

REPORT OF THE CONSULTANTS
on
CERTAIN PERSONNEL PROBLEMS
RELATING TO THE PROPOSED MERGER
of the
FULTON COUNTY - ATLANTA SCHOOL SYSTEMS

JUNE 19, 1967

WILLARD S. ELSBREE
and
JOHN E. PHAY
CONSULTANTS

Report of the Consultants on Certain Personnel Problems
Relating to the Proposed Merger of the Fulton County -
Atlanta School Systems, June 19, 1967

This report deals with the implications of merging the certificated and non-certificated personnel of the two current school systems - Fulton County and Atlanta. The question of the soundness of the merger itself was deemed to be outside the province of this study. The consultants have proceeded on the assumption that a merger is contemplated; that if effected, it is essential to unify personnel policies and practices, and that specific procedures for dealing with the employee groups in the two school systems should be spelled out.

Perhaps the two most important personnel problems that must be resolved if a merger is to be effected are the establishment of equitable salary and wage policies and the determination of how present and future pension and retirement provisions are to be administered.

Certain other policies and practices must also be unified if the merger is to deal fairly with the employed personnel. Sick leave, insurance provisions, and tenure regulations must somehow be brought into harmony - otherwise morale will suffer and the objectives of the merger will not be fully realized.

In order to obtain the data and information needed to arrive at recommended procedures the consultants assembled, with the help of the Coordinator of the Metropolitan School Development Council, pertinent published materials from each of the school systems involved and they interviewed executives responsible for the administration and supervision of the personnel policies. Included in the list of those interviewed were:

the Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia,

the Deputy Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia,

the Director of Finance for Fulton County Board of Education,

the Assistant Director of Finance for Fulton County Board of Education,

the Controller of the Atlanta School System,

the Assistant Controller of the Atlanta School System,

the Superintendent of Schools in each system,

the Assistant Superintendent for Personnel in Atlanta,

the Coordinator of the Metropolitan School Development Council,

the Director of Non-certificated Personnel in Atlanta,

the Secretary for the Atlanta General Pension Fund,

the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools, Atlanta.

Many official reports were examined together with policy statements in an effort to learn the basis for existing practices. The fact that salary policies were undergoing major revisions has been noted and the proposals contained in this report take full account of these changes.

It should be pointed out that many personnel policies are subject to revision almost annually. Salary levels in particular are very unstable and inflation has forced boards of education and public boards generally to boost salaries and wages more frequently than was true a few years ago. Because of this instability any calculations of future costs are bound to be unreliable. The best that can be done is to make what appears to be

reasonable assumptions and show their implications.

Salaries of Certificated Personnel

With the merger of the Atlanta and Fulton County School systems an immediate concern of the several thousand individuals employed will be - what will be my salary for next year? It is the opinion of the consultants that a basic salary schedule should be developed for the certificated personnel of the merged systems but that such a schedule should be developed only after the merger is consummated. The preparation of a salary schedule that has good possibilities of wide and enthusiastic reception should involve many people in its development. Representatives of organized professional groups, area specialists and supervisory and administrative personnel should have a part in the preparation of the basic salary program. Until the merger occurs, similar professional organizations will continue to exist for both Atlanta and Fulton County. After merger, many organizations will be consolidated and at that time the new organizations may be appropriately represented. The same situation obtains for representatives of area specialists and the supervisory and administrative staff. A salary schedule that could be recommended by consultants prior to the merger of the systems and without the involvement of representatives from the new groups would be premature. Therefore, it is recommended that after merger

a salary study committee composed of representatives of all certificated groups and areas be appointed to consider salary schedules and salary policies for the new system.

With the decision reached that any new salary schedules should be developed only after merger of the systems, the consultants examined the possibilities of what salary provisions might be best for immediate application following the merger and during the transition period. The same treatment, salarywise, of all personnel in the new system is a prerequisite in determining salary policies for the new system.

It was found that the two salary schedules could be merged and after careful review and examination the consultants came to the conclusion that retention of the salary schedules of the Atlanta System and the placement of the Fulton County personnel on the Atlanta schedules is the best solution possible with the merging of the two systems. To make such a transfer from one salary schedule to another it is recommended that the following rules be applied:

1. No employee's salary will be reduced.
2. Teachers and other certificated personnel will be placed on the appropriate 1967-68 Atlanta School System's salary schedule, on the step stipulating a salary that is equal to or next higher in amount to the current salary being paid.

3. Any Fulton County employee whose salary is higher on his present salary schedule than it would be on the same step of the Atlanta salary schedule will be paid this higher salary amount, but when and if eligible in subsequent years he will proceed according to the provisions of the appropriate salary scale.
4. For employees new to the merged system, a maximum of five years' service in other school systems will be accepted on a year by year basis. Such a person, with five years' experience, would enter on step 6 of the salary schedule.
5. Salary scale incentives applicable to the Bachelor's and Master's degree scales will be established following steps 4, 8, and 12. Teachers will be allowed to proceed on these salary scales only after completing six semester hours of approved college or university credit, or its equivalent, in in-service programs approved by the Board of Education.

To make the salary changes by the application of the above rules it was estimated by the Coordinator of Metropolitan School Development Council that the cost increase will be approximately \$

During the transition period there should be established a salary study committee, as indicated earlier in this section, to ascertain the adequacy of the salary schedules and policies in operation and to recommend any changes that promise to produce better salary arrangements. In addition,

a review should be made to ascertain whether or not individual employees have been appropriately classified and given correct placement on the salary schedules.

Wages of Non-certificated Employees

A similar approach is suggested for arriving at appropriate wage policies for the non-certificated workers in the county and the city school systems. Atlanta has recently adopted a classification plan recommended by the Public Administration Service. These schedules have been developed after much study and it appears logical to fit the non-certificated school employees from the county into the basic Atlanta pattern. There are differences in the length of the work year in some categories. This calls for minor adjustments but is not a serious obstacle to unifying the two groups. Bus drivers are employed in the county but are not employed by the Atlanta School System. The current wages paid bus drivers should be continued for the time being and the pay levels assessed when salaries and wages generally are being reviewed.

In the case of custodians it would be necessary to reclassify the Fulton County employees in order to achieve parity. This is not a difficult task and if the merger is voted, temporary classifications could be made in those cases where the job descriptions were not clear and final assignments made after individual cases were reviewed.

According to estimates made by the Coordinator of the Metropolitan School Development Council, the cost of bringing all the non-certificated employees under a single tent if the Atlanta pay scales were applied is \$543,756. This assumes that no consolidation in jobs will be made and the same number of employees are retained.

Retirement Provisions

Both Fulton County and the City of Atlanta maintain local pension and

retirement systems for their employees. This practice is of fairly long standing and, as has been the case in other American cities and counties, it arose because of the obvious need to provide employees with protection against the vicissitudes of advanced age and the local community against the inefficiency which results when workers, past the prime of life, are retained on the job.

Unfortunately the history of local pension plans has not been too favorable. Even when they have maintained a solvent position, which many have not, they have seldom provided the protection to new members that was guaranteed by those established and administered by the State. As a result, they have rapidly diminished in number and state plans have supplanted them. The latter because of larger memberships, the spreading of risks, and greater resources, have supplied the certificated staff with superior protection. Moreover, state employees' retirement systems are increasingly providing coverage for the non-certificated employees in school systems.

The problem confronting Fulton County and Atlanta with respect to pension and retirement is not unlike that found in many other systems. The funds required represent a tremendous investment and the accrued liabilities run into millions of dollars.

The ultimate solution in the minds of the consultants lies in moving the responsibility as quickly as possible from the local system to the State and the abandonment of any local retirement for new certificated personnel. This cannot be achieved quickly nor painlessly. While the proposal to merge the two school systems poses some knotty problems with respect to employee retirement, a reasonable solution can probably be worked out.

With the merger of the two systems, it is recommended that the policies with respect to retirement and pension provisions listed below be adopted by the various boards concerned:

1. All new certificated personnel will secure membership under the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia.
2. All new non-certificated personnel will secure membership in the social security program provided under the Federal Insurance Compensation Act.
3. All certificated personnel who are members of retirements systems operated by either the Atlanta General Employees' Pension Fund Board or by the Fulton County School Pension Board may withdraw their personal contributions to their pension fund if and when they become members of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia.
4. Members of the retirement system operated by the Atlanta Pension Board who wish to continue to be covered by the provisions of such board may continue their membership, and the Atlanta Pension Board will continue to administer and be responsible for all pension liabilities for such personnel as required by their current commitments. Future changes in pension benefits will be available to such members.
5. The Fulton County Board of Commissioners will assume all obligations, liabilities, and commitments of the Fulton County School Pension Fund Board.
6. Members of the retirement system operated by the Fulton County School Pension Board may at their option transfer their membership to a new Fulton County pension system to be administered by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners or its designate and retain

all of the rights and benefits they held under the system operated by the Fulton County School Pension Board.

7. Commitments for members who have retired under the pension systems operated by either the Atlanta Pension Board or by the Fulton County School Pension Board shall have all such commitments honored by the Atlanta Pension Board or by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners respectively.

Insurance

The practice of providing group life and personal accident insurance for employees is commendable and should be continued. It is recommended that:

1. Employees of the Atlanta and Fulton County school systems who have retained their school system sponsored insurance policies and who are retired will have their benefits and vested rights under their policy protected by the Atlanta City Board of Aldermen and the Fulton County Board of Commissioners, respectively, and such boards will manage and make any annual payments due insurance companies that exceeds the amount required of the employees under the provisions of the policy.
2. At the time of the merger, group life and personal accident insurance contracts be cancelled and a new contract agreement be entered into with a commercial company that will provide the best policy at the lowest rate.

Tenure

Job security should not be placed in jeopardy for an employee of the two school systems because of the merger. It is recommended that:

1. Tenure policies for the new system be established for the several classes of personnel employed and that the policies

for each classification be those now extant in either the Atlanta School System or the Fulton County School System that are more generous to the individual employee.

2. Employees holding tenure in either of the two systems concerned at the time of merger be automatically provided tenure in the new system.
3. Any probationary period served in the two systems concerned and prior to the merger of the two systems will be accepted at full value for tenure considerations in the merged system.

Leaves of Absence and Vacations

The emoluments and rights earned under provisions that now exist for the personnel in the Atlanta and Fulton County schools should be protected. It is recommended that the provisions that are most generous to the employees, that now exist in either of the two school systems concerned, be adopted for the new merged system with respect to sick leave, maternity leave, bereavement leave, military leave, professional study leave, emergency leave and vacations.

Records

With the merger of the two systems, it is anticipated that changes will be needed in both accounting and personnel records systems. With modern office equipment and electronic data processing machinery, the work of business, accounting, financial and statistical offices can be handled with dispatch. Moreover, information on personnel can be secured in as many ways as needed in short periods of time. In order for the new system to be able to function efficiently, it is recommended that as soon as the merger is voted, specialists in systems data processing be employed to plan for the merging of data of the two school systems together with programs for fast retrieval of such data.

Combining the Central Office Staff Personnel

A merger nearly always requires some consolidation of central office personnel. Hence, the procedures for determining how the unified system should assign the current central office employees needs to be spelled out.

The two systems as might be expected have several comparable central office positions and in some instances the merger, in the interest of economy, might necessitate the assignment of certain officials to posts outside the central office. This fact together with the need to reassess existing assignments calls for the exercise of both judgment and diplomacy on the part of those charged with the responsibility of building a new central organization.

The consultants believe that the wisest procedure to follow in merging the two central staffs is as follows:

1. The new Board of Education should choose a superintendent of schools for the system and an associate superintendent.
2. The Board of Education should appoint a committee to make recommendations as to the assignment of personnel to the new system central office positions. This committee should be composed of the superintendent of schools, who should act as chairman, the associate superintendent of schools, and two officials currently responsible for the recruitment, selection and assignment of personnel in the two systems being merged.
3. The officials currently responsible for the recruitment, selection and assignment of personnel should make recommendations to the superintendent of schools regarding the assignment of secretaries, clerks and custodial workers needed for service in the central headquarters.

4. In making assignments, consideration should be given to the age, experience and personal fitness of the individual employee for the job to be filled.
5. All central office employees should be housed under one roof and adequate facilities should be provided to facilitate the work.