



**The Organization of Educational Services
and Local School Districts in
New Jersey**

A Report to the State Board of Education

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Commissioner of Education**

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I. The Issues

School governance is concerned with the control and organization of the educational enterprise at every level from state board to local classroom. In few other subjects are the problems so complex or the definitive answers so elusive.

School governance in New Jersey is said to be unnecessarily complex and fragmented, permitting too many small districts (and perhaps a few larger ones) to provide inadequate, costly and inefficient programs. A state level effort to regionalize services and even school districts has been recommended by the Legislature's Task Force on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools.¹

The issues now are to determine the extent to which these statements reflect the facts, and if they do, to determine the advantages and disadvantages of regionalization, to outline an appropriate reorganization and to suggest ways to encourage that reorganization.

A decade ago, the goal of regionalization was to improve the quality of educational programs. Recent changes have renewed interest in regionalization and related governance issues but from a different perspective. These changes include school finance reform, accountability, increased interest in education shown by the Legislature here as well as in other states, inflation and declining enrollment. Arguments for or against regionalization now focus more on achieving cost savings; the change in emphasis is significant. Recent studies suggest that cost savings will not result from district regionalization.

The 1969 report of the Committee to Study Next Steps of Regionalization and Consolidation in the School Districts of New Jersey found that many districts were too small to operate efficiently and completely as educational units and many districts lacked an adequate tax base.² That study, commonly referred to as the Mancuso Report, recommended K-12 consolidation with a minimum district enrollment of 3,500. It called for an increased state share in school spending as an incentive. Anticipated benefits included more efficient use of public funds, greater flexibility in grade organization and use of personnel, more services, a more logical sequence of educational activities and greater citizen participation. The report concluded that "almost all evidence points to a correlation between enrollment, wealth, quality education and efficiency."

A more recent study, however, rejects this position and finds "no strong empirical base to support the assumptions and assertions of school and district consolidation advocates."³ That study is concerned with rural consolidation; its findings may not apply to New Jersey. The critics argue that expected cost savings are consumed by higher transportation costs. In support services, such as joint purchasing agreements, savings gained from volume are lost by higher distribution costs. On the quality issue, the critics again find studies supporting consolidation to be inadequate because they fail to control other variables found to be related to high achievement. Large systems, they contend, offer less flexibility for innovation, less diversity in response to student needs, and a low level of citizen participation in policy making.

In New Jersey, educational services are delivered through a structure consisting of several levels: statewide, regional, county (and multi-county), multi-district within county, district and school building levels. Educational services can be categorized as instructional or support services. Parts of the structure are further complicated by differences in grade pattern, type of student served and type of governing board. While it is possible to envision consolidation of services as a combining of small districts into larger ones, it is more appropriate to think of centralization of some services at a particular level and simplification of some elements of the structure. Benefits, incentives, opportunities and barriers that exist at one level may not exist elsewhere.

On February 6, 1979, Governor Brendan Byrne asked the State Board of Education to "consider the advantages and disadvantages of consolidation and to recommend ways to encourage such consolidation of districts or services, where appropriate." This report is a response to that request. Chapter one introduces the issue, chapter two identifies expectations used to evaluate the current structure and chapter three surveys the current structure of educational agencies in New Jersey. The conclusions and recommendations are presented in chapters four and five.

II. What Is Expected of the New Jersey Public School System

A review of the organization of educational services should begin with a generally accepted statement of what is expected from the public school system. The organizational structure should help meet those expectations; where it does not, organizational changes should be contemplated. In this

case, organizational changes could include either district regionalization, regionalization of support services, or both.

This review of the New Jersey public school structure was based on the following three sets of expectations:

- 1) expectations for the system as a whole, from state board to local district,
- 2) expectations for the educational service agencies at a regional, county or multi-district level and
- 3) expectations for local districts.

The statements below were derived from the New Jersey statutes and administrative code, from a review of the experience of other states and from the experience of the study team members.

A. Expectations for the System as a Whole

From a system-wide perspective, the New Jersey school system should be supportive of T & E, cost effective, equitable, responsive to high priority needs, supportive of a state/local partnership, responsive to change, flexible, supportive of citizen involvement, accountable, and feasible. The expectation of feasibility applies particularly to proposed changes.

Supportive of T&E

The fundamental purpose of the school system is to ensure that all pupils in New Jersey develop the skills necessary to function politically, economically and socially. The comprehensive approach to educational planning, instruction and evaluation known as T & E, and the state and local goals established pursuant to the 1975 act must be supported.

Cost Effective

Duplication of services and functions in the system should be minimal. Where overlapping structures exist, there must be justification. In general, the governance structure should be administratively simple and characterized by clarity of role and function at each level.

Equitable

Equity refers to the goal of providing equal educational opportunity to all. Equity embraces concepts of per pupil expenditure and tax equity among districts as well as equal access to programs. It means recognition of the rights of all pupils, including minority pupils. The statewide system should seek reduction and elimination of disparities in services offered by high and low wealth communities.

Responsive to High Priority Needs

While routine functions must be maintained, every period has high priority needs that demand special effort. Today, the high priority needs include more effective educational programs, especially in the basic skills, more effective staff development programs, and attention to the capital needs of New Jersey school districts.

Supportive of State/Local Partnership

The responsibility, needs, contributions and achievements of the state, regional, county and local authorities must be recognized. The Legislature has determined that fiscal and administrative responsibility for the state's school system must be shared among state, regional, county and local agencies, and the citizens of the state.

Responsive to Change

The New Jersey Supreme Court recognized that the concept of "thorough and efficient" will evolve; the governance structure must support rather than impede this development. The structure must be flexible, in order that projected changes in educational need may be accommodated. For example, the structure must recognize potential changes in pupil enrollment. Local educational agencies can differ in goals, objectives, program, and in other structural aspects.

Supportive of Citizen Involvement

The school system should provide opportunities for the involvement of citizens. N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-2 requires that decisions concerning budgets, programs and personnel and other essentially local questions be made "democratically with a maximum of citizen involvement..."

Accountable

Accountability includes both requirements for fiscal responsibility and an expectation for beneficial results from educational programs.

Feasible

The expectation of feasibility is critical in the review of proposed revisions in the governance structure. Feasibility is to be achieved through the recognition of the costs and benefits of each proposal and the legitimate needs of existing boards and other structures.

B. Expectations for the County and Regional Educational Service Agencies

Educational service agencies at county and regional levels should be organized to achieve school improvement, equity, thoroughness and efficiency, citizen involvement, and state/local partnership.

School Improvement

Educational services agencies should contribute to improving the quality of programs, particularly where deficiencies are found. They should support the efforts of local schools and school districts in improving the performance of pupils.

Equity

The educational service agencies should contribute to the goal of providing all children in New Jersey, regardless of socio-economic status or geographic location, with the educational opportunity which will prepare them to function politically, economically and socially in a democratic society.

Thoroughness and Efficiency

Educational service agencies at the county and regional level should provide major elements of the thorough and efficient system of free public schools, especially the following elements provided in the act:

- * breadth of program offering designed to develop the individual talents and abilities of pupils,
- * programs and supportive services for all pupils, especially those who are educationally disadvantaged or who have special educational needs,

- * qualified instructional and other personnel,
- * efficient administrative procedures,
- * adequate state program of research and development,
- * evaluation and monitoring of programs at both the state and local levels.

Citizen Involvement

The expectation for citizen involvement in educational matters, as defined in NJSA 18A:7A-2, generally applies to local districts. Yet, if for reasons of economy and better service, a particular educational service is provided at a multi-district, county or regional level, the local citizens should not forfeit their opportunity for effective involvement.

State/Local Partnership

The Public School Education Act of 1975 and other sections of NJSA, Title 18A, stress that the New Jersey education system should be built on a state and local sharing of responsibility for programs and finance. Educational service agencies must contribute to that partnership by serving the needs of local and state educational agencies. Where different agencies operate in the same region or county, their efforts should complement one another. Competition for clients or funds must be eliminated. Individual agencies should enhance and strengthen the service capacity and performance of the entire system.

C. Expectations for Local School Districts

Throughout the last decade, professional consensus on the appropriate organizational structure at the district level was aimed at identifying desirable ranges of classroom, school and district enrollments, program offerings, staff patterns and per pupil expenditures. Some scholars are now criticizing the standards that guided the school consolidation movement. Persons with both points of view would agree on some version of the categories of expectations for the local districts below. They would disagree about the contribution of district regionalization in attaining those expectations. These broad categories of expectations for the local school districts are program quality as measured by student performance, program comprehensiveness, economic efficiency, equity of expenditure, tax rate and access to programs, and citizen participation.

Detailed expectations for New Jersey school districts are defined in code and statute and summarized in the monitoring checklists used by county offices.

III. A Survey of New Jersey Education Agencies

Two Categories of Education Agencies

At the elementary and secondary level, the New Jersey public school system is composed of more than 670 distinct education agencies. They fall into two general categories that are defined by the programs offered and the geographical area served. The first category includes 93 units that provide a

variety of specialized programs to counties or regions, while the second category includes 580 local school districts that provide a broad range of instructional programs to their immediate communities. This section describes the two categories in greater detail. Table 1 presents the organization of these categories.

TABLE 1

Two Categories of Educational Service Agencies	
<u>County and Regional Services</u>	
County Office of Education	21
County Vocational Schools	20
Special Education Districts	2
Educational Improvement Centers	4
Educational Services Commissions	9
Jointure	1
Audiovisual Aids Commissions	21
Regional Day Schools	11 (projected)
County Special Services School Districts	4
	<u>93</u>
<u>Local School Districts</u>	
K-12	195
K-12 Regional	13
9-12 Regional	32
7-12 Regional	17
K-6 Constituent	59
K-8 Constituent	129
Sending Elementary	118
Non Operating	17
	<u>580</u>

A. County and Regional Services

In most other states where many small districts already have been consolidated, interest in district consolidation has waned while new attention is being given to the function of intermediate service units (ISU).

A recent national survey of intermediate units identified three broad types: decentralized state agencies, voluntary cooperatives among local districts and

joint ventures between state and local agencies.⁴ New Jersey has never defined an intermediate unit, but the ISU concept can be used to analyze what exists here.

Most states have established one or, at most, two of the types of ISUs. New Jersey has all three types and more than one example in some cases. New Jersey also has a number of other county and regional services units that do not fit the ISU concept.

The county offices of education represent the first type--decentralized state agencies. The Jointure Commission, the Audiovisual Aids Commission and the Educational Services Commission represent the second type--voluntary cooperatives among local districts. Some 298 informal cooperatives among two or more local districts recently identified in a survey could also be included in type two. The Educational Improvement Centers represent the third type--joint ventures between state and local agencies.

County vocational schools and the two districts which provide only special education are distinct because they are legally identical to the other local education agencies. Nevertheless, the scope of their services suggests that they be viewed as part of a regional or county service system. A number of these county units can be grouped together because they offer special education services. Those units include the special education school districts (not a statutory designation, but a descriptive one for purposes of this review), Regional Day Schools, County Special Services School Districts, and the Jointure Commission.

In all, nine types of county and regional agencies exist between the state and local boards of education: County Office of Education, County Vocational Schools, Special Education Districts, Educational Improvement Centers, Educational Services Commissions, Jointure, Audiovisual Aids Commissions, Regional Day Schools, County Special Services School Districts.

All nine have governing boards with the exception of the county office which represents the Commissioner.

Six of the nine type units provide some direct instruction, but to different pupils, in most cases (e.g., severely handicapped, regular vocational.) The Special Education School Districts, Special Services Commissions, and the Regional Day Schools and even one Educational Service Commission, all provide instruction for handicapped pupils. The apparent duplication is partly due to different structures in different parts of the state, and to a policy that encourages multiple program offerings for pupils. Special education services and the network of agencies that provide them are the subject of a separate report.⁵

Two of the units provide bidding assistance; one provides audio visual aids; three offer technical assistance; the broadest service packages however, are offered by the County Office, the Educational Improvement Centers, and the Educational Services Commissions.

Comparable staff and financial data on all units are not available at the present time because reporting requirements differ. Estimates show that 2,500 full and part-time professionals work in these various intermediate units.

Fiscal 1979 budgets for all the limited purpose units exceeded \$125 million, of which \$85 million were for the county vocational schools.

Methods of selecting the boards vary from appointment by local boards, by the Commissioner and the State Board, to election by constituents. The county superintendent serves on five boards and is responsible for convening and maintaining two others. These boards vary in size from five members to more than seventy (in the case of the education services commission in one county if all districts chose to belong.)

The nine county and regional service agencies are described below in terms of their services and governance:

1. County Offices of Education

The county superintendents of schools represent the Commissioner of Education in their counties. Under their direction, county offices provide counsel, offer general supervision and technical assistance to local education agencies, make annual reports to the Commissioner concerning the status of local districts (including the program of instruction and the condition of the schools), and perform other statutory duties. The county offices collect and maintain records of all aspects of local district operation. County personnel review and approve local district budgets and annual reports and conduct school visits to monitor compliance with statute and code. The county superintendent also provides leadership through service on the many county boards and by actions that have assisted in the creation of vocational schools, educational service commissions and many other units.

2. County Vocational Schools

County Vocational Schools are local education agencies that provide programs of career preparation as well as other instruction. Enrollment is open to all students within the county. County vocational schools exist in all but one county.

In eighteen counties, the county vocational schools are governed by a five-member board of education consisting of the county superintendent and four members appointed by the County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Sussex and Warren counties have elected boards.

3. Special Education Districts

Two districts in Atlantic County, Longport Borough and Corbin City, are local education agencies that provide only special education services. The two districts function as informal regional centers that draw pupils from districts within the county and adjacent districts outside the county that are unable to provide appropriate programs for handicapped pupils.

The governance structures in these districts are identical to those in other local school districts.

4. Educational Improvement Centers

The four Educational Improvement Centers provide a variety of consulting and staff training services to local boards of education and teachers. The EICs

diagnose institutional and management problems, identify alternative solutions, conduct in-service training, assist in development of improvement plans, and disseminate information relative to the improvement of instruction and school and district operations.

The EICs are governed by a board of directors whose members are nominated by the commissioner and approved by the State Board of Education. Each EIC board consists of twelve educators, a parent, a non-public school representative, a county superintendent, a representative from business and industry, and a student.

5. Jointures

Jointures may be established by voluntary action of two or more districts to provide direct instruction, instructional support, and services to handicapped pupils through diagnosis, program delivery and transportation. Currently, the only jointure operating is the North Hudson Jointure Commission which is composed of six member districts.

Jointures are governed by a board which consists of members of participating boards of education. The jointure board is responsible for seeing that facilities are maintained and that adequate staff is obtained for developing reimbursement formulas among the contracting districts and for establishing tuition rates for non-member districts to pay for the capital and current operating costs of the commission.

An administrative principal is the chief operating officer of the jointure.

6. Educational Services Commissions (ESC)

The nine Educational Services Commissions were established by the voluntary action of member local boards of education. The Commissions offer programs of educational and administrative services to member public school districts on a contract basis and also to non-member districts and non-public schools. The services include transportation, special education instruction and support, and adult education. A board of directors composed of representatives from member boards of education and the county superintendent govern each ESC. They determine, with the approval of the State Board of Education, what services are to be provided by each commission.

7. Audio Visual Aids Commission (AVA)

Audio Visual Aids Commissions are established by two or more boards of education in order to operate a county educational audio visual aids center. The Commissions maintain and provide educational audio visual aids to the public schools of participating districts.

The AVA Commissions are governed by a seven member board consisting of three professionals with appropriate certificates, three members of participating boards of education, and the county librarian, if any, or a librarian employed in a library within the county, which is supported partially or totally by public funds. The county superintendent serves as the secretary of the Commission. There are currently 21 Audio Visual Aid Commissions.

8. Regional Day Schools/State Department Schools for the Handicapped

Eleven state operated Regional Day Schools are being established to provide educational programs to severely handicapped students. Sites are now identified and a majority have been acquired. The schools are expected to begin operation by 1981.

Legislation creating the network provided that the schools be operated by the State Board of Education but allowed for up to five operators state-wide. The operators probably will be the Department of Education, educational service commissions, county special services districts and/or county vocational schools.

9. County Special Services School District

County Boards of Chosen Freeholders may establish County Special Services districts for the education of handicapped children. All programs offered by the Special Services School Districts must be approved by the Commissioner with the consent of the State Board.

The Special Services School Districts are governed by eight-member boards consisting of the county superintendent, six members appointed by the freeholders and the chairman of the county mental health board or his designee who serves ex-officio without vote. The board is responsible for staff disposition, submitting the annual budget for approval, and appointing an advisory committee comprising at least ten members including a psychiatrist, a

psychologist, a social worker and a county child study supervisor where appropriate. The committee meets at least four times a year and is responsible for making recommendations to the board regarding all matters referred to them.

Each county special services school district has a board of school estimate consisting of two members elected from the special services district board of education, two members chosen from the board of freeholders, and the director of the board of freeholders.

The special services district board of education annually submits its budget to the board of school estimate, which determines the appropriation at a public hearing.

B. Local School Districts

This section presents a brief profile of local school districts in terms of enrollment, wealth, spending, staff ratios, and tax effort.

1. Enrollment

More than seventy percent of the public school pupils in New Jersey attend districts that offer K-12 programs. The K-12 regional approach involves a small number of districts (13) and pupils (3.9 percent) Nearly a quarter attend districts with some other grade plan.

The other district categories are as follows:

Regionals 9-12 and 7-12 -- districts that are limited purpose regional districts. Their constituent elementary districts have representation on the regional board and share the local tax levy burden on the basis of their relative per pupil property wealth.

Constituents K-6 and K-8 -- independent elementary districts with their own boards and schools. These districts are constituent members of limited purpose regionals, to provide for the secondary education of their own pupils.

Sending districts -- elementary school districts that operate their own school districts but send all pupils to one or more receiving districts on a tuition basis for their secondary level education. Residents in these districts have no representation on the receiving district boards.

Non-operating districts -- sending districts that do not operate schools of their own. They send all pupils to other districts on a tuition basis.

Recent studies indicate that only senders and the K-6 constituents are below 1,000 in average enrollment (see Table 2). In all types, the range of enrollment size is great. In general, the elementary districts tend to be below 1,000 in enrollment. Most limited purpose or secondary regionals are below 1,500 and the K-12 constituents are more evenly distributed in size. One way

to sum up the enrollment data is to examine the number of districts with 500 or fewer pupils. Twenty-four percent of the districts with 2.9 percent of the pupils are in that category. A more comprehensive view of the size distribution by district type appears in the Appendices.

TABLE 2
TOTAL ENROLLMENT BY ORGANIZATIONAL TYPE
(ON-Roll 1978-79)

	No. of Districts	Min- imum	Maxi- mum	Average	Total	Percentage of State Total
K-12	195	750	64,756	4810	934,822	70.4%
9-12 Regional	32	726	7,293	2197	70,321	5.3%
7-12 Regional	17	661	5,050	1895	30,326	2.3%
K-12 Regional	13	1648	8,414	4029	52,381	3.9%
K-6 Constituent	59	46	2,362	510	30,119	2.3%
K-8 Constituent	129	85	5,803	1037	132,825	10.0%
Sending	118	58	3,003	461	54,409	4.0%
Non-Operating	17	--	---	---	---	---
County Vocational	20	168	3,548	1,191	23,813	2.0%

2. Wealth

Districts in different grade plan categories differ widely in terms of weighted average wealth per pupil (See Table 3). The low K-12 weighted average is due to the presence of large low-wealth urban districts. The sending and non-operating districts are on the average most wealthy but exhibit the greatest extremes.

TABLE 3

**EQUALIZED VALUATION PER RESIDENT PUPIL
BY DISTRICT TYPES**

	No. of Districts	Minimum	Maximum	Weighted Avg. Per Pupil
K-12	195	\$21,780	\$ 407,451	\$ 81,140
9-12 Regional	32	43,500	245,403	97,260
7-12 Regional	17	45,311	390,128	107,950
K-12 Regional	13	46,681	225,381	104,504
K-6 Constituent	59	13,212	693,363	98,970
K-8 Constituent	129	24,535	313,857	93,193
Sending	118	7,292	1,657,474	127,606
Non-Operating	17	39,670	6,314,398	331,740
County Vocational	20	44,395	220,534	55,483

The comparison of relative wealth and enrollment size in Table 4 below indicates that New Jersey districts are relatively proportional in the distribution of total enrollment and total property wealth.

TABLE 4

**Comparison of the Proportion of Total Enrollment
and Total Property Wealth in Each District Type**

<u>DISTRICT TYPE</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF EQUALIZED VALUATION</u>
K-12	70.2%	63.2%
9-12 Regional	5.3%	5.7%
7-12 Regional	2.3%	2.5%
K-12 Regional	3.9%	4.5%
K-8 Constituent	10.0%	10.6%
K-6 Constituent	2.3%	2.5%
Sending	4.0%	2.1%
County Vocational	2.0%	2.1%
Non-Operating	0.0%	.4%

3. Spending

Differences in enrollment size are associated with differences in per pupil budgets. These spending differences are greatest among the elementary districts:

TABLE 5

<u>Total Adjusted Current Expense Budget Per Resident Pupil by Organization Type</u>		
<u>Organization Type</u>	<u>Enrollment Size</u>	<u>Weighted Average Total Current Expense Budget</u>
9-12 Regionals	0 - 1,499	\$ 2,460
	1,500 +	2,404
7-12 Regionals	0 - 1,499	\$ 2,180
	1,500 +	2,083
K-8 Constituents	0 - 499	\$ 2,144
	500 - 999	2,032
	1,000 +	1,943
K-6 Constituents	0 - 499	\$ 2,059
	500 - 999	1,780
	1,000 +	1,480
Sending Elementary	0 - 499	\$ 2,268
	500 - 999	2,069
	1,000 +	1,902

The K-6 per pupil budgets are slightly lower overall than K-8 budgets. This occurs because the K-6 plan tends to appear in southern counties where salary levels are lower than in counties closer to the New York metropolitan area.

There are wide ranges in the per pupil budgets in all district categories. The non operating districts, with a range of \$1,652 to \$4,865 in per pupil spending, tend to stand out (see Table 6). The many reasons for the variations among districts include differences in pupil needs, fiscal capacity as measured by property wealth and personal income, salary and staffing ratio differences, and local preferences.

TABLE 6

<u>Variations in Per Pupil Budget by Enrollment Size and District Type</u>			
<u>Organization Type</u>	<u>Enrollment Size</u>	<u>Minimum Budget</u>	<u>Maximum Budget</u>
K-12	All	\$1,233	\$2,950
9-12 Regional	0 - 1,499	\$1,838	\$3,055
	1,500 +	\$1,809	\$2,995
7-12 Regional	0 - 1,499	\$1,816	\$2,698
	1,500 +	\$1,722	\$2,635
K-12 Regional	All	\$1,812	\$2,901
K-6 Constituent	0 - 499	\$1,434	\$3,012
	500 - 999	\$1,411	\$2,462
	1,000 +	\$ 754	\$1,987
K-8 Constituent	0 - 499	\$1,626	\$3,010
	500 - 999	\$1,314	\$2,786
	1,000 +	\$1,031	\$2,835
Sending Elementary	0 - 499	\$1,572	\$4,813
	500 - 999	\$1,503	\$3,806
	1,000 +	\$1,568	\$2,363
Non Operating	All	\$1,652	\$4,865

4. Staff Ratios

The K-8, K-6 and sending elementary districts have both the lowest average administrative ratio (number of instructors per administrator) and the lowest instructional ratio (number of pupils per instructor). Table 7 gives details.

TABLE 7

VARIATIONS IN STAFF RATIOS BY DISTRICT TYPE

	K-12	9-12 Reg'l.	7-12 Reg'l.	K-12 Reg'l.	Sending	K-8 Const.	K-6 Const.
Ratio 1							
Instr/Admin.							
Maximum	36.2	38.0	51.5	21.0	42.0	42.0	33.0
Average	18.8	21.7	22.5	17.0	17.0	16.6	16.3
Minimum	10.8	11.4	13.7	12.9	8.0	9.0	4.0
Ratio 2							
Pupils/Instr.							
Maximum	20.6	19.9	20.8	18.4	24.6	24.0	23.3
Average	16.4	16.6	16.8	16.8	15.0	16.1	16.4
Minimum	13.0	13.4	13.2	14.5	6.2	7.8	8.9

Differences in per pupil wealth and enrollment are associated with differences in staffing ratios. Table 8 presents an analysis of instructional ratios over a three year period in high, medium and low wealth districts of different enrollment groups.

TABLE 8

Average Number of Pupils Per Teacher in Elementary Districts (constituents and senders)

	Wealth	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79
Below 1,000 Enrolled	Low	18.5	17.4	15.9
	Medium	17.5	17.0	15.4
	High	17.1	16.5	14.8
1,001 -- 3,000 Enrolled	Low	20.6	19.8	19.2
	Medium	17.5	17.9	17.0
	High	17.9	17.5	16.4
3,001 -- 6,000 Enrolled	Low	19.1	18.3	17.5
	Medium	19.1	20.4	20.7
	High	-----	-----	-----

The smaller districts have lower staff ratios and, probably because of enrollment decline, their ratios have declined rapidly. A major change in education since the Mancuso Report has been enrollment decline. New Jersey's public

school districts are now experiencing an average annual decline in enrollments of 2.8 percent. From FY'72 to FY'79 the decline has been 10.3 percent. Despite the net change of decline, some public school districts in the state are exhibiting enrollment growth. Therefore, state policy must encompass declining, growing and stable districts. The present downward trend is expected to continue until the late 1980's, at which time enrollments may begin recovering at a modest rate. Districts experiencing enrollment decline have great difficulty reducing their expenditures at the same rate as enrollment decline. Certain categories of costs can only be reduced when enrollment has dropped a substantial amount. For example, a district would have to lose 300-500 elementary school pupils to justify closing an elementary school. Until that point is reached, the district will experience higher per pupil costs for operations and maintenance of that building.

Rates of enrollment decline in these same groups of elementary districts described in the preceding paragraph are different. The high wealth elementary districts declined faster than the low wealth groups. (See Table 9) This has been the trend for districts as a whole in New Jersey. In all but a few size and wealth categories among the elementary districts, the rate of enrollment decline was exceeded by the rate of the decline in the staff ratios. In other words, the elementary districts tended to increase the number of instructional staff both in absolute terms and in relation to the number of pupils. Whether that action leads to more effective and efficient programs depends on many factors, including one's view of what constitutes the optimum class size for a group of students and the staff ratio that exists in particular cases.

TABLE 9

**Average Rate of Enrollment Change in
Elementary Districts (Constituents and senders)**

	Wealth Group	From FY 77 to FY 78	From FY 78 to FY 79
Below 1,000	Low	- 2.8%	- 3.4%
	Medium	- 4.8	- 1.3
	High	- 3.6	- 5.2
1,001 - 3,000 Enrolled	Low	+ .2	- 1.9
	Medium	- 3.5	- 3.8
	High	- 3.0	- 3.8
3,001 - 6,000 Enrolled	Low	- 2.6	- 2.1
	Medium	+ 3.3	+ 1.6
	High	-----	-----

5. Tax Equity

The equalized tax rate per \$100 of expenditure is a measure of the tax effort required to support a unit of educational spending. It can also be used to measure equity. Complete equity would exist if all districts experienced the same equalized tax rate per \$100 of expenditure. Chapter 212 brought tax equity to approximately two thirds of the districts. Those districts with property wealth per pupil above the guarantee amount established by the state equalization aid formula experience a degree of tax favoritism. A moderate degree of tax equity exists for districts with per pupil wealth below the guaranteed valuation amount (see Table 10). For those districts, the weighted average equalized tax rates per \$100 of expenditure are close together. On average, about a third of the districts are above the guarantee; the table shows that a relatively greater proportion of the sending districts (45 percent) are above the guarantee and, thus, have a tax advantage over other district types.

TABLE 10

EQUALIZED TAX RATE PER \$100 OF EXPENDITURE BY DISTRICT TYPE			
		N	Tax Rate Per \$100 of Exp.
K-12	(Total)	195	.0742
over	\$105,000	66	.0581
below	105,000	129	.0828
K-12 Regional	(Total)	13	.0676
over	\$105,000	5	.0500
below	105,000	8	.0799
9-12 Regional	(Total)	32	.0693
over	\$105,000	12	.0603
below	105,000	20	.0763
7-12 Regional	(Total)	17	.0572
over	\$105,000	7	.0445
below	105,000	10	.0764
K-6 Constituent	(Total)	59	.0641
over	\$105,000	23	.0484
below	105,000	36	.0824
K-8 Constituent	(Total)	129	.0706
over	\$105,000	50	.0593
below	105,000	79	.0788
- Sending and Non-Ops	(Total)	135	.0431
over	\$105,000	61	.0334
below	105,000	74	.0745
Other	(Total)	23	.0627
over	\$105,000	7	.0510
below	105,000	16	.0737

C. Regional School Districts - The Legal Structure

Sixty-two local districts are distinct from the others in that they are organized as regional school districts. Two or more districts may join, after

appropriate review and the approval of the electorate in each districts, to form a regional district. Regional districts are of two types, "limited purpose" and "all purpose." The joining districts are referred to as "constituents" of the regional.

Limited purpose regionals may be organized to operate elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, county vocational schools, special schools, health facilities or particular educational services or facilities. All purpose regionals may be organized for all educational purposes of participating municipalities.

Regional districts of both types are governed by nine member boards of education. The County Superintendent apportions the seats on the board according to the number of inhabitants in each municipality, but each constituent district has at least one member. The County Superintendent appoints the first board of a newly formed regional district; thereafter, board members are elected at the annual election.

In all purpose regionals, the tax levy is apportioned among constituent municipalities on the basis of each constituent's proportional share of the total equalized property valuation. In limited purpose regional districts, a portion of each constituent's equalized valuation is allocated to the regional. That portion is equal to the proportion of the constituent's resident enrollment that attends the limited purpose regional. Both apportionment methods are equalizing in that the equalized tax rate is the same for all constituents.

New Jersey statutes provide for a regionalization process that includes the following steps:

- Step 1 Feasibility study initiated by the local boards, but prepared by Department of Education technical staff and coordinated by the county superintendent.
- Step 2 Review of the study by a department committee and approval by all local boards.
- Step 3 Local petition for a referendum on the regionalization issue.
- Step 4 Approval of the regionalization proposal by the voters in all districts for regionalization to occur.

The Commission of Education also has the authority to form regional districts. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in 1971, Jenkins et al. vs. Township of Morris and Board of Education that the Commissioner has the authority to direct districts to proceed with suitable steps toward regionalization. The Commissioner retains "supervisory jurisdiction...with full power to direct a merger on his own if he finds such course ultimately necessary for fulfillment of the State's educational and desegregation policies in the public schools."⁶

IV. Conclusions

This chapter presents conclusions in three categories: The Statewide Perspective, The County and Regional Units and The Local School Districts.

A. The Statewide Perspective

This presentation summarizes the study team's view of how the current system as a whole meets reasonable expectations identified in chapter two.

1. Supportive of T&E

The judgment on the structure's contribution to T&E is mixed. Many agencies such as educational services commissions and the voluntary cooperatives are not accountable to the same degree as local districts. Many agencies in the system were established prior to the Public School Education Act of 1975; consequently, they operate under a variety of statutes. The study team finds that the system as a whole does not tend to support T&E on its own, but rather demands constant intervention and leadership on the part of the county offices.

2. Cost Effectiveness

The system is administratively complex. It is characterized by lack of clarity of role and function at each level, with extensive duplication of services in some areas such as transportation and special education.

Although, in some cases notably in special education, there may be sound educational reasons for the apparent similiarity of program offerings, redefinitions of role should be considered.

Differences in per pupil costs are associated with differences in rate of enrollment decline, staff pattern and enrollment size. Districts faced with severe enrollment decline need to find alternative uses for unneeded buildings. Efforts to gain greater cost effectiveness cannot focus only on individual schools, districts or educational service agencies. Real cost control and effective service in the future may require that the resources of various kinds of education agencies in an entire county be used as part of a comprehensive educational services plan.

3. Equity

In addition to the limitations of the equalization formula, organizational factors such as differences in staff patterns, enrollment, and access to programs and services affect equity. Districts with enrollment below 500 may have difficulty in providing a thorough and efficient educational program. While there are benefits in having a small enrollment, the local boards of education of such districts should demonstrate that they offer comprehensive programs either individually or in coordination with other agencies.

4. Responsiveness to High Priority Needs

It cannot be determined whether high priority needs are being met, because of the lack of clarity of the role and function of the many education agencies.

Each tends to pursue its own priorities. The county offices are the agencies best positioned to coordinate the many parts of the system.

5. State/Local Partnership

The sharing of responsibility for finance and administration by the state, regional, county and local agencies is clouded by the same confusion over role and function cited in the preceding conclusion.

6. Responsiveness to Change

The current structure is changing haphazardly. From time to time the State Board considers plans to alter the structure, governance, funding or program of an agency, but these plans focus on single agencies in isolation from all others.

7. Citizen Involvement

Many citizens are excluded from involvement in this structure. For example, citizens in Type I districts do not vote on the school tax levy, while those in Type II districts do. Parents whose children are sent out of district, as in the sending districts or the non-operating districts, have no formal voice on the board of education that educates their children. Significant agencies at the county or intermediate level, such as the educational services commission, are remote from the public eye.

8. Accountability

Whether accountability is viewed in terms of fiscal responsibility or an expectation of beneficial results from educational programs, the structure as a whole is not accountable. Many different agencies can be involved in the education of a single child. For example, a handicapped pupil who resides in one district, whose placement is determined by a voluntary cooperative child study team, may be provided transportation by an educational services commission. Half of the pupil's educational program may also be provided by a County Vocational school district. As a result, no one supervises the entire process.

B. County and Regional Service Agencies

1. General Conclusions

- a. Regulatory, technical assistance, and direct instructional services are all provided by units at the county and regional levels. Many agencies provide at least two of these services. It would be unrealistic to expect that agencies could be confined to one function only, nor would this be desirable. For example, the county offices are primarily regulatory, but must provide technical assistance to districts to carry out the regulatory function.
- b. New Jersey has a great many distinct types of service agencies at the county and regional level which provide valuable services to

particular clients, but do not function as interdependent parts of a service system. The units lack formal statements of purpose.

c. New Jersey has three agencies that resemble intermediate units in other states. They are: the Educational Improvement Centers, the Educational Service Commissions, and the County Offices of Education. These three represent distinctly different approaches to the intermediate unit concept as it has been applied nationally.

d. There is a separate network of dissimilar agencies that provide special education services. The network includes county, state, local and co-operative agencies that must provide similar services. The network deserves, and is currently receiving, a separate review, but, ultimately, special education services must be coordinated with all other education service agencies.

e. A countywide approach is needed in the support service area. The county superintendent in each county is qualified to guide and coordinate the development of a countywide service system by virtue of membership on the county service agency boards and the historic function of the county office. The 1975 Public School Education Act enhanced the county office role through county monitoring and budget review. The creation of the county business administrator's position further strengthened the county office. This position has not been created in all county offices, however.

2. Conclusions Concerning the Educational Service Commissions

The Educational Service Commissions could be the foundation for a more effective and efficient service network at the county and regional level, but significant organizational problems must first be resolved. Those problems stem from both the statute under which the commissions operate and the lack of administrative code. New commissions should not be formed until appropriate statutory and code provisions are in place. The problems with the Educational Service Commissions are outlined below:

- a. Procedures for establishing a commission are not complied with.

Proposals to the State Board to establish a commission should include a complete financial plan; in fact, proposed budgets have been incomplete if submitted at all. The plan should also identify members and participating district assessment fees and payment agreements, including the source of start-up funds and time lines for collection of fees. Because of the confusion between the concepts of member and participating districts, and of operating and contracted services expenses, this has never been done. While there are notable exceptions, commissions have been established without sufficient planning. Feasibility studies are notably absent.

In short, establishment procedures need revision and control. On the positive side, it was found that an aggressively led commission can serve districts in more than one county as the law provides.

- b. Changes in operations and scope of activities are not presented to the State Board for approval as required.

As educational service commissions expand, the scope of their activities needs to be monitored and approved by the county superintendent and the State Board of Education. Once the commissions are established, changes or expansion of their activities are not brought before the Board for approval. Overlap and conflict arise. At fault is the combination of conflicting roles and interpretation by the Department of Education, the county superintendents, the commission board, the director and the vague wording of the existing statute. To alleviate this condition, roles need to be redefined, statutory mandates reworded, and rules and regulations adopted to clarify the intent of the law.

- c. There is a lack of continuity on commission boards.

Local boards tend to send their freshmen members to the commission board; the result is poor continuity on the commission board. The boards meet bimonthly and attendance is sporadic. The requirement for a board representative from each district results in unwieldy boards. It has been suggested that boards be allowed to send administrators as their representatives on the commission boards. If participating boards are permitted this option the goal of citizen involvement is not achieved.

d. The Educational Service Commissions are not sufficiently accountable.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the commission directors is their entrepreneurial style. The commissions appear to be cost effective because their staffing is lean and they must compete with other vendors and other districts. This characteristic should be encouraged, but greater accountability is needed.

Many view the continued presence of the county superintendent on the educational services commission board as desirable. The commissions, however, will have to demonstrate that they are more cost-effective than any school district in providing certain services. These commissions should be audited and monitored closely, a task best conducted by the county superintendent. Direct involvement by the county office in the operation of these commissions, however, contains the potential for conflict of interest. For example, the county office, in reviewing the budget for a local district, might have to recommend that the district seek a service contract with an educational service commission in order to provide the most cost effective level of service. Such a recommendation would be inappropriate if the county superintendent were concerned directly as a voting board member with the operations of the commission.

Clear lines of accountability are absent in the present commissions. There are no budget or program reviews except, presumably, those initiated by the member districts acting alone and on their own

behalf. The importance of greater accountability is illustrated by the preponderance of transportation services in the commissions' budgets. The support for commission transportation services activities comes indirectly from state transportation aid paid to districts, which in turn pays a portion of those funds to the commission. While Commissions do submit financial audits, closer monitoring and review by the county superintendent are needed.

e. Funding is inadequate

When a commission is established, the plan for financing its budget, fee schedules, contracts and agreements generally are not submitted for approval. As a result, unplanned start-up costs burden the initial cash flow. Operating expenses such as insurance, vendor payments, salaries and rentals must be paid in the first quarter of operation. Even though member districts may pay a nominal fee to join, the fees are generally insufficient to meet initial operating expenses. Since the participating districts are not required to make advance payments, they usually pay for services after they have been reimbursed by the state.

The system perpetuates a recurring cash flow problem. To a large extent the commissions are supported indirectly by state transportation aid. In one county, approximately 89 percent of the commission's revenue came from the transportation program provided to local districts.

Because of their funding problems, commissions may be forced into the practice of using balances from one program area to provide start-up money for other activities. The practice is questionable.

3. Conclusions Concerning the Educational Improvement Centers (EIC's)

Individual Educational Improvement Centers (EICs) have served New Jersey since 1968. A statewide network has existed since 1976 when the fourth EIC was established. In 1976 and 1977, attempts were made to coordinate planning among the centers to meet both statewide and local education needs, yet the State Board of Education still has not adopted a statement of purpose for the EIC. Today the EICs as a group are hampered by the lack of a common statement of purpose and by the lack of an appropriate funding mechanism. Both issues are rooted in three conditions: diversity in the regions served by the centers, differences in the activities or programs they have developed, and ambiguity in the expectations held for them. Each of these matters deserves specific attention.

a. Diversity in Regions Served

The four EICs are different because the regions they serve vary in terms of needs and clientele. This diversity is indicated in Table 11.

TABLE 11

Characteristics of EIC Regions

EIC Region	Percentage of State Total of Various Clientele Served						Other Region Characteristics
	Districts	Schools	Teachers	Pupils Below MBS. Standard	Title I Elig. Pup.	Geographic Area	Equalization Aid As A % of Revenue
Central	27%	27%	29%	26%	24%	33%	27%
Northeast	23%	34%	37%	40%	47%	7%	23%
Northwest	27%	20%	17%	15%	7%	31%	18%
South	23%	19%	15%	19%	22%	29%	30%
State	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	N/A.

For example, EIC Central must cover a third of the state's geographical area and somewhat more than a quarter of the districts, schools, pupils below basic skills standards, and other clients. EIC-Northeast covers a small geographical area (7 percent of the state) but that area includes 40 percent of the pupils below minimum basic skills standards and 47 percent of the pupils eligible for federal Title I programs.

b. Diversity in Programs Developed

In general, statutes require that EICs, on request, support and assist local districts and teaching staff members. They are expected to aid in improving school programs and services through diagnosis of educational problems and development of alternative solutions, staff development, assistance to citizen's advisory

groups and parent associations, and through a variety of planning and informational services. To meet those expectations, all EICs engage in similar kinds of training, consultation and service activities but each reflects its own tradition and regional character. The EIC concept has evolved over twelve years, but individual centers fit into that concept at different stages of its development. EIC-Central emphasizes consultation, training and field assistance in selected areas. EIC-Northeast is heavily involved in district management problems and urban schools research. EIC-Northwest stresses teacher support and curriculum services while EIC-South is extensively involved in planning, technical assistance and the provision of responsive information retrieval services.

c. Diversity in Expectations

Discussions with 12 members of senior staff from the department of education and the EICs produced eight different images of what an EIC should be. No view was advanced by more than two people. The EICs were described as extensions of the state education department, as resource centers for districts, as both special purpose and general purpose centers, as training centers, as regional service bureaus, as advocates for particular new programs and as agents of change. An explanation for this difference of opinion at the state and regional level may be the fact that EICs increasingly respond to local school and community priorities rather than to statewide priorities.

d. Funding Issues

The centers use a number of funding sources but rely most heavily on a state appropriation that is divided among them. This appropriation is based on the Department of Education staff's determination of the needs and prospects of each center for the budget year.

Funding sources and grants can define the programs and objectives that an EIC pursues, since its reliance on such categorical funding tends to reduce its flexibility in responding to either state or local priorities. A more systematic basis for the funding of EICs is desirable, but development of that financial basis depends upon a greater degree of consensus on both the purpose of EICs and the relationship of EICs to other educational agencies in the state.

4. Conclusions Concerning Transportation

A three-year increase of 57 percent is expected in total transportation costs, with the greatest increase in the last year, due to fuel increases. The figures in Table 12 also reflect a number of other changes:

1. Services have been extended and improved resulting in increased costs.
2. Increased numbers of preschool handicapped pupils are now transported.

3. Efforts to identify all handicapped pupils have resulted in increased transportation costs.
4. Private schools have increasingly taken advantage of shared-time vocational program offerings for their students.

TABLE 12

<u>TRANSPORTATION -- BASIC STATISTICS</u>				
	<u>Actual 1976-1977</u>	<u>Actual 1977-1978</u>	<u>Estimated 1978-1979</u>	<u>Estimated 1979-1980</u>
Total No. of Miles Travelled	108,311,100	122,057,100	139,145,094	140,000,000
No. of Pupils Transported	644,128	639,747	649,314	650,000
Total Cost	\$ 95,863,207	\$107,710,859	\$124,776,376	\$150,795,000

In 1977-78, transportation services were provided to 577,076 public and non-public school pupils.* There were 7,500 district-owned and contracted buses in use. The average bus capacity is 54 pupils; the average load per bus was 76 pupils. In other words, some buses made two trips to and from school.

If every bus in use were to average two trips each day, 5,770 buses would be needed to transport 577,076 students. The 7,500 buses presently in use could be reduced by 1,730. Using \$10,000 as an estimated annual cost of operating a bus, the theoretical cost savings should approximate \$17 million. This cost

*The 577,076 figure excludes private school pupils given transportation aid in lieu of transportation, public and nonpublic school pupils riding common carriers, and handicapped pupils.

savings would be a permanent annual savings. Note, however, that the theoretical estimate is just that--theoretical. Many factors would intervene to reduce the estimated savings, such as: the proximity of transporting districts to one another; differences in school calendars; the degree of cooperation among local boards; and the opening and closing times of schools.

Several different agencies have demonstrated the ability to reduce transportation costs while maintaining service quality: in 1979 Pinelands Regional High School adopted a transportation consolidation plan for more than 2,000 pupils which avoided the purchase of 24 new buses, plus other costs for drivers and operations that totaled \$650,000.

To cite a second example, the Sussex County Education Services Commission was able to reduce transportation costs per pupil for 36 handicapped pupils by 15 percent.

5. Conclusions Concerning the Consolidation of Computer Services

The Task Force on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools recommended creation of a statewide electronic data processing (EDP) network and an educational electronic data processing commission to develop and monitor a master plan for the sharing of EDP services.

Other states have taken steps to achieve cost saving and more effective service in the data processing area. Minnesota, for example, established regional service centers for data processing and required all districts to report data through these agencies. An educational computing consortium

cooperates with the Minnesota Department of Education to review all EDP plans. Districts in that state may expend funds for EDP only after approval of their data plans by the consortium and the Department. A Michigan Computer Services Task Force recommended this limitation: "districts which choose not to participate in the regional computer services system would not be eligible for any state financial support associated with the service system or representation on any of the system's advisory or governing boards." These steps may or may not be appropriate for New Jersey. A review of the status of electronic data processing in New Jersey districts is needed.

The present study did not consider data services in detail but did review the task force recommendations. It concluded that the commission called for by the Business Efficiency Task Force should be created. A countywide data plan is needed in conjunction with the development of the Educational Services Commissions in each county.

C. The Local School Districts

The general conclusion is that the evidence considered in this study is not sufficient to justify a mandatory K-12 regionalization approach for all districts. There should be room for small districts, small schools and small classrooms, but the local board must demonstrate that a thorough and efficient program is being provided to pupils. The study concludes that a K-12 approach to the planning and provision of educational programs is essential; where organizational barriers impede that process, the barriers must be removed through reorganization. Any such reorganization should proceed with caution. New Jersey has very limited experience with the K-12 regional school district approach.

1. The 580 local school districts are characterized by great diversity in wealth, spending level, enrollment size, and tax effort. To a lesser extent they also exhibit diverse staffing patterns. Some of these variations result from local needs and preference and should be preserved. In other cases, the differences point to the need for action to correct deficiencies.
2. Districts that do not operate schools and whose citizens are not represented on the boards that educate their children are an anachronism.
3. Sending/receiving relationships between districts are questionable because residents in the sending districts are not represented on the receiving boards, and because there may be poor program continuity from grade to grade.
4. Small districts (elementary districts with enrollments below 500) tend to have higher per pupil costs and lower staff ratios which may or may not reflect inefficient staffing patterns. These findings warrant a case by case review of the programs, performance and operations of those districts.
5. Although benefits could result from district regionalization in particular instances, major cost reduction on a statewide basis is probably not one of them. Included in the Appendices is an analysis of the financial effects of combining existing sending/receiving districts into regional districts.

6. In particular cases, benefits that are realizable include better program articulation from grade to grade, better citizen involvement through board representation, more efficient use of staff, and a wider scope of educational program offerings.
7. A case by case review will be needed to identify districts where educational progress is hindered by organizational barriers that could be corrected by regionalization. A comprehensive but simple set of guidelines and criteria will be needed to guide such a review. The major sources of such criteria are the experience and data gained in the four years since Chapter 212 was enacted.
8. The Commissioner has the authority to direct the formulation of regional districts after sufficient review in particular cases.
9. Financial incentives would be required to effect any significant reorganization of districts.

Conclusions Concerning Voluntary Cooperatives

Nearly half of all New Jersey's districts are part of a voluntary cooperative of some kind. The large number of cooperatives reflects the leadership in county offices and on local boards of education. It also testifies to the economic inefficiencies of small district size and illustrates that local districts have done much already to develop more efficient service systems. Finally, to some extent, the number of cooperatives demonstrates the reluctance of districts to join long term formal structures such as regional districts or educational services commissions.

V. Recommendations

A. Recommendations Concerning County and Regional Agencies

New Jersey should establish a more formal intermediate unit system based on no more than three existing county and regional agencies: County Offices of Education, Educational Improvement Centers and the Educational Service Commissions. There is a need for more than one type of intermediate unit in New Jersey. Continued existence of multiple units at the same level will result in undesirable competition unless the relationship among the units can be clarified. Briefly, the three units should have the following functions:

- * The county superintendent's office primarily serves as field representation for the Commissioner, providing state regulation and monitoring local compliance.
- * The educational service commission primarily assumes tasks of routine business operation, relieving local school districts of that burden and providing for consolidation and coordination of programs and services in such areas as transportation, computer services and purchasing.
- * The educational improvement center primarily provides technical assistance and staff development services to local teachers and administrators to enable them to improve their professional function.

The three units must complement one another. The county office is primarily regulatory while the improvement centers and service commissions aid local agencies in fulfilling their responsibilities under regulations. The major issue of coordination will be to avoid conflict in the roles of the EICs and ESCs.

The interrelated nature of the missions of each of these agencies will require further definition. Where possible, the services provided by other county and regional agencies should be subsumed by one of the three. The four County Special Services Districts that now exist are not affected by this recommendation.

County Offices of Education

1. The County Superintendent, in coordination with boards of all educational agencies in each county, should encourage and lead a county-wide educational planning activity to develop thorough and efficient educational services. This activity should result in a county educational services plan within three years. County plans will vary to reflect the needs of each county.
2. The county plan should result in creation of an Educational Service Commission. If, however, it is determined that such a commission is not needed in a particular county, then the plan should include an agreement whereby the services of an Educational Service Commission in another county are made available to districts.

3. Transportation of pupils should be examined from a countywide perspective in each county. The county superintendent, in coordination with local districts, the educational services commission and the Bureau of Transportation in the Department of Education should prepare a county transportation master plan. The master plan would identify current and projected routes, buses, drivers and costs both current and projected.

The purpose of the master plan would be to identify ways to reduce the number of bus fleets, the per pupil cost and units costs, and the time spent on buses through better route planning.

The county superintendent should engage in joint planning activities with local districts in order to coordinate school calendars on a county basis. Such coordination would permit more cost effective scheduling of transportation. Wherever possible, the county superintendent should involve nonpublic schools in this joint planning.

The master plan would provide for gradual consolidation of bus fleets under the ownership of local districts or the Educational Services Commissions. The second alternative is preferred. The transfer price of each vehicle would be negotiated, with technical information provided by the Division of Finance and Regulatory Services in the Department of Education.

Where negotiations reach an impasse, the Commissioner and the State Board would review the facts and resolve the situation. State transportation aid would be paid only to local transportation systems that have complied substantially with the county transportation master plan.

4. The county office role is primarily to provide leadership and regulatory services. The county office should avoid direct provision of other educational services; where such services are provided now, they should be reassigned to other agencies.
5. The County Superintendent should be responsible for budget and program review and for approval of all public agencies in the county that provide elementary and secondary education services.
6. The Commissioner should assess or audit the county monitoring system and make any changes necessary. The monitoring system should then be extended to all public agencies that provide elementary and secondary education services.
8. The county superintendent should, within three years, complete a case by case review of certain categories of districts defined in a later section of this report in order to identify districts where regionalization should be required.
9. A county school business administrator should be appointed in each county.

Educational Services Commissions

1. The programs and services of an educational services commission should be provided throughout the state. This could be accomplished by either mandating one commission per county or requiring that all counties be served by at least one commission. All districts in a county should become members of the educational service commission in that county or in the county designated if a commission has not been formed. Participation in the programs and services available through the commission would be voluntary and on a contract basis.

2. Each local board of education in the county shall appoint a representative and voting alternate for the purpose of organizing the county education service commission. This group of local board representatives would meet twice each year to approve the budget and program of the commission and to elect a commission executive committee.

3. The local board representatives shall elect a commission executive committee of which the county superintendent will serve as an ex officio member. The executive committee should meet monthly to conduct the business of the commission. The executive committee shall not exceed 15 members, including the county superintendent. In commissions with membership exceeding fourteen (14) districts, the local board representative shall adopt a rotation plan to ensure equitable representation.

4. Annually, the educational services commissions shall submit to the county superintendent a program plan, a budget and a copy of the audit for approval.
5. The commissions should provide programs and services of all kinds with the exception of monitoring services which are the county office responsibility, and technical assistance and in-service training which should be provided by the educational improvement centers. The commission should function as coordinators and consolidators of programs and services in the counties. The commission should conduct feasibility studies from time to time to determine programs and services that could be provided.
6. After completion of a statewide and/or countywide Electronic Data Processing Plan, the commissions would be the potential agent for county EDP services.
7. Other services to be provided would be determined through feasibility studies conducted by the commissions for review by the county superintendent.
8. The staffing should remain lean. The commission should not duplicate staff that are available elsewhere either in the county office or in the educational improvement centers.
9. All member districts shall be assessed a membership fee for operating expenses of the commission which shall not exceed twenty

percent of the approved commission budget for the ensuing year. Districts shall pay the membership fee on or before July 15 of the fiscal year for which the budget was made. Districts that contract for services with the commission will draw against these membership fee payments. Membership fees from districts not participating in commission programs or services shall be retained by the commission for its operation.

10. To provide for program expansion, the commissions may carry over unappropriated balances not to exceed 15% of the total balances.

The Educational Improvement Centers

1. The primary recommendation calls for the Commissioner to seek a consensus on the proper function of the EICs as a group. Pending this development, available funding options should include purchase of services, state department of education sponsorship of EICs, department/district collaboration and a combination of those approaches.

- a. Purchase of Services: Under a purchase of service option, EICs would act much like independent consulting firms. The department would use requests for proposals or other procurement instruments to secure the services of the best qualified competitors for whatever work is to be done. EICs would be encouraged to propose and execute work on the basis of opportunities as they arise. The department would be seen as a

steady customer of qualified bidders. The successful EIC would be independent, aggressive, and entrepreneurial. The centers would risk the authenticity of their status as local education agencies, given the pressures to act more like an entrepreneur than a public agency. Jobs at the centers would be uncertain if there were extensive reliance on unpredictable project funding.

b. Department Sponsorship: Such sponsorship adds a measure of sustained department interest to the independence described in the first approach. It keeps the department involved in the center but encourages development to the point where minimum institutional maintenance would be underwritten as needed. The department and local districts would share costs of program operations at levels determined by department interest and demographic factors. The department would bear a major share of costs associated with accomplishing state priorities but would provide a contributing share of support for regional priorities.

c. Department/local collaboration: Through collaboration, the department and LEAs would become involved in developing regional capacity for school improvement work. Very limited long-term support would be distributed among EICs in accord with demographic factor differences. Essentially, that support would be committed to such expenses as employment of the EIC director, a small office staff, and provision of an office for

them. Beyond that, the department could offer capacity building funds to underwrite each new major program development. A department share of costs would be offered on a five-year reducing share basis. In addition, centers will be encouraged to develop whatever project support they can obtain. As an incentive, the department would underwrite up to 20 percent of the cost of an approved project for up to three years. Further department support might develop from successful EIC competition in response to requests for proposals.

The EIC now serves combinations of state and regional interests. When funding questions arise, it would be expedient, but misleading, to base decisions on whether department or regional requirements are being met.

Such a decision would either reduce the EIC to a subsidiary of the department or reduce the state to a funding conduit. Such a circumstance virtually guarantees tension between those who need funds to sustain their work and those who are accountable for the management of those funds. The issues involved in EIC planning, then, bring together concerns about governance, program and funding of the centers. The role of the EIC in the education service system has not been sufficiently detailed to avoid overlap or even competition with other agencies of the Department of education. In particular,

* there is no specific guidance regarding relationships between EICs, the State Department of Education, county offices and local school districts.

* it is not clear whether an EIC should respond primarily to the interests of the department, as its sponsor, or those of the agencies in its service region.

* the degree of autonomy appropriate to an EICs governance board and staff has not been clarified with regard to their capacity to operate independently of other agencies (e.g., County offices, Educational Services Commissions) serving the same constituents.

2. Provision for EIC support does not, currently, differentiate among funds provided for core support of the institution, program support for department priorities, and program support for regional priorities. A management plan for EICs should be developed that will provide means to distinguish among such funding purposes.

Features of the design should include:

Assured long-term department support for the core of the EICs, including provisions for a director, business manager, clerical support for the two management staff members, sufficient space to provide offices for management and meeting space needs for the board of directors.

Department sharing in the costs of department priority program development to meet long-term regional needs. Aggregate state allocation for EIC program development should be distributed among EICs on a demographic factors basis.

Department provision of matching incentive grants (regarded as cost sharing) would go with project support secured competitively from an external matching source.

3. The senior staff of the department of education, in consultation with key staff of EIC's, should develop a comprehensive and current statement of EIC purpose, functions and activities for submission to the Commissioner and State Board of Education. The EICs should be expected to serve primarily as technical assistance and training centers and to serve local school districts in their regions. They should also be responsive to state priorities.

B. Recommendations Concerning Local School Districts

1. Each non-operating district that does not intend to become operational immediately should present a plan of action to the Commissioner within one year to regionalize with an appropriate district. All plans approved by the Commissioner and State Board should be implemented within two years. The Legislature should authorize a five-year phase in any change in tax burden that would result.

2. Each county superintendent should initiate and conduct within three years a review of districts to determine whether K-12 regionalization should be recommended. The categories to be reviewed are:

- a) sending/receiving districts,
- b) elementary districts of all types with enrollments below 500,
- c) K-12 districts with enrollments below 1,500

3. Appropriate criteria and procedure should be established by administrative code to guide this review.

4. Where regionalization is recommended, local district boards should have the opportunity to show cause why they should not enter into regional districts.

5. Where districts agree to form K-12 regional districts, or join existing regionals, or are required to do so after an administrative process, an array of adjustments to various state aid programs should be possible. Conditions should be established for the use of the following alternatives:

a. Current Operating Expenses

For the first three years of operation of the consolidated district, the district would receive state equalization aid which is 10 percentage points above the support ratio computed

pursuant Chapter 212. For the next two years following, the district will receive a state support ratio that is 5 percentage points above the computed ratio.

b. State School Building Aid

For approved additions, renovations, and for new schools required as a direct result of district reorganization, the state would provide aid to cover the actual cost, or the enrollment as of September 30 in the second through sixth years multiplied by \$25.00, whichever is less.

c. Approved transportation expenditures could be reimbursed at 100 percent.

d. Limited planning grants should be available.

C. A Longer View of the Problem

The proposals just described, though moderate by design, are expected to bring significant improvement in the effectiveness of the public school system within a two to five-year period. The improvements are expected to result from the creation of service units at the county level, clarification of the purposes of agencies at that level and a case by case review of the smallest districts. This review will help identify those districts that cannot provide thorough and efficient programs because of their organizational characteristics.

There are, however, long term problems to be addressed, which stem from the fact that New Jersey, even with the improvements defined here, will have three distinct types of intermediate units: decentralized state agencies, voluntary cooperatives, and joint ventures between local and state agencies. This interim structure still may be too complex for the needs of New Jersey.

This report proposes that the EICs, the county offices and the Educational Service commissions all be redefined in terms of individual missions and the mechanism that enables them to work together to deliver services. That redefinition process may reveal that beyond the two to five-year immediate future, another step will be needed.

The long term view is based on recognition of two major themes in the T&E legislation: evaluation and school improvement. At the county level the evaluative function is primarily one of monitoring for compliance with code and statute; this is the responsibility of the County Office of Education. The school improvement theme is shared by Educational Improvement Centers and Educational Service Commissions. This study concludes that one of two general configurations will evolve which will leave New Jersey with just two types of intermediate units.

The first alternative would consist of a county office of education in each county with primarily regulatory functions, and an Educational Service commission in each county to provide all types of support services that couldn't be provided as effectively at the local level. The EICs would no longer receive state support.

The second alternative would have the county office in the same role as in the first alternative. The EICs and ESCs would be formally combined to produce a regional service system with county service delivery units.

The second alternative is more likely to serve the needs of New Jersey because it combines both regional and county structures. It is assumed that different services will have to be organized at different levels to be cost effective.

Formidable political and organizational obstacles exist when one considers the long view of the problem, which are beyond the scope of this report, but must be addressed as the recommendations in this report are put into effect.

Footnotes

1. Task Force on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools, Modern Financial Management '78; An Update for New Jersey School Districts. (A Report to the Governor and the Legislature from the Task Force on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools), Trenton, New Jersey, March 1978, p. 39.
2. Report of the State Committee to study the next steps of Regionalization and Consolidation in the School Districts of New Jersey. State of New Jersey Department of Education, Trenton, New Jersey, 1969.
3. Jonathan P. Sher, Rachel B. Tompkins, Economy, Efficiency, and Equality: The Myths of Rural School and District Consolidation, National Institute of Education, July 1976, p. 3.
4. E. Robert Stevens, Grace G. Bensimon, Tony P. McAdoo, Noble J. Gividen, Major Policy Issues Surrounding the Education Service Agency Movement and A proposed Research and Development Agenda. (Unpublished paper, Stephens Associates), Burtonsville, Maryland, June 1979.
5. Preliminary Status Report: Special Education in New Jersey. New Jersey Department of Education, Division of School Programs, Trenton, May 1979.
6. Jenkins et al. v. Township of Morris School District and Board of Education, 58 N.J. 483 (1971).

APPENDIX A

ON-ROLL PUPILS BY GRADE PLAN CATEGORY

	K-6 Const.	K-8 Const.	Sending	Total Elem.	7-12 Regl.	9-12 Regl.	Sec. Total	K-12	K-12 Regl.	K-12 Total	County Voc.
0- 499 N	40	27	79	146							6
On-Roll	10,715	7281	21,427	39,423							2,134
500- 999 N	12	52	30		4	6	10	3		3	6
On-Roll	8,663	37,741	20,371	66,775	3,094	5,230	8,324	2,623		2,623	3,948
1000-1499 N	4	27	7	38	2	8	10	14		14	2
On-Roll	5,109	32,593	8,009	45,711	2,620	10,018	12,638	17,777		17,777	2,312
1500-1999 N	2	9	1	12	6	5	11	27	2	29	1
On-Roll	3,270	15,570	1,599	20,439	10,427	8,552	18,979	46,820	3,386	50,206	1,794
2000-2499 N	1	5		6		3	3	31	1	32	3
On-Roll	2,362	10,607		12,969		7,113	7,113	69,503	2,457	71,960	7,019
2500-2999 N		2		2	2	3	5	18	2	20	
On-Roll		5,608		5,608	5,541	8,425	13,966	48,706	5,375	54,081	
3000-3499 N		1	1	2		2	2	14	2	17	1
On-Roll		3,124	3,003	6,127		6,399	6,399	44,940	6,252	54,364	3,058
3500-3999 N		4		4	1	2	3	14	1	15	1
On-Roll		14,498		14,498	3,594	7,339	10,933	51,952	3,757	55,709	3,548
4000-4499 N								9		9	
On-Roll								38,568		38,568	
4500-4999 N						1	1	8		8	
On-Roll						4,688	4,688	38,100		38,100	
5000-5499 N					1	1	2	7		7	
On-Roll					5,050	5,264	10,314	36,889		36,889	
5500-5999 N		1		1				8	4	12	
On-Roll		5,803		5,803				45,999	22,740	68,739	
6000+ N						1	1		1	42	
On-Roll						7,293	7,283	492,945	8,414	501,359	

APPENDIX B

Cost Per Student in K-12 Districts
Compared with "K-12 Sender" Districts

One of the questions which must be addressed in making decisions about regionalization is whether or not there is a cost differential between an existing condition and one which could be implemented. In comparing costs per student in districts already organized on a K-12 basis with those of "K-12 senders" (i.e., districts which operate elementary schools and send their students to a K-12 district for secondary education), it was found that no significant cost differential exists.

Actual expenditures for 1977-78 were used as reported on the Educational Financial Information Report. Expenditures included were total current expense plus expenses for food services, student activities and maintenance. For accurate student cost data, the tuition for secondary students paid to receiving districts was subtracted from expenditures of the elementary sending districts.

The data are reported in the accompanying tables.

**COST PER STUDENT IN K-12 DISTRICT
COMPARED WITH K-12 "SENDER" DISTRICTS**

COUNTY Monmouth

Elementary Districts (Senders for Secondary)

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</u>	<u>TUITION FOR SECONDARY</u>	<u>TOTAL RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>	<u>ELEMENTARY RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>	<u>SECONDARY RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>
Avon	\$ 498,677	\$ 97,709	258.0	12.0	46.0
Belmar	1,655,900	427,869	675.5	449.5	226.0
Bradley Beach	1,327,118	389,691	692.0	500.0	192.0
Brielle	1,546,217	513,982	763.0	481	282.0
Deal	799,069	118,592	199.5	145.5	54.0
Millstone Twp.	1,447,285	424,830	774.5	552.5	222.0
Neptune City	1,365,116	447,454	780.5	536.5	244.0
Roosevelt	435,440	134,034	157.0	103.0	54.0
Sea Girt	754,183	232,137	363.0	236.0	127.0
Spring Lake	1,049,359	376,182	480.5	283.5	197.0
Spring Lake Hts.	1,273,048	495,366	680.0	400.0	280.0
Union Beach	<u>2,378,916</u>	<u>751,288</u>	<u>1445.5</u>	<u>984.5</u>	<u>461.0</u>
TOTAL	\$14,254,828	\$8,818,268	7269.0	4884.0	2385.0

Average Total Costs = 1961
(Source: Educational Financial Information Report, 1977-78)

K-12 DISTRICTS

COMPARISON OF COSTS

DISTRICT	TOTAL EXPENDITURES ¹	TOTAL RESIDENT ENROLLMENT
Asbury Park	\$ 7,392,164 (-716751)	3052.0
Hazlet Twp.	10,382,456	5619.0
Holmdel Twp.	5,177,676	2522.0
Keansburg	3,070,115	2020.0
Keyport	3,207,621 (-751288)	1386.5
Long Branch	10,550,039	5285.0
Manasquan	3,753,977 (-2034396)	919.5
Middletown Twp.	22,118,213	12903.0
Neptune Twp.	11,660,738 (-560635)	5673.0
Ocean Twp.	9,800,149	4681.0
Wall Twp.	8,102,792	4046.0
TOTAL	\$95,215,940 (-4063070) =	48107
	\$91,152,870	

Cost Per Pupil in "Sender K-12" Districts - \$1961
 Cost Per Pupil in K-12 Districts - \$1895
 Difference \$ 66

Conclusion: Cost for K-12 services is \$66, or 3.7% less expensive in districts organized on a K-12 basis.

AVERAGE COST PER PUPIL = \$1895

¹Less Tuition (Receiver (Regular))

**Costs Per Student in K-12 Districts
Compared with K-12 "Sender" Districts**

COUNTY Salem

Elementary Districts (Senders for Secondary)

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>TOTAL C.E. EXPENDITURES</u>	<u>TUITION FOR SECONDARY</u>	<u>TOTAL RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>	<u>ELEMENTARY RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>	<u>SECONDARY RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>
Alloway Twp.	\$ 991,789	\$ 337,377	585.0	388.0	197.0
Elmer Boro	546,602	246,854	305.0	198.0	107.0
Elsinboro Twp.	360,312	125,087	207.5	134.5	73.0
Lower Alloways' Creek Twp.	1,145,922	248,778	386.5	259.5	127.0
Mannington Twp.	734,807	254,346	366.5	229.5	137.0
Oldmans Twp.	890,008	274,532	448.5	308.5	140.0
Quinton Twp.	1,070,114	411,800	589.0	365.0	224.0
Upper Pittsgrove Twp.	<u>1,251,035</u>	<u>412,047</u>	<u>721.0</u>	<u>489.0</u>	<u>232.0</u>
TOTAL	\$6,990,589	\$2,310,821	3609.0	2372.0	
<u>PER PUPIL COSTS</u>					

AVERAGE TOTAL COSTS = \$1,937

(Source: Educational Financial Information Report, 1977-78)

K-12 DISTRICTS

COMPARISON OF COSTS

<u>DISTRICTS</u>	<u>TOTAL C.E. EXPENDITURES</u> ¹	<u>TOTAL RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>
Pennsville Twp.	\$6,589.632	3202.5
Penns Grove-Carneys Point Regional	5,517,809	2623.5
Pittsgrove Twp.	2,648,049	1289.5
Salem City	4,046,525	1479.0
Woodstown-Pilesgrove	2,966,315	1204.5
TOTAL	\$21,767,530	9799.0

Cost Per Pupil in "Sender K-12" District - \$1937

Cost Per Pupil in K-12 Districts - \$2221

Difference \$284

Conclusion: Cost for K-12 Services is \$284, or 12.8%, more expensive in districts organized on a K-12 basis.

AVERAGE COST PER PUPIL = \$2221

¹ Less Tuition Received (Regular)

**Aggregate Cost Per Student
Comparison Data: Monmouth and Salem Counties**

Elementary Districts (Senders for Secondary)

<u>NUMBER OF DISTRICTS</u>	<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</u>	<u>TOTAL RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>
20	\$21,245,417	10,878

AVERAGE COST PER PUPIL = \$1953

K-12 DISTRICTS

<u>NUMBER OF DISTRICTS</u>	<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</u>	<u>TOTAL RESIDENT ENROLLMENT</u>
16	\$112,920,400	57906

AVERAGE COST PER PUPIL = \$1950

COMPARISON OF COSTS

Cost per pupil in "Sender K-12" Districts -	\$1953
Cost per pupil in K-12 districts -	\$1950
Difference	- 3

Conclusion: Cost for K-12 services is \$3 less expensive in K-12 districts, an amount which cannot be said to have significance.

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