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SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION FOR EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT
IN ATLANTA AND FULTON COUNTY

Report
of the

Local Education Commission
of
Atlanta and Fulton County
Georgia

LOCAL EDUCATION COMMISSION
OF ATLANTA AND FULTON COUNTY

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SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION FOR EDUCATIONAL
ADVANCEMENT IN THE ATLANTA AND FULTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

INTRODUCTION

The present generation is witnessing a revolution in education. Underlying causes of this revolution include social and economic changes of unparalleled speed and magnitude, the development of an increasingly complex society and a rapidly accelerating accumulation of useful knowledge. The necessity for all persons to secure more education of higher quality than ever before and to continue the quest for learning throughout life becomes more apparent with each passing year. No useful role for the uneducated remains and the cost of ignorance is more than society can afford.

Major characteristics of the educational revolution follow: enrolling children in school at an earlier age, extending the upper limits of formal schooling, providing education programs adapted to the cultural background of the student in order to equalize educational opportunity, an enormous increase in the kinds and amounts of instructional materials, in school use of a larger number and variety of specialists, technological advances which enhance the effectiveness of teaching, improvement in organization for teaching and improvement in the quality of teaching. Fast growing dimensions of modern school systems include junior colleges, vocational-technical schools, early childhood education programs and adult education programs.

Additions and improvements in schools are increasing greatly the cost of education. Upward trends in cost will continue into the indefinite future if schools are to meet the demands placed upon them by the public.

The revolution in education places a premium on wise, long-range planning by school districts. Because of population growth and diversity of educational need, metropolitan areas pose difficult educational problems which require much study. Careful, long-range plans for educational advancement are essential in these districts, as in others, if schools are not to suffer in the future. School personnel, members of boards of education and other citizens in the Atlanta and Fulton County school districts are well aware of these conditions and are giving thought to the future advancement of education in the area.

Such planning for the future was given official status by the General Assembly of Georgia in 1964 when it created the Local Education Commission of Atlanta and Fulton County. The Commission was authorized,

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.

WORK OF THE COMMISSION

The tasks assigned by the General Assembly to the Commission were complex and formidable. After considerable study, the Commission adopted a plan which, if followed, would enable the Commission to discharge its responsibilities. This plan was revised from time to time as the study progressed and as modifications which would improve the study were identified. The work of the Commission consisted of completing the steps described below.

1. A review of previous studies which gave attention to the same problems the Commission was asked to study.
2. A study of social, economic and educational trends in the metropolitan area of Atlanta.

3. A study of developing educational needs and programs.
4. A study of the Atlanta and Fulton County schools with particular attention to finance.
5. An analysis of the educational reasons which support the creation of a single school district.
6. An analysis of the disadvantages of a single school district.
7. The identification and description of steps which would be necessary to create a single school district.
8. Tasks which would have to be completed in effecting a transition from the present districts to a single district.
9. Deciding on whether to recommend a single district.

Throughout the entire course of the study the overriding concern of the Commission was to reach the decision that would serve the best interests of those who are to be educated in the Atlanta and Fulton County school districts.

The deliberations of the Commission and the information considered in these deliberations, relevant to the purposes of the study, are summarized briefly in the following pages.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

The charge of the General Assembly to the Commission springs from a background which spans years of citizen concern for good schools in the Atlanta metropolitan area. During these years, several special studies of the metropolitan area have paid attention to the schools and their problems of advancement.

The Local Government Commission of Fulton County recommended in 1950 a Greater Atlanta Development Program. The report of the Commission included

reference to the schools and the possibility of merging the Atlanta and Fulton County school districts. The report took the position that, ultimately, merger was desirable, but not at that time because of differences in expenditure levels and in school programs of the two districts.

The General Assembly created a Local Education Commission in 1958 to study the two school systems and to submit a plan or plans for their improvement to members of the General Assembly from Fulton and DeKalb Counties. This Commission also studied the question of merging the two school systems and concluded that while this would be desirable in the future, it was neither desirable nor practicable at that time. The Commission recommended the creation of a Metropolitan School Development Council which would make it possible to achieve some of the advantages of consolidation. The proposed council was established and has become an effective instrument for carrying out joint programs of the two school systems. These programs include the Juvenile Court School, Educational Broadcasting, Public Information Services and In-Service Education.

The Fulton County Board of Education appointed a study commission in 1963 to seek ways to overcome the financial crisis in which the Fulton County Schools found themselves because of a City of Atlanta annexation program. The annexation program was recommended by the Local Government Commission in 1950 and was carried out in the early fifties. As a result of this program, 72 percent of the taxable wealth of the Fulton County School District and nearly 50 per cent of its students were annexed by Atlanta. The report of this Commission also took the position that the school districts should undertake merger when feasible and recommended that steps be taken to determine what would be involved in bringing about a single district.

All studies, since 1950, which have concerned themselves with education in Atlanta and Fulton County have given serious consideration to the creation of a single school district in place of the two existing districts. These studies have taken the position that consolidation should be undertaken when feasible. The two districts, meanwhile, have grown closer together in levels of financial support and in educational programs. Furthermore, there has been a marked increase in the number of cooperative undertakings in pursuit of common interests. However, differences remain which would have to be reconciled if a single district is created.

ADVANTAGES OF A SINGLE DISTRICT

Major advantages of a single district over the two present districts number fifteen. These advantages are concerned with the basic structure for education, adequately financing the schools, equalizing educational opportunities, and improving the quality of education. Actually, all concerns of the study focus on the improvement of the schools. There follows a statement of each advantage and a brief discussion of its meaning.

A Better School District Will Be Provided

Adequate criteria for determining the soundness of a school district have been developed by educational authorities. These criteria are concerned with such things as a sufficient number of children in the district in order to make possible reasonable educational effectiveness and cost economy, adequacy of the district as a unit of local government, availability of an adequate local tax base, adequate bonding capacity, reasonable tax leeway and some degree of fiscal independence. When these criteria are applied to the present districts of Atlanta and Fulton County, neither is

revealed as a satisfactory district. Fulton County meets only one of the six criteria: the number of children to be educated. Atlanta lacks adequate bonding capacity. If the two districts were combined, the resultant district would be more adequate, primarily because of fiscal resource, than is either when considered separately.

Educational Opportunities Can Be

Equalized More Easily

The right of every individual to secure an education is inherent in a democracy. The modern definition of this right is that every individual must secure an education appropriate to his purposes, interests, abilities and needs. Equality of educational opportunity, therefore, does not mean the same education for all, but it does mean the same level of quality for all insofar as this is possible. The extreme diversity of cultural interests and backgrounds which are found in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, and in any other metropolitan area, require a wide range of educational programs adapted to these basic differences in people. The current nationwide interest in providing more realistic educational programs for children in slum areas is an indication of concern for this kind of need. The Atlanta district is heterogeneous in composition while the Fulton County district is more homogeneous. Combining the two would make it possible to provide in a more economical and efficient manner the variety of educational programs which are needed.

The equalization of educational opportunities in Atlanta and Fulton County is virtually impossible under the present district organization. A single district would contribute much to making this a manageable task with minimum difficulties.

New and Needed Educational Programs
Could Be Provided More Economically

Neither school district has yet provided post-secondary education programs for which there is great need. Perhaps the fastest growing trend in American education is the development of comprehensive junior colleges. These institutions provide two years of academic work either for terminal purposes or for transfer to a senior college. They also usually offer programs in vocational-technical education and in adult education. It is increasingly clear that continuing education is a must for the adult citizen of tomorrow. The kind of world in which we live requires increasing amounts of education. A recent Educational Policies Commission report takes the position that two years of education beyond the high school should be provided at public expense for all high school graduates.

Fulton County is not financially able to provide junior colleges under its present tax structure. It would not represent the best economy for each district to provide its own junior colleges. A program to serve the metropolitan area would provide the best means of meeting this growing educational need. The two districts have already found it profitable to cooperate in the provision of vocational and technical education as shown by a new vocational-technical school which is to serve both districts. Plans are in the making for construction of a second institution of this type.

More Adequate Curricula for Special
Student Groups Can Be Provided

The variety of curricula needed to meet the diverse educational needs referred to above requires special education programs for small groups of selected students. These programs serve children with serious physical

handicaps, those suffering from severe mental retardation, children with extreme emotional difficulties, the exceptionally bright, and those with unusual talents. Since such programs are needed for only small numbers of children, they can be provided more economically if the student population to be served is drawn from both the Atlanta and Fulton County districts rather than for each school district to offer its own programs. Furthermore, the educational quality of offerings can be improved more readily in a unified district.

Certain Educational Programs and Services
Can Be Provided More Satisfactorily

The richness and depth of both teaching and learning are being enhanced by new discoveries concerning human growth and development. The contributions of science to the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes are increasing at a rapid rate. Integrating into curricula the accelerating flow of new and useful subject matter which the modern school program must offer if it is to remain effective is an increasingly difficult problem.

The modern school must be staffed by professional personnel who keep up with these continuing developments that affect their productivity. System-wide and continuous career development programs for personnel have become a necessity. This educational service can be provided better on a larger district basis rather than in terms of the present separate districts. The development and use of various learning resources and the appropriate utilization of technological advances in teaching can be stimulated and fostered better through a single school district.

Needed Improvements in Educational Quality

Can Be Achieved More Readily

The search for better schools is a common thread running through all considerations involved in deciding the consolidation question. Unless the ultimate consequence of unifying the two school districts is a better quality of education, there is little need to pursue the issue. Changes in financing schools, in administrative and supervisory services and in the scope and variety of educational offerings can be justified only if they bring about better education. The educational advancement which is essential to sound progress of the Atlanta metropolitan area requires a unified approach and not a series of separate and structurally unrelated school programs.

The search for educational quality is now both universal and continuous. The pursuit of quality is complex because it is concerned with everything that has a bearing on educational programs offered by a school district. The unification of efforts to improve quality would certainly maximize both opportunities and resources for enrichment of educational offerings.

Comprehensive, Long-Range Planning

Can Be More Effective

The increasing magnitude of educational responsibility has been stressed in earlier statements. The quantitative demands as well as the qualitative demands of this responsibility will continue to increase. Projections which have been made through the next several years show no letdown in the rate of population growth in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The indicated increase in the educational load calls for the most intelligent planning of which the people responsible are capable. Since this growth ignores school district

lines, adequate planning for new enrollment also must ignore these lines insofar as actualities permit. Comprehensive, long-range planning cannot be satisfactory if it is segmented on the basis of school district lines which have no constructive significance in the context of the metropolitan area as a whole.

For the same reasons long-range planning for improvement in the quality of education can be more effective if done for a single district rather than the present separate districts.

More Effective Solutions to Common
Educational Problems Are Possible

Educational problems are not confined to areas marked off by school district lines. Some educational problems are unique to certain types of districts, as is true of Fulton County and Atlanta. But many such problems are common to the school districts of an area, state, region or nation. Those problems which are common seem to be on the increase. The school district which embraces as nearly a self-sufficient socio-economic unit as is possible provides the best structural framework for the consideration of educational problems. Solutions to these problems should not be restricted by artificial district lines which ignore the facts of life. A unified district would provide for a more constructive approach to problem solution than does the present dual approach. This is all the more important since most of the educational problems to be faced are common to the two districts.

More Effective Research Programs
Can Be Stimulated and Executed

As good schools have become more central to personal and community

advancement, the place of research in education has become more apparent. Sound analyses of existing programs, the identification and description of strengths and weaknesses, and the determination of grounds for change require research. Planning ahead to be sure there will be adequate classrooms and teachers for the children in school at the beginning of a given year rests on research. School systems without strong research programs cannot achieve their maximum effectiveness. The complexity of a metropolitan area and the interrelationships of roles of its different segments require comprehensive research programs based on trends and needs of the entire area rather than of sub-units such as separate school districts. Furthermore, economy and wise management dictate a metropolitan-wide approach to research.

Needed Experimentation and Educational
Invention Can Be Achieved More Readily

Major advances in our society depend heavily on invention and experimentation. This fact is well recognized in the world of science and technology. The role of invention and experimentation in the improvement of social institutions such as schools is equally important. Schools, like the communities in which they exist, must change as society changes. New curriculum materials should be developed and tested on experimental bases. New knowledge of human growth and development should be applied to teaching and learning on experimental bases. New teaching procedures and methods should be tested through tryout and evaluation.

Heavy reliance upon invention and experimentation are crucial to needed educational advancement. There is no need for the school systems within Fulton County to engage in separate programs of this nature. The interests

of both districts can be served better by unified programs, to say nothing of economies which could be effected.

More Extensive Use of Selected Educational
Facilities and Learning Resources Is Possible

Centers for acquiring, creating, distributing and servicing curriculum materials such as publications, filmstrips, video tapes, films and the necessary equipment for appropriate use of these materials are becoming common. The creation of teaching materials for local use and on the basis of needs unique to the local situation is an important function of these centers. The use of television in teaching and in professional development programs is increasing. The needed facilities for extensive television programs in the metropolitan area can be centered easily in one location.

It is not necessary to duplicate the facilities and resources mentioned above in different school districts serving the same metropolitan area. A single center can provide a constant flow of materials far richer and more comprehensive than would be possible if available financial support is used to provide centers in the separate districts.

Equity and Balance in Financial Effort
and Support Can Be Achieved

An axiom of educational finance, which is accepted universally, is that wealth should be taxed where it is in order to educate children where they are. The most glaring deficiency in the structure of public education in the Atlanta area violates this axiom. The center for commerce and industry is the City of Atlanta. Contributions of most Fulton County citizens to

the economy of the metropolitan area are made largely in the City of Atlanta where they do their work. This wealth enriches Atlanta primarily, although earnings paid to the individual may be spent wherever he chooses. The City already recognizes these facts of the economy of the area by helping to support schools in the Fulton County District through a $1\frac{1}{2}$ mill countywide property tax. The industrial wealth of the metropolitan area which is a major source of school revenue lies largely within the City of Atlanta.

No equitable system of financial support and effort is possible which does not take into account these economic facts. A single tax program for the metropolitan area with the revenues distributed according to educational need is the only available satisfactory answer to the problems of providing adequate support for the schools. This is Atlanta's problem as well as Fulton County's problem because of the highly complex interdependence of the economy of the two districts. A single school district would be the most simple and prudent way to achieve the goal of equity and balance in financial effort and support.

Greater Financial Stability is Possible

The disadvantages of heavy reliance on the property tax for the support of schools are well known. The primary advantage is that revenues from property taxes fluctuate less than do revenues from more sensitive barometers of economic health. Desirable stability in the financial structure of a school system in the final analysis is related to the soundness of the economy of the district and the fairness of its system of taxation. The better balanced the tax program, the more stable the financial base of the schools. The more complete the area served by the school district is as an

economic unit in its own right, the more stable will be the local tax base for schools.

It is obvious that combining the Atlanta and Fulton County districts into a single school system would provide a far sounder economic base for year-to-year stability in school support.

Economies Are Possible

Consolidation cannot be justified solely as an economy measure, if this is defined as an actual reduction in expenditures. Any plan for immediate unification of the Atlanta and Fulton County School Districts would cost more than the sum of the current budgets of the two systems because, assuming that the same quality of education is to be provided in the entire district, costs would need to be equalized upward instead of downward. Nevertheless, some financial economies are possible because of the elimination of duplicate programs and services which can be handled better through a single system. In this connection, special reference is made to experimentation, invention, research, certain district-wide programs and services, specialized curricula for small student groups and others enumerated earlier. These programs could be provided at higher quality levels and at a lower unit cost on a unified basis than would be possible in dual programs.

However, the greatest economic gain to be derived from consolidation would be in the creation of opportunities to purchase more with the educational dollar rather than in the utilization of fewer dollars. This kind of economy is of much greater importance than is the mere saving of money. One good test of a school district is not how little money it spends, but how much education it buys for its expenditures.

New Educational Developments

Can Be Better Accommodated

As shown earlier, the revolution in education which is underway is composed of both problems and opportunities. A large school district is in better position than a small district to stay abreast of such developments because of its more complex and varied interacting elements.

Problems and needs often fall into sharper focus in a large district where the dynamics of change appear to express themselves with greater vigor.

Opportunities for new developments in education to be put into practice prevail to a greater degree in the large district. Many resources not formerly available to improve schools are now being made available. The major source of this new support is the Federal Government through numerous pieces of legislation. It is much easier to take full advantage of the funds thus made available if a single district is created. The complexities of government relations to education are rapidly increasing. It would be more satisfactory to handle these relationships for the Atlanta and Fulton County Schools through a single agency than through two agencies.

Assumptions

The above identification and description of advantages of a single school district are predicated on certain assumptions concerning the proposed new district. Among these assumptions are the following:

1. An adequate legal base for the new district will be provided.
2. An administrative structure which will make possible the necessary leadership for educational advancement in the metropolitan area will be created.

3. An adequate plan for financing the new school district will be adopted.
4. Emphasis on continuously improving educational quality and extending educational services will be continued.

Conclusion

Consolidation as such is of no value. It is valuable only as it results in educational advancement, improved educational opportunities for children, youth and adults; however, it will not guarantee such advancement.

DISADVANTAGES OF A SINGLE DISTRICT

The Commission was as much interested in identifying and analyzing the disadvantages of one school district as it was in identifying and analyzing the advantages. Without the weighing of advantages and disadvantages against each other, no objective way of making a decision was open to the Commission. Major concern was with both real and possible educational disadvantages of a single district rather than with problems and issues which would have to be faced if the two present districts are dissolved and a new one is created in their stead. However, the latter problems and issues are also important and they were studied extensively. They are reviewed in a subsequent section of this report. Possible disadvantages of the larger district are presented next.

Difficulties in Providing School Programs Needed Because of Differences in Attendance Areas

The capacity of schools to make adaptations which take into proper

account the educational needs of their neighborhoods is related to the size of districts. Considerable uniformity of educational programs in the various attendance centers within districts has been traditional. Because of the range of socio-economic conditions which exist in metropolitan areas a greater variety of educational needs is present in metropolitan school districts. Thus, greater variations are required in school programs than are needed in smaller more homogeneous districts. Current efforts to develop more realistic school programs for children in slum areas of cities is an example of the need for different kinds of programs according to community backgrounds. A reasonable degree of control must be vested in the local school community if these variations in educational needs are to be met. Neighborhood control generates local responsibility, interest and initiative which are essential to good schools.

Unhealthy Reliance on Bureaucracy

Where at least some degree of local control is not present, decisions are necessarily removed from the local scene. Instead of the healthy exercise of community responsibility for schools, directives from a central office removed from the community may take the place of local initiative. Thus, bureaucratic controls may grow up which inevitably stress uniformity and discourage the community autonomy which has been one of the major strengths of public education in America. There is evidence to show that the larger the district the greater the likelihood that authority over the neighborhood school will be centralized in administrative offices which are usually too far removed from the local school to be responsive to local interests and needs.

Inadequate Invention and Experimentation

Historically, many very large school districts have been notably lacking in educational invention and experimentation. Some of the major current educational ills of our country are found in the slums of large city districts where until recently little effort has been made to develop school programs which would serve these areas realistically. Innovation is difficult in situations which do not encourage the exercise of individuality. Uniformity and invention are not compatible. Excessive use of rules, regulations and directives inhibit creativity.

Problems unique to large school districts in metropolitan areas have been the subject of much study in recent years. Experiments with new methods and procedures for utilizing the interests and abilities of citizens in neighborhood school centers have been successful. At present, the nature of educational needs of the culturally deprived and the curriculum materials and teaching procedures which are adapted to their backgrounds are subjects of important research and experimentation. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provides more than one billion dollars to improve education programs for socially disadvantaged children. Current trends are pointing to ways of stimulating innovation and experimentation in all school districts.

Poor Communication

The difficulties of maintaining satisfactory channels of communication increase with the size of a school district. The threads which hold a school system together become tenuous as the district grows larger. Greater dependence must be placed on formal and impersonal means of communication in large districts. Opportunities for misunderstanding and conflicting opinions are

greater where personal and informal contacts are missing.

Too Much Centralized Decision Making

The disadvantages of bigness in utilizing democratic participation in reaching decisions stems partly from the lack of an adequate structure for such participation and partly from the slowness of action characteristic of large units of government. The fact that both the soundness of decisions and an adequate understanding of their meanings are enhanced by participation in their making is of great importance in education because of the nature of teaching and learning.

It has been difficult for large school districts to avoid making many decisions in central offices which might be made more satisfactorily in local attendance areas.

Loss of Personal Identity

Many studies have shown that a close relationship exists between the productivity of a person and the degree to which he feels himself to be an integral part of the enterprise which provides his employment. The more he is made to feel that he is but a mere cog in a machine, the more he acts as though this were true. There is no substitute for warm personal relationships in achieving satisfaction and success in one's work. The kind of environment which encourages such relationships is very hard to maintain where large numbers of persons are involved.

Conclusion

The Atlanta and Fulton County school districts, if combined, would be about eleventh in size among all districts in America. In 1964-65, the

total regular day school enrollment in the two districts was 150,218 plus special schools and adult programs. This is about one-sixth the enrollment in New York City which has more than one million pupils and enrolls more pupils than any other district in the Nation. Both the Atlanta and Fulton County districts have reached already the size of school systems which have suffered from the ills described above. Therefore, if the proper safeguards are observed in the creation and establishment of the new district, combining the school districts would scarcely create problems of bigness beyond those which already exist.

Just as creating a single school district would not guarantee the educational advantages discussed in this document, neither would the ills described inevitably follow. Knowing the disadvantages to avoid should be sufficient forewarning to assure the provision of an adequate legal base for the new district, satisfactory administrative leadership and sufficient financial support.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

After carefully balancing against each other the educational advantages and disadvantages of one district in place of the two existing districts, the Commission then defined and examined the steps which would have to be taken in order to create a single school district for Fulton County and the tasks which would have to be completed in the transition. Neither set of undertakings appeared to be faced by insurmountable barriers; hence, the Commission was free to make its decision on strictly educational grounds.

The evidence before the Commission scarcely permitted a recommendation other than the creation of one school district for all of Fulton County.

This is the recommendation. The Atlanta and Fulton County school districts should be dissolved, not merged. An entirely new district should be created. In this way none of the limitations of the present districts need be preserved and the advantages of both can be combined in the new district. Furthermore, desirable features of a school district not currently present in either Atlanta or Fulton County can be incorporated in the new district.

NEXT STEPS

The foregoing presentation outlines some of the steps taken by the Commission in reaching a decision on the question of merger. Having decided that, in its opinion, the educational programs needed by the children, youth and adults of Atlanta and Fulton County can be provided better by a single district, the Commission turned to a study of the actual steps which would be necessary to achieve merger.

The legislation creating the Commission, in addition to directing the Commission "To study the desirability and feasibility of combining . . . " (the Atlanta and Fulton County School Systems), stated that the Commission "may draft a plan or plans for the combining of such school systems."

The decision on whether there will be a single district will be made by the voters of the present districts. Hence, if the members of the General Assembly from Atlanta and Fulton County accept the Commission's recommendation, their next step would be to draw up and submit for passage necessary legislation for holding a referendum on the issue.

Since the voters are entitled to all information that can be provided in order for them to make the best decision, legislation authorizing the referendum should also spell out the essential characteristics of the pro-

posed new district. The Commission recommends that this legislation include the following:

1. A definition of the necessary legal basis for dissolving the present districts and creating the new district.
2. A description of organizational, administrative and tax structures of the new district.
3. Provisions for safeguarding present commitments and obligations of the two existing districts.
4. The date on which the new district would come into being.
5. Provision for setting up the machinery required to make the transition from the two present districts.

Should the majority of votes cast in the referendum in each of the two existing districts favor the single district, the proposed school district would then be created in accordance with the specifications of the legislation. (It is assumed that voters in each district would be required to approve the single district before it can be created.)

The transition from two school districts to one school district is complex and requires careful planning. Problems and issues which will have to be resolved can be foreseen. Their exact nature will depend to some extent on the specific provisions made for dissolving the present district and creating a new district. But the following questions may be anticipated, and satisfactory answers to them are possible at this time.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Since merger of the Atlanta and Fulton County school districts has been discussed from time to time during the past twenty years, opinions

already have been formed on both sides of the issue. It may be assumed, however, that the vast majority of citizens have had no opportunity to become properly informed on the basic facts needed in order to reach a wise decision. Much public discussion of the facts concerning the present districts and the proposed new district is essential to reaching a sound decision. These facts should be made available to all citizens. Many questions will be asked and properly so. Citizens are entitled to the best possible answers to these questions. It is, of course, impossible to foresee just what all of these questions will be, but it is safe to assume the following will be of interest. Answers to these questions are given in light of known facts.

What Would the New District be Like?

The Atlanta district consists of 128.395 square miles of which 8.420 miles lie in DeKalb County. The Fulton County School District includes 420 square miles of territory. Therefore, the two districts, if combined, would make a single district of 548.395 square miles of which 539.975 square miles would be in Fulton County proper.

The proposed district would have had a total population of 632,600 on April 1, 1964, including 126,400 in the present Fulton County district and 506,200 in Atlanta, of whom 43,900 were in DeKalb County. On October 1, 1964, the total school enrollment for the regular day program, including kindergartens, would have been about 142,000 pupils. Professional personnel in the new district would have numbered nearly 5,500 individuals, and other school employees just under 3,000 persons.

There would have been 170 elementary schools, 35 high schools and two night high schools in the district. The schools are now located as

follows: 118 elementary and 24 high schools in Atlanta, 52 elementary and 11 high schools in the Fulton County district.

The school budget for 1965-66 would have been slightly under 61,500,000 dollars, with expenditures equalized by raising Fulton County School District expenditures up to current Atlanta levels, including the provision for kindergartens. The 1965-66 budget for the Atlanta schools is \$46,713,124.92; the Fulton County school budget for the same year is \$13,891,184, making a total of \$60,604,308.92.

The school tax digest for the 1965-66 school year is \$1,448,147,960 at present assessments. This is divided as follows: \$167,691,000 in the Fulton County district and \$1,280,456,960 in the City of Atlanta.

What Will be the Name of the New District?

The Atlanta-Fulton County School District is an appropriate name. Enabling legislation would specify the name of the district.

What Would Happen to the Properties
of the Two Present Districts?

Properties of the two districts would become the property of the new district. These assets belong to the people and are simply held for the people by the present districts. The new district would hold them in the same way, and their value would be unaffected by the transfer. Buildings and equipment would serve the same people they now serve and in the same ways. Children would attend the school they now attend and would be taught by the same teachers.

What Would Happen to Debts of
the Present Districts?

Nothing. Debts of the Atlanta district amount to \$41,894,556, and for the Fulton County district, \$18,100,444. These are bonded debts incurred primarily for the construction and equipment of needed school buildings. Provisions have been made already for retirement of these debts. These provisions would be as binding if there is a single district as they are at present.

What Would Happen to the Teachers, Principals,
and Other Employees of the Present Districts?

All of these individuals would retain their present positions. The only exception would be among administrative personnel on the district-wide level. Some reassignment would be necessary but no one would be assigned to a position of lesser rank than he now holds, with the exception that only one superintendent would be needed.

What Would Happen to Salaries of Employees?

No one would take a cut in salary. In fact, those teachers now in the Fulton County schools would receive a small salary increase since the Atlanta salary schedule is slightly better than the Fulton County schedule. Two salary schedules would be untenable, as would be any reduction in salaries of present employees.

What Would Happen to the Present
Teacher Retirement Systems?

Each of the existing retirement systems would be retained for those

who are now members as each system has provided a binding contract to its members. No teacher could possibly lose in retirement benefits because of a single district. Some way should be found to provide a sound retirement system for the proposed district with each new employee enrolling in this system. Perhaps the present State system could serve this purpose.

What Would Happen to the
Tenure of Teachers?

The proposed new district would not affect earned tenure of teachers in either of the present two school districts. All teachers would carry with them into the new district all of the years of service and all of the benefits of tenure which they have earned.

What Would Happen to Positions Held by
Teachers in the Present Districts?

Nothing. Teachers would continue their work in the same schools, in the same capacity, in the same school communities and with the same colleagues.

Would the Single District Cost Less Money?

No. While various economies could be effected in a single district resulting in some savings for the particular services rendered, the overall cost would be higher than the combined cost of the two present districts because the single system would provide for the entire district those programs and services which are now provided by only one of the districts. For example, the new district would provide kindergartens for all schools as are provided in the present Atlanta district. Provisions for pupil

transportation would have to be uniform throughout the new district. If the Fulton County policy of transporting pupils who live one and one-half miles or more from school or from public transportation which is provided at a student rate were adopted for the new district, no additional cost would be necessary. Adding kindergartens to present Fulton County schools would cost approximately \$400,000 per year. Capital outlay needs would be \$1½ million for the construction of 60 classrooms for kindergartens.

How Would the New School
District be Financed?

One of the major reasons for creating a single district is to provide a more equitable tax base for education. In view of the fact that Fulton County has reached the maximum tax rate for schools under present provisions and Atlanta is approaching fiscal difficulties because of the present tax structure, the new district would be timely in making it possible to work out a more reasonable plan for financing education in both Atlanta and Fulton County. A tax structure which differs from that of either present district should be sought. The goal sought by the new tax program would be to distribute among the people of the entire county the cost of education on a fair basis. A single district would make possible taxing the wealth where it is and applying it to educational need where it exists -- a long-term guide to financing schools.

A major source of school support should be found to take some of the burden from the property tax and to equalize responsibility for support.

Would School Taxes Paid by the Average
Individual Be More or Less
Than at Present?

An answer to this question is not possible without knowing the tax structure of the new district. However, it is safe to assume that the average tax payer will be taxed more fairly in view of one of the main advantages of creating one district. A single tax system for education in the entire country would certainly be fairer than either of the present systems. These systems leave much to be desired. The Fulton County plan in particular is cumbersome and inequitable. Atlanta is now paying part of the educational bill for Fulton County as a result of annexing 72 per cent of the taxable wealth in the Fulton County School District and almost 50 per cent of the students.

Should a tax be levied to broaden the base of support, the tax bill of the property owner could be reduced.

Wouldn't a Single District Be of
Greater Benefit to the Fulton County
District Than to Atlanta?

Perhaps initially as Fulton County's school finance problems currently are more severe than those of Atlanta because of the city annexation program of the last decade. But, that which is Atlanta and that which is Fulton County as defined by existing boundaries is unrealistic. The economic life of the two is so interwoven that existing boundaries simply make no sense at all as taxing units. The two districts are now taxing themselves at relatively the same rate in terms of real effort. Partly because of the

tax structure, Fulton County schools are in trouble fiscally. Atlanta is not far behind in this respect. Hence, both districts stand to gain from a single district if a sound tax structure is created.

Can't a School District Become Too Large?

Probably so. The answer depends upon whether size is permitted to foster unhealthy bureaucracy. Atlanta is already one of the largest school districts in the Nation. The new district would occupy about the same position among large districts that Atlanta now occupies.

Are There Examples of Similar
New Districts?

Yes. One of the latest to be created is the Nashville-Davidson County School District. All units of local government were merged in this instance. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, is another fairly recent example of the same kind of change. Others could be mentioned. No failures of such mergers are known at present.

Is There a Trend in Metropolitan
Government to Larger Units,
Including Larger School Districts?

There are some indications of such a trend, probably because of a growing recognition of the need to streamline metropolitan governments and minimize overlapping and duplication.

No doubt, many additional questions will be asked concerning the proposed new district. Objective answers should be provided insofar as it is

possible to do so. It is hoped that every citizen will familiarize himself with the facts concerning schools in the present districts and the arguments for and against creating a single district.

AFTER THE REFERENDUM?

If the voters approve a single district proposal, the time table defined in the enabling legislation would be set in motion. Much work would have to be done to effect the transition.

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 exist currently in either of the present districts.

Some of the several aspects of this problem are listed below with types of needed action indicated. Additions to this list are likely to be necessary in the event a single district is created.

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 such questions 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.
29. Make a budget for the new school district.

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE CREATION

OF THE COMMISSION

This document begins with a paragraph which states that a revolution

in education is underway because of swiftly moving cultural changes of profound impact on all areas of civilization. During the course of this study several developments occurred which have major bearings on the recommendation for one school district to serve Fulton County. Among these developments are the following:

1. Mounting sentiment for a new Atlanta annexation program. Any such move could only aggravate further the already serious financial problems of the Fulton County schools under the present district organization.
2. A statewide educational study has been completed which strongly recommends fewer, more efficient, school districts for the State. While main emphasis is on districts of sufficient enrollment to provide economically the wide range of educational programs and services needed, the basic concern is with sound districts.
3. The Federal Government has passed an education support bill for elementary and secondary schools. This seems to signal a new and far stronger role of the National Government in education for the future. Other Federal legislation which influences schools supports this conclusion. The impact of this changing role on school district organization is not clear at this time. But present indications point clearly to the importance of strengthening local school districts.
4. The proposed new Constitution for the State of Georgia, if passed, will encourage the consolidation of school districts and will make it easier for consolidation to be achieved.

A P P E N D I X

TABLE I

ESTIMATED TOTAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS IN REGULAR DAY PROGRAMS
IN THE ATLANTA AND FULTON COUNTY DISTRICTS
1965-1970

Years	Atlanta	Fulton County	Total
1965-66	119,204	35,020	154,224
1966-67	122,376	36,210	158,586
1967-68	125,548	37,441	162,989
1968-69	128,721	38,714	167,435
1969-70	131,893	40,030	171,923

TABLE II

ESTIMATED ANNUAL SCHOOL BUDGETS OF THE ATLANTA
AND FULTON COUNTY DISTRICTS
1965-1970

Years	Atlanta	Fulton County	Total
1965-66 *	\$46,713,125	\$13,891,184	\$60,604,309
1966-67	51,104,159	15,002,479	66,106,638
1967-68	55,907,949	16,202,677	72,110,626
1968-69	61,163,297	17,498,891	78,662,188
1969-70	66,912,647	18,898,802	85,811,449

* Actual