

Tentative

PROPOSED PLAN OF STUDY FOR THE LOCAL EDUCATION COMMISSION  
OF ATLANTA AND FULTON COUNTY

Purposes of the Study: "To study the desirability and feasibility of combining the school systems of Fulton County and the City of Atlanta, including the portion thereof lying in DeKalb County; to provide that said Commission may draft a plan or plans for the combining of such school systems and submit same to members of the General Assembly from Fulton and DeKalb Counties." (Taken from H.R. 505-1246, as passed by House and Senate.)

The legislation creating the local Education Commission of Atlanta and Fulton County clearly defines two specific and closely related major tasks and assigns these tasks to the Commission. The two tasks are:

1. To recommend whether or not a single school district would be better for Atlanta and Fulton County than the present separate districts of Atlanta and Fulton County.
2. To draw up a plan or plans for creating a single school district to take the place of the present Atlanta and Fulton County districts.

The work of the Commission would be simplified if it could first determine the answer to the question of the desirability and feasibility of a single school system. Should the answer be negative, the Commission might logically consider it unnecessary to propose a plan or plans for creating a single school system. On the other hand, the most practical answer to the first question is necessarily based on the results of an inquiry into the various factors which would be involved in the dissolution of the two existing school districts and in creating in their stead a single district.

Obviously, the consideration of feasibility demands the identification and careful analysis of the requirements for establishing a satisfactory single school district.

Therefore, the proposed outline is based on the assumption that a thorough exploration of what the creation of a new school district means is desirable if the most satisfactory answer to each of the two questions is to be achieved. The steps which are listed and discussed below are based on this assumption.

I. Describe the new school district which might be created.

What would this district look like? What would it include?

This description should include an identification of the geographical area the new district would include, the total population of this area, the school age population and the actual school enrollment. The number of teachers and other professional personnel, and the number of other employees would be listed. The number, size, types and distribution of schools, a general description of the educational program as contemplated, an analysis of available facilities, instructional materials, transportation, and other supporting services would be included. Wealth, sources of wealth, and the nature of the economy of the district would be a part of the description.

A general overview of the organization and government of the district and relationships to other units of government would be included. This statement would stress the fact that the new district would be made up of schools now in existence located on their present sites and functioning essentially as they do now and with the same personnel.

II. Identify and describe the legal steps which would be necessary in order to create a single school district in place of the two existing districts.

What would be required to dissolve the present districts of Atlanta and Fulton County? How would the new district be created?

A complete listing and the precise definition of the various legal actions necessary in order to discontinue the present school districts are essential. For example, what would be done with the debts of these districts would have to be spelled out. The laws necessary for creating a new district would be set forth. The required constitutional amendment would be drafted.

Plans for the organization and administration of the district would be stated with provisions for creating a board of education, specifying the number of members, eligibility for membership, type of representation (district-wide or by areas), term of office, method of selection, powers, duties, and responsibilities. In addition, a plan for organizing and administering the school district should be set forth, including provisions for a chief administrative official, and the spelling out of his powers, duties, and responsibilities.

The necessary legal steps would also require the setting forth of a tax plan for financial support of the district, the kinds of school taxes to be levied, provisions for tax leeway, and provisions for debt and debt services. The statement on legal requirements would take into account the impact of the proposed new State Constitution on creation of the new district and relationships of the district to other units of government. Some attention should be given to the broad general problem of metropolitan government in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

III. Decisions, recommendations, policies, regulations, and operational procedures which would be essential to creating the new district and getting it into operation. (Not necessarily an inclusive list.)

What are the specific steps required to bring the new district into being? to set it into operation? to assure satisfactory operation?

The autonomy which local school districts in Georgia are free to exercise is considerable. The Atlanta and Fulton County school districts have freely exercised this autonomy. Being entirely separate districts, they have developed their own policies, procedures, and operational patterns. While many similarities exist in these matters, there are also differences. Creation of a new district would require careful attention to such guides and practices. Changes which are necessary must not work injustices on school personnel or reflect unwisely on educational programs. Careful and tedious study are required which will result in the development of policies, procedures, and operational patterns needed by the proposed new district and which may or may not currently exist in either of the present districts.

Some of the several aspects of this problem are listed below with types of needed action indicated. As the study advances, additions to this list are likely to be necessary.

1. Development of a system of personnel records for professional and other school personnel.
2. Development of a system of records for pupil accounting.
3. Development of necessary guides and procedures for budgeting.
4. Development of purchasing plans and procedures.
5. Development of plans for appropriate financial accounting.
6. Development of a salary schedule for professional and other personnel.

7. Development of a retirement system, or systems.
8. Development of policies concerning employment practices, professional and other.
9. Development of policies regarding sick leave, vacations, leaves of absence, professional growth, etc.
10. Development of policies regarding size of schools.
11. Development of general school regulations, such as length of the school day, number of days in the school year, and holidays.
12. Development of a school calendar.
13. Reach decisions on the school program having to do with kindergartens, special education, vocational education, and other program areas.
14. Reach decisions on pupil-teacher ratios to be established and maintained.
15. Reach decisions on services to be provided by the school district, such as food, transportation, and health.
16. Reach decisions on instructional materials and supplies which are to be provided.
17. Reach decisions on special professional personnel to be provided such as librarians, school psychologists, counselors, and reading specialists.
18. Reach decisions on administrative and supervisory services to be provided.
19. Reach decisions on non-professional personnel to be provided, such as lunch room workers, custodians, and secretaries.
20. Determine the curriculum adjustments which are necessary and suggest how they are to be made.

21. Recommend policies regarding expansion of school programs with special reference to junior college education, vocational and technical education, and adult education.
22. Propose a method of combining the two central office staffs.
23. Propose a plan for the internal organization and administration of the new school district, answering questions such as, Will there be area superintendents? Will there be junior high schools? How many grades will be in the elementary schools?
24. Recommend the future of the Metropolitan School Development Council. Will it have served its purpose if the new school district is created? If not, should it be extended to include the entire metropolitan area?
25. Recommend plans for handling textbooks and instructional supplies.
26. Make recommendations concerning teaching loads.
27. Make recommendations concerning the visiting teacher program.
28. Make recommendations concerning organizations which exist in the respective school districts, such as Parent-Teacher Associations, local teacher associations, and the various student organizations.

IV. A proposed budget for the new district.

What would it cost to finance the new school district in order to maintain the level of present school programs?

A budget should show the total amount of revenue needed and the allocation of funds to the various areas of the educational program. A comparison should be made of the cost of education in the two present districts and the new district calling attention to any differences in cost and giving explanations for the differences. The budget should also

show the sources of revenue and the amounts from each source. The budget would necessarily take into account revenues to be received from the State. How these revenues compare with those presently received from the State by the two separate districts should be shown.

- V. Identify and describe the advantages and disadvantages of a single school system in comparison to the advantages and disadvantages of the two present school systems.

What facts and conditions support creation of a new district? What facts and conditions support retaining the two existing districts. What is the proper recommendation?

The steps which have been outlined above would provide a sound basis for answering these questions. A decision on the single district issue would also involve bringing up-to-date those aspects of previous studies which deal with the present questions and the identification of changes made since these studies were completed, legal and otherwise, which have a bearing on the problem. This statement should take account of the problems and issues which would have to be faced in undertaking to develop a single school district.

- VI. Propose a plan for creating and putting into operation the new school district, if it is to be created.

This step is essentially the development of a blueprint for action to be taken in the event a new district is desired, including a time table for such action. A statement of specific steps to be undertaken in creating the new school district would be drawn up. Special attention would need to be given to required legislation. A sequential schedule

of steps should be included and assignments made of responsibilities for carrying out each step. A time schedule should be suggested.

VII. Design a Public Information Services Program.

Acceptance of any proposals of the Commission will depend largely on public knowledge and understanding of such proposals. Therefore, a wide variety of opportunities should be provided for citizens to become acquainted with the proposals and to understand their impact on education in the metropolitan area. Hence, appropriate use of television, radio, and newspapers will be in order. Individual and small group conferences with selected persons is an extremely important step in this program. Provision for adequate public discussions is another important step.

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