

REPORT OF THE
SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND STANDARDS STUDY COMMITTEE

Submitted to the Iowa Legislative Council
and the Members of the
Second Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly

PROGRESS REPORT
OF THE
SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND STANDARDS STUDY COMMITTEE

The School Systems and Standards Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council at its July 1, 1971 meeting for the purpose of conducting a study of the present organization of the various school districts and county school systems and joint county school systems. It is directed to study financing of the districts and systems, and recommendations concerning a reduction in the present elementary and secondary school systems and the creation of a new or modified organizational structure such as county-like administrative units, except where populations or geographic conditions would otherwise dictate, and consider abolishing, modifying, or replacing the county, joint county, and merged school systems. The Committee was also established to conduct a study of the present statutory educational standards and to propose any changes that appear to be necessary in order to provide for meaningful minimum curriculum for the students of Iowa. The Council's mandate to the Study Committee specified that the number of schools where students attend, if possible, should remain the same in any recommendations to be made by the Committee in order that students within their respective school districts will receive a quality education in an efficient manner. The Legislative Council stipulated that the Study Committee was to complete its study and make recommendations to the General Assembly by January 1973.

The Legislative Council named the following members of the General Assembly to serve as legislative members of the Committee:

Senator W. Charlene Conklin, Waterloo
Senator Wilson L. Davis, Keokuk
Senator Gene V. Kennedy, Dubuque
Senator Cloyd E. Robinson, Cedar Rapids
Senator Richard L. Stephens, Crawfordsville
Representative Charles E. Grassley, New Hartford
Representative Charles E. Knoblauch, Sr., Carroll
Representative Norman G. Rodgers, Adel
Representative Elizabeth Shaw, Davenport
Representative Delwyn D. Stromer, Garner

The Committee held its first meeting on September 1, 1971 and named Senator W. Charlene Conklin to serve as Chairman and Representative Charles E. Grassley to serve as Vice Chairman. The following persons were selected by the Committee to serve as citizen advisory members of the Committee:

Dr. Roderick Bickert, Mason City
Mr. Paul L. Eckert, Davenport
Mr. Roger E. Leavitt, Marcus
Mrs. Jane Paul, Henderson
Dr. Ralph Scott, Cedar Falls

At its first meeting, the Committee discussed the three major areas of study: The county school system, the restructuring of local school districts, and school standards. Since the time before the convening of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly, Second Session, was short, the Committee agreed to study and make recommendations only in the area of the county school systems or intermediate educational unit, leaving the other two areas for study during the next interim.

Iowa currently has three echelons of educational agencies; the local school district, the county school system, and the State Department of Public Instruction. According to information received by the Committee, one state (Hawaii) has a single echelon system, fourteen states have two echelons, and thirty-five states have three echelons.

In Iowa there are three different kinds of intermediate units of education. There are thirty-one counties with single county school systems. Forty-three counties have combined into eighteen different multi-county systems which have completed an agreement so that a single county superintendent and county school personnel can serve more than one county although each county maintains its separate county board of education. Twenty-five counties have combined into nine separate joint county systems with a single board functioning for each joint county system. The nine joint county systems comprise approximately thirty-five percent of the assessed valuation and population of the state. If the single county systems of Polk, Pottawattamie, Woodbury, and Dubuque Counties were joined with the nine joint county systems, they would contain approximately fifty-five percent of the assessed valuation and population of the state. Attached to this Report is a chart showing the present operation of the county school systems in Iowa.

After the initial organizational meeting, the School Systems and Standards Study Committee held four two-day meetings in order to develop its recommendations. Mr. Leroy Petersen, Director of the Office for Planning and Programming and Mr. Robert Buck, members of the Governor's Educational Advisory Committee, appeared before the Study Committee to explain the Advisory Committee's recommendations. The Advisory Committee recommends abolishing the county school system and not replacing it, but instead establishing from ninety-nine to one hundred twenty local county-like administrative units.

The Committee also heard testimony from the Advisory Committee on Regional Services, a committee of school personnel appointed by Dr. Paul Johnston, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Advisory Committee recommends the establishment of fifteen regional areas with boundaries coterminous with the boundary lines of the merged areas already developed for the area community colleges and vocational schools. Department of Public Instruction personnel appeared at several meetings and explained both the regulatory and service functions of the state in providing the services which cannot be provided on the local level by all school districts.

Representatives from the following county school systems appeared to describe their programs:

Lee County
Cedar, Johnson, Linn, and Washington Counties
Black Hawk-Buchanan Counties
Polk County
Fremont-Mills County
Carroll County
Kossuth County

The Committee also toured the facilities of the Polk County Board of Education offices. The Committee also heard recommendations from representatives of the Iowa Taxpayers Association, the Iowa Property Taxpayers Association, and the Polk-Des Moines Taxpayers Association, and from Area XV, Ottumwa, in which special education services are provided throughout the merged area.

The Committee invited and heard from Dr. Robert M. Isenberg, Executive Secretary of the American Association of School Administrators, who is the foremost authority in the United States on the structure of the intermediate unit of education. Dr. Isenberg spent two days talking with Committee members and discussing possible alternatives for the establishment of an intermediate educational unit.

A questionnaire was sent to all county superintendents, asking them to list services which were provided by their county or multi-county unit. The Committee determined that in general services were provided in the following areas: Data Processing, Special Education, Media Centers, Professional and Curricula Improvement and regulatory functions for the State Department of Public Instruction. Special education personnel employed by counties include school psychologists, speech clinicians, hearing clinicians, social workers, work-study coordinators, vocational rehabilitation consultants, and other diagnostic personnel. Physically handicapped and mentally or emotionally handicapped children are enrolled in special education classes. Over seventy percent of the funds expended by county school systems are for special education purposes. The responses to the questionnaire indicate that there is a wide variation among services offered by the county and joint county school systems.

The General Assembly has appropriated \$3,700,000 for each year of the present biennium for reimbursement to school districts and county boards of education for special education purposes. The State Department of Public Instruction provides reimbursement for the following seven special education programs:

1. Mentally retarded
2. Visually handicapped
3. Hearing handicapped
4. Speech handicapped
5. Physically handicapped

6. Emotionally disturbed
7. Specific learning disabilities

The Committee learned that the minimum pupil population required to support special education programs varies with the number of handicapped students present in a specific area. Many special education services can be provided with pupil populations of less than five thousand, however certain specialized instructional services can only be provided if the pupil population is from twenty thousand to forty thousand. This factor is important in determining the size of the intermediate unit. Attached to the Report is a chart indicating the size of enrollment necessary to support various special services.

The Committee determined that the possible alternatives are as follows:

1. Maintain the present system.
2. Establish regional educational service agencies as recommended by the Department of Public Instruction or as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Regional Services.
3. Establish fifteen regional service agencies but utilize the same governing board as the area schools utilize.
4. Establish a cooperative arrangement between the local school districts.
5. Abolish the present system and do not replace it.

The Committee recommends that the special education functions of the county and joint county school systems be administered by the board of directors of each area vocational school or area community college. There will be fifteen different areas providing special education services and the superintendent of each merged area school will be the chief administrator of the special education services. The Committee envisions that in each merged area a separate assistant superintendent for special services will be employed.

The Committee recommends that an advisory committee composed of two citizens from each director district in the merged area be elected at a meeting by the merged area director and all local school board members within that district. The advisory committee shall advise the board of directors of the merged area regarding the special services which should be offered.

The Committee recommends that the county school system be abolished on July 1, 1972, but that the board of directors of the merged area furnish special education services up to July 1, 1973 at the same level as was provided for the school year commencing July 1, 1971 in cooperation with the local district. Since some county and joint county systems budget on a calendar year basis and some budget on a fiscal year basis, the transitional period will be six months for some systems and one year for some systems.

For the transitional period the local district funds used by the local district for special education services will remain with the local district. The county mill levy for the transitional period, which is the same millage as was levied for the previous year, will go to the intermediate unit in the merged area and the state funds for reimbursable costs will go to the intermediate unit in the merged area.

For the year following the transitional period, the Committee recommends that local districts be allowed to increase their millage ceiling and budget limits by the amount which was formerly paid by the taxpayers in the district for special education purposes in the county school system.

During that year each local district will fund the special education program of the merged area at a level based upon a percent determined with the cooperation of the State Comptroller's Office and the Department of Public Instruction multiplied by the per pupil cost in the district and the funds thus obtained together with the direct state appropriation for special education services will be pooled at the merged area level. The cost of new special education programs will be paid by the state as mandated in H.F. 654.

The Committee reviewed all functions of the county and joint county school systems and recommends the repeal of all obsolete functions and transfer of all regulatory functions to either the state or local level.

Five regional data processing facilities are presently operating throughout the state. The Committee recommends that the data processing function be administered by the State Department of Public Instruction and that participation in data processing services by the local districts be on a voluntary contractual basis between the local districts and the agency providing the data processing service. The Polk County System; the Cedar, Johnson, Linn, and Washington Joint County System; and the Muscatine-Scott Joint County System presently operate data processing facilities, and the Committee believes that these facilities will continue to function.

The State Department of Public Instruction has authorized a media center to be established in each of the fifteen

the special education consultants, not be provided by the merged area boards. However, the recommendation does not preclude a local district from employing consultants for specific purposes on a contract basis.

The research function should be administered on a contractual basis and coordinated with research being conducted by the Department of Public Instruction and the Board of Regents institutions.

The Committee recommends that the board of the merged area be authorized to accept and operate federal projects in the merged area.

The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Instruction be given the power to authorize certain school districts in one merged area to contract for services from an adjacent area.



The Committee recommends that Chapter 281 of the Code, the special education chapter, be amended to reflect new modes of thinking in the special education field and that to the maximum extent possible children requiring special education attend regular classes and be educated along with children who do not require special education. Whenever possible, restrictions to learning and to the normal functioning of children requiring special education within the regular school environment shall be overcome by the provision of special aids and services rather than by separate programs for those in need of special education.



The Committee agrees with the recommendation of the Governor's Educational Advisory Committee that the number of local school districts should be reduced and county-like administrative units be formed. During the next interim, the Committee intends to study and make recommendations concerning the structure of local school districts and also school standards.


The information below indicates the size of enrollment necessary to support various special services.

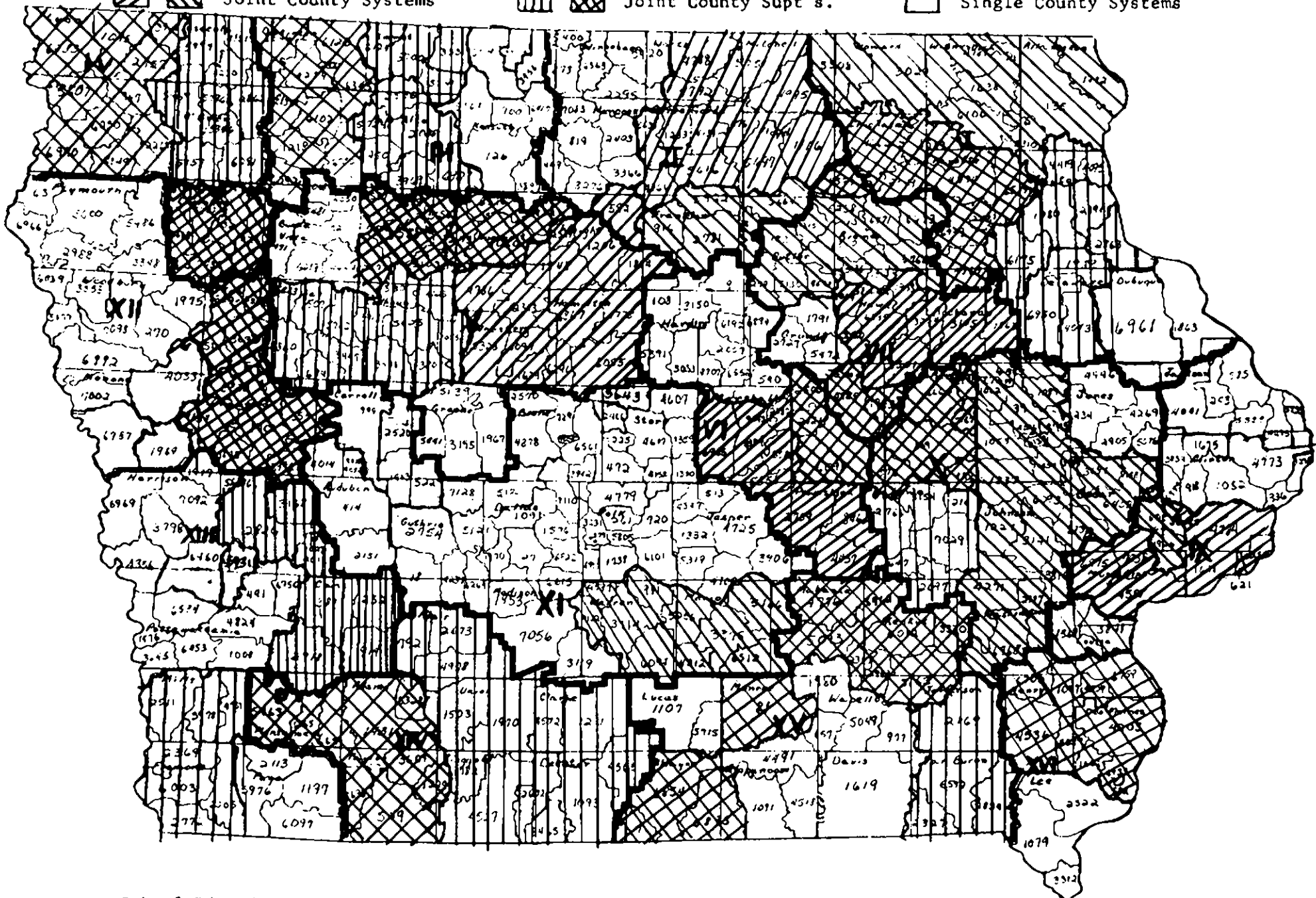
<u>INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES</u>	<u>MINIMUM NUMBER OF HANDICAPPED STUDENTS FOR ADEQUATE PROGRAM</u>	<u>PUPIL POPULATION REQUIRED TO SUPPORT PROGRAM</u>	<u>NUMBER OF DISTRICTS WITH SUFFICIENT ENROLLMENT TO SUPPORT PROGRAM</u>
Mentally Retarded			
Educable (2%)	52	2,700	34
Trainable (.3%)	20	8,000	8
Emotionally Disturbed (2%)	20	3,000	29
Visually Handicapped (.1%)	20	20,000	3
Physically Handicapped (.5%)	20	4,000	20
Specific Learning Disabilities (3%)	60	2,000	67
Hearing Impaired (.6%)	40	7,000	14
 <u>SUPPORTIVE SERVICES</u>			
Clinical Speech Services (6%)	60	1,500	90
School Psychological Services		2,000	67
Consultative Services in Mentally Retarded	325	15,000	6
Work Study Coordinator (Jr. Sr. Hi. level)	30	3,000	29
Hearing Clinician		10,000	7
Consultant School Health Services		40,000	1

State of Iowa
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

  Joint County Systems

  Joint County Supt's.

 Single County Systems



School District; County, Joint County Superintendents, Joint County School Systems;
and Area School Corporations in Iowa as of August 1, 1970