16) In Your Opinion What Has Been the Attitude of the Adult Population in Your School District with Regard to Your Sharing Program?

One-half of the school superintendents, or ten of them, answered the question by reporting the adult population's attitude toward the sharing agreement had been "excellent." Eight other superintendents portrayed a different evaluation of the adult population's attitude toward sharing by selecting the response "fair." One superintendent marked "reluctant acceptance" as the best description of the adult population toward the sharing program in his district. One superintendent believed the word "dissatisfied" was the most appropriate choice to state the adult population's attitude toward the district's sharing plan.

Twelve of the sixteen responding board presidents, or 75 percent, felt the attitude of the adult population in their district had been "excellent" with regard to sharing. Three board presidents felt the attitude of adults in their district had been "fair," while one board president
stated the people had an attitude of "reluctant acceptance" toward the sharing program.

The principals from ten school districts indicated a very favorable attitude of the adult population by choosing the response "excellent." Three principals viewed the adult attitude as "fair."

All superintendents, principals and board presidents who returned the questionnaire answered this question. Some expanded the possible choices to express their summations of a sharing program.

17) If You Were Asked to Name the One Biggest Problem With Your Current Sharing Program, What Would That Problem Be?

There was a range of answers to this question and an edited list of all responses is presented in Appendix D. Many respondents qualified their answer by saying "there were no really serious problems, but if they had to name one it would be . . . ."

The one item that was mentioned by far the most often was transportation problems or schedules, especially as they pertained to activities and trying to be sure that students still had the opportunity to participate even though it meant special transportation arrangements. There are a lot of "activity" busses being run as a result of sharing programs.
18) What Are the Financial Arrangements Between Your District and the District With Whom You Share? (This question was for superintendents only)

There was a variety of financial arrangements taking place between the sharing districts. In all of the districts where sharing was "one way" there was a tuition type of arrangement with the sending district paying a tuition cost. Most of these call for the maximum allowed by the receiving district minus a percentage for the sending school to pay for their transportation costs.

In those districts involved in "two way" sharing programs the districts had worked out a variety of arrangements that seemed to be working for them. These usually involved some type of shared costs based on student count, teacher responsibility or types of activities handled by the district. A listing of these superintendent responses is available in Appendix E.
CHAPTER 5
Summary and Conclusions

This chapter will summarize and draw conclusions from the investigation of the twenty school districts in the state of Iowa that were participating in a whole grade sharing program during the 1986-1987 school year.

The primary purpose of this study was to obtain as comprehensive as possible a perspective of how such sharing plans are operating and functioning as viewed by school superintendents, secondary principals and school board presidents in school district where sharing agreements have been initiated. Survey questionnaires were sent to fifty-three school administrators or board presidents who had been identified as being included in the whole grade sharing plans in the state of Iowa in 1986-1987 by the Department of Education. The data received from forty-nine school administrators or board presidents were used to compile this study.

The significant findings in the opinion of the investigator were as follows:

1) Five of the schools engaged in a whole grade sharing program were only sending students to another district for academic instruction. These schools were not
receiving or providing service to any of the other school's students. In a sense they were not actually sharing but were rather tuitioning their students to a larger district. Such a plan does permit the local school to maintain the classes for the younger students in the local district. The sending district is also eligible for the incentive funding provided by additional weighting of students as provided for by the legislature. It followed then that five districts identified as being involved in a sharing plan were in turn only receiving students. In this study there were found to be ten schools who were actually sharing students by both sending and receiving them from and into their school district.

Clearly then, half of the schools involved in sharing plans only send or receive students. The other half of the school districts are operating plans that allow some students from each school to attend classes in another district.

The data also shows the sharing concept is rather new in the state as evidenced by the very small number of districts utilizing such plans at the present time.

2) Only one of the twenty schools surveyed included kindergarten class students in the sharing program. Only two school districts included any of grades one, two, three, four or five in a devised sharing plan. Clearly, then, grades seven through twelve are those most frequently
involved in sharing programs. This seems to agree with the prevailing conventional wisdom that younger students should remain as close to the home district or school as possible. For that reason, it is unusual to find students below seventh grade involved in a sharing program where they are attending centers outside the local district.

3) The highest number of pupils being sent from one school district to another was 178 students. The lowest number being sent from one district to another was 28. The average number of 77.6 students were being exchanged in sharing plans. These numbers indicate there is quite a variance in the number of students exchanged in the existing sharing plans in the state of Iowa at this time.

4) There was a reduction or addition of professional staff in fourteen of the schools involved in whole grade sharing programs. The number of teaching positions eliminated was 47.97 positions. The average number of staff reductions in these schools was 2.4 teaching positions. Those schools that needed to hire additional staff only increased their numbers by 4.3 members. These facts demonstrate that there are staff reductions when sharing programs between schools are developed.

5) The survey facts show a very small difference of opinion among the superintendents, principals and board presidents as to what was the primary reason for their district desiring to enter a sharing program.
The school administrators ranked the primary reason their district was interested equally between loss of enrollment and improvement in curriculum considerations.

The board presidents saw the interest in sharing generated by the desire to improve curriculum and loss of enrollment as their primary reasons for being interested in a sharing agreement.

The majority of principals agreed with the superintendents who ranked both the loss of enrollment and improvement in curriculum as being equal factors as primary reasons for the sharing agreement being started.

It can be stated the two factors of loss of enrollment as well as the decline or limited curricular offering were both significant in contributing to promoting school boards as well as administrators to encourage plans to engage in sharing programs.

Interestingly, the choice "an acceptable alternative to reorganization" was the least selected choice and therefore was not seen as a reason for considering the sharing agreement.

6) The data revealed differences of opinion as to how instrumental the financial incentives provided by the legislature had been in causing two school districts to consider a sharing program. Over half of the superintendents and board presidents believed that legislative action had a positive effect on the decision to
share while most principals believed that action had a most positive effect toward the decision of entering sharing programs.

It is not clear why principals viewed the legislative action more positively than did the groups who would usually be considered as being more interested in the financial ramifications of the sharing programs.

7) The majority of the superintendents, principals and board presidents agreed the sharing program would have taken place without the financial incentives offered by the legislature. It appears some movement had been occurring in the local school districts toward devising sharing plans for the agreement by the respondents to have been that solid.

8) The largest school district enrollment in this investigation involved in sharing was 705 students. The smallest district enrolled 118 students. The average student enrollment was 303 students. This appears to demonstrate the fact that small schools are very aware of the difficulties they are facing with regard to providing an acceptable educational program. This investigation suggests some of them are willing to address the problems and attempt to bring about actions toward solving their problems.

9) The distance between the two participating schools was found to be between five and 14.5 miles. The average distance was a little over nine miles between attendance centers. It can be observed these schools with sharing
programs tend to be fairly close to each other.

10) One of the strongest benefits of sharing programs can be reported as that of allowing a wider curriculum offering to the students participating in a sharing program.

11) There exists a difference of opinions as to whether the sharing plan will finally develop into reorganization of a single school district for the two school districts currently sharing. A majority of superintendents predict that will happen. However, only one-half of the board presidents believe that reorganization will occur between the present sharing districts.

Principals are the most optimistic in believing that the current sharing districts will reorganize into one district.

12) The majority of superintendents, school board presidents and 100 percent of the principals express the opinion that student attitude toward sharing is excellent. The results of this study should be encouraging to any one concerned about student acceptance of a sharing program.

The data revealed superintendents chose the adult population's attitude toward the sharing program as excellent less often than did the school board presidents or principals. However, over one-half of them did assess adult population's attitude as excellent. It may be that the superintendent who has to accommodate many requests and facilitate situations in small schools is more acutely aware
of the inner workings of the school and this may have caused the less favorable response than board presidents or principals. However, it should be stressed even the majority of superintendents reported the people's attitude as excellent.

**Implications for Future Research**

Studies providing more information concerning the actual process the sharing districts went through regarding who met, how many times, and how essential problems had to be resolved to commence sharing programs should be conducted.

More information could be solicited as to the curricular offerings now presented to students of sharing programs as compared to what was available prior to the sharing.

A follow-up study of those sharing programs could be repeated within two years to determine what has developed as the result of their sharing plan.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study were those created by the questionnaire samples which were contingent upon the honesty of response or the interpretation by the reader. The sample completed may have been representative of when the respondent replied and under the given circumstances not controlled at that particular time. There was no follow-up nor random sample with which to compare data.
The purpose of this study was to gain information as to how the sharing programs being operated in twenty school districts in the state of Iowa during the 1986-1987 school year were presently operating and functioning as perceived by the superintendents, principals and board presidents in those districts. It was felt the objective has been met. The extremely high response to this project strongly indicates the desire by those involved in a sharing program to share information concerning their programs. It will be that attitude and desire that will most likely further develop sharing programs which will in turn provide more quality educational programs for the young people of this state.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

SHARING PROGRAMS IN IOWA

1. YOUR POSITION
   ________ BOARD PRESIDENT
   ________ SUPERINTENDENT
   ________ PRINCIPAL

2. DO YOU REPRESENT A "SENDING" OR "RECEIVING" SCHOOL?
   ________ SENDING
   ________ RECEIVING
   ________ BOTH

3. GRADE LEVELS SENT FROM YOUR DISTRICT (please circle the appropriate grades)
   K  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12
   NONE

4. NUMBER OF STUDENTS SENT TO ANOTHER DISTRICT ________

5. GRADE LEVELS RECEIVED BY YOUR DISTRICT (please circle the appropriate grades)
   K  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12
   NONE

6. NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVED BY YOUR DISTRICT ________

7. WAS THERE REDUCTION OR ADDITION OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN YOUR DISTRICT AS A RESULT OF SHARING?
   _____ YES
   _____ NO

   IF "YES", HOW MANY STAFF MEMBERS WERE REDUCED? ________

   OR HOW MANY STAFF MEMBERS WERE ADDED? ________________
8. PLEASE RANK THE REASONS (IN YOUR OPINION) THAT YOUR DISTRICT WAS INTERESTED IN SHARING STUDENTS (rank 1, 2, 3, etc., with number 1 being the primary reason followed by number 2 as the next most important reason, and so on)

_____ LOSS OF ENROLLMENT

_____ FINANCIAL REASONS

_____ IMPROVEMENT IN CURRICULUM

_____ AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO REORGANIZATION

_____ OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY ____________________________

9. DID THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROVIDED BY THE LEGISLATURE POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO ENTER A SHARING AGREEMENT?

_____ POSITIVE INFLUENCE

_____ NEGATIVE INFLUENCE

_____ NO INFLUENCE

10. WOULD YOUR SHARING PROGRAM HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITHOUT THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES PUT IN PLACE BY THE LEGISLATURE?

_____ YES

_____ NO

_____ DON'T KNOW

11. WHAT IS THE K-12 RESIDENT ENROLLMENT IN YOUR DISTRICT?


12. HOW MANY MILES BETWEEN YOUR MAIN ATTENDANCE CENTER AND THE MAIN ATTENDANCE CENTER OF THE SCHOOL WITH WHOM YOU ARE SHARING?


13. WAS THERE AN INCREASE OR DECREASE IN CURRICULAR OFFERINGS FOR THE STUDENTS FROM YOUR DISTRICT WHO ATTEND ANOTHER CENTER? (disregard this question if you are a receiving school only)

_____ INCREASE

_____ DECREASE
14. DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR SHARING PROGRAM WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD TO REORGANIZATION BETWEEN YOUR DISTRICT AND THE DISTRICT WITH WHOM YOU SHARE?

_____ YES

_____ NO

15. IN YOUR OPINION WHAT HAS BEEN THE ATTITUDE OF THE STUDENTS FROM YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT WITH REGARD TO YOUR SHARING PROGRAM?

_____ EXCELLENT

_____ FAIR

_____ RELUCTANT ACCEPTANCE

_____ DISSATISFACTION

16. IN YOUR OPINION WHAT HAS BEEN THE ATTITUDE OF THE ADULT POPULATION IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT WITH REGARD TO YOUR SHARING PROGRAM?

_____ EXCELLENT

_____ FAIR

_____ RELUCTANT ACCEPTANCE

_____ DISSATISFACTION

17. IF YOU WERE ASKED TO NAME THE ONE BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH YOUR CURRENT SHARING PROGRAM, WHAT WOULD THAT PROBLEM BE?

18. (THIS QUESTION FOR SUPERINTENDENTS ONLY) WHAT ARE THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN YOUR DISTRICT AND THE DISTRICT WITH WHOM YOU SHARE?
Dear Colleague:

According to information provided to me by the Department of Public Instruction, your school district is involved in some type of whole grade sharing program. The school district that I represent (Central Webster) is also involved in a whole grade sharing program. We send grades 6, 7, and 8 to Dayton Community School and they send students in grades 9-12 to our district.

As a part of a class project that I am currently working on at Drake University, I am conducting a survey of some aspects of the sharing programs in operation in Iowa. As I am sure you are aware, this kind of arrangement is receiving a good deal more attention in our state. Perhaps the experiences of those of us who have been involved would be helpful to others. I would appreciate it very much if you would take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed survey instrument for me. Having completed a lot of these instruments for various individuals and organizations, I am fully aware of the feelings another questionnaire may generate. I have tried to keep this very short and concise. This form should require only about five minutes to complete.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Allan F. Lyons
Superintendent
Central Webster Schools
Burnside, Iowa 50521
APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

May 25, 1987
Burnside, Iowa

Dear Board President:

About three months ago I contacted you with regard to a survey that I was conducting among schools who are currently involved in whole grade sharing projects. As the school year comes to a close I now hope to have some time to pull together my data and complete my project.

In looking at the returns I have received, I do not believe I have yet received one from you. I have received 100 percent response from the superintendents and 100 percent response from the principals. I do need a little help from the board president group to reach that 100 percent level. Since there are only a small number of people in the group I am surveying, it becomes important that I receive as many replies as possible.

I have enclosed another questionnaire and would really appreciate it if you could take just a few minutes to complete this survey form and return it to me. I realize that there may be some questions concerning numbers that you are not sure about; just give me your best estimate. I am more interested in the opinions stated in the questions that call for that type of response.

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Allan F. Lyons
Superintendent
Central Webster Schools
Burnside, Iowa 50521
RESPONSES TO QUESTION ON PROBLEMS

Edited comments of all responses to the question: "IF YOU WERE ASKED TO NAME THE ONE BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH YOUR CURRENT SHARING PROGRAM, WHAT WOULD THAT PROBLEM BE?"

Superintendent Comments:

"Distance for travel."

"Grandparent problems that go back to the 50's reorganization."

"Transportation and coordination of activities."

"Transportation and coordination of activities."

"A change."

"Convert the people that started with a negative attitude (not the students but some parents)."

"I do not see a big problem with our current sharing. The current problem is should our districts share with a third district."

"Sharing district (sending) would like to share with more than one district - that is some of the parents would like to do this."

"Continued declining enrollment is making it most difficult to continue sharing under our present arrangement, we will need to look at expanding."
"You need to be slow to move because you always need to check with the other school before making a decision."

"Transportation."

"The parental fear that one district's children are favored over the other district's children. The feeling that everyone is not being treated the same."

"I believe the distance from the sending school tends to reduce participation in extra-curricular activities, thereby slowing the process of mixing completely the two student bodies--transportation."

"Negotiations--two contracts and teachers want the best of both worlds."

"Transportation--after activity events and practices."

"Transportation."

"Declining enrollment--transportation for extra curricular events."

"Covering all the loose ends and making certain we don't penalize a student when it comes to year-end awards, etc."

"Trying to generate the feeling that all students are being treated the same."
Principal Comments:

"Transportation."

"We moved teachers from high school positions to middle school positions. This change has caused problems with those teachers reluctant to change to meet the different needs that middle school students have."

"Dismissal at the end of the day."

"Putting it together and getting the curriculum the same in the elementary."

"Transportation."

"Transportation - especially regarding co-curricular activities."

"Students from the sending school (smaller district) adjusting to increased class size (less individual, nurturing attention) and academic expectations. We have an academic eligibility policy."

"Transportation--and it is going better than expected."

"There are no really big problems. Getting the students here before the last minute in the morning can be a problem at times."

"Transportation costs."

"In sending school it split the community. Students from other school are often late because of the bus."

"Publicly--transportation; internally--negotiations! Trying to get two master contracts fairly close together without breaking the bank."
"Communication."

Board President Comments:

"None."

"Parental and community acceptance."

"Some initial problems in transportation and class scheduling. Those have been resolved. It has been a very positive experience for us."

"The fact that we started with 10-12 high school and despite efforts to get it changed to a 9-12 high school, can't get it done."

"Bussing for extra-curricular programs."

"Activities--busing of practices. It is really only a small problem though."

"Equalizing salary schedules (ISEA was no help). Teachers were also shared, as well as students, books, equipment, and building."

"In the area of transportation."

"Transportation for extra-curricular activities."

"The sending school board keeps changing their mind."

"Transportation--we are running shuttle buses between schools for the academic school day and for all extra-curricular activities so everything has to work on a tight time schedule."

"A split community. We are within minimal miles to more than one district and not a large majority wants to go
entirely one direction."

"Transportation."

"We are not sure we are big enough yet in light of current legislative talk. This causes us concern since if we have to share with a third school, we may have differing opinions on which direction to go."

"Transportation--some of the students are on the bus a long time."
APPENDIX E

RESPONSES TO QUESTION ON FINANCE

Answers from superintendents to question number 18 which was: "WHAT ARE THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN YOUR DISTRICT AND THE DISTRICT WITH WHOM YOU SHARE?"

"$2,100 tuition--sending district transports."
"...pays 83 percent of the allowable cost per pupil based upon the fact they transport their own students. Our transportation cost was 17 percent of the cost per pupil in our first year of sharing."
"$1,250 per student is our cost."
"We get all of the incentive funds because we have the high school."
"High school district gets the incentive funds. We send our share to them."
"$2,100 tuition and we transport."
"Educational costs are paid on the percent of students in the program (K-6) (7-12)."
"Educational costs are shared on a percent ratio determined by the number of students in the program."
"We get $1,250 the first year and 80 percent of state growth for the next two years."
"No cost for sharing students... hires six of our teachers on a 60-40 split. We share all extra curricular
activities on a 60-40 split. Both high school and junior high.

Share costs on a student ratio based on last September's enrollment.

"Pay actual tuition cost to receiving district and then reimbursed back transportation."

"A contract arrangement between the two districts. Certain items are provided entirely by one district and other items are shared on a 65-35 basis (enrollment)."

"...charges 83 percent of the allowable per pupil expenditure. The other 17 percent represents the $400+ cost of transportation to the...district and is deducted because they handle their own transportation."

"Our contract calls for a 70-30 split on all costs. That is the percentage of students from each district."

"We are the receiving district and charge our maximum tuition rate and then reimburse the sending district for transporting the students."

"$1,700 per student the first year. Increase the same as comptrollers allowable growth each year."

"Certain expenses are paid by each district. Others are shared on a 65-35 basis which is enrollment percentage."