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THE APPROPRIATENESS OF SHARING SERVICES
IN FIVE HI-LINE SCHOOLS

by

THELMA GORE ANDERSON

A professional paper submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

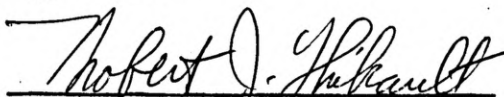
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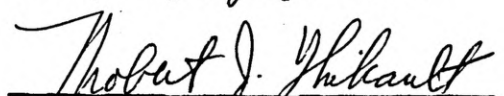
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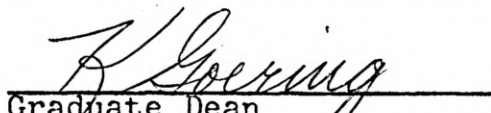
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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine if shared services (the providing of programs and services through the combined efforts of school districts) would be appropriate for five schools located within close proximity to each other on the Hi-Line in north-central Montana (Kremlin, Gildford, Hingham, Rudyard, and Inverness). Demographic data were gathered concerning these schools; discussions were held with administrators and community members regarding programs and services currently being shared, and the attitude of these people as to the practicability of the concept of inter-district cooperation. Literature describing the utilization of shared services in selected areas of the United States and the State of Montana was reviewed.

It was concluded that the sharing of services and programs between and among these five schools would indeed be appropriate, and it was recommended that prompt action be taken to implement an arrangement whereby students from all schools would be transported to Hingham for home economics, to Rudyard for industrial arts, and to Kremlin for secretarial practice. The employing of a school nurse to be located in one of the interior towns and shared by the five districts was recommended, as was the hiring of a full-time secretary for each school. Recommendation was also made that member schools avail themselves of consultant services offered by Northern Montana College through the North Montana Shared Consultant Services, a cooperative enterprise in which four of the five schools under study are participants. Because the study was limited to a modest beginning, only these specific recommendations were made at this time.

Suggestions for the future include an investigation of other programs which could reasonably be shared; an examination of the administrative structure with a view to possible revision; and continued utilization of the consultant services. Acknowledging that consolidation may be imminent, recommendation was made that an extensive effort be made to gain acceptance for this decision from members of the community if such a decision becomes necessary. It was thought that the sharing involved in inter-district cooperation might aid in promoting this acceptance.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

In 1888, James J. Hill, for whom Hill County is named, found a plentiful water supply at Havre [Montana], and forthwith made camp and built his lines west across the prairies toward the coast.

Settlers followed the railroad, and in 1910, when 320-acre sites were allotted to homesteaders, they poured into the region in hordes [Haight & Haight, 1943, p. 43]."

Thus was born the "Hi-Line" of north-central Montana, a series of small towns, situated approximately six miles apart along the right-of-way of Hill's railroad, the Great Northern (now Burlington Northern).

The homesteaders were predominantly family groups eager to establish homes and to become part of a stable community. In each of the burgeoning small towns, at least one church and a school promptly appeared, tributes to the deep respect the settlers had for spiritual and educational significance in the lives of their children.

For a period of approximately seven years the Hi-Line flourished; families with children occupied nearly every 320-acre tract, and schools within walking distance were considered a necessity. 1917 saw the beginning of the "drouth years." No rain fell; no crops grew. Discouraged and disenchanted, many of the homesteaders forfeited their rights to the land and left the area. Only the resolute

remained, anticipating tomorrow and determined that conditions would improve. The result of this exodus was the survival of only the most natural community centers necessary to service the needs of the remaining population--these centers in Hill County west of Havre being Kremlin, Gildford, Hingham, Rudyard, and Inverness.

Since the drouth years of 1917-1920, residents of this area, along with residents of the rest of Montana, have survived the depression of the Thirties, the World War of the Forties, the Korean Police Action of the Fifties, and the Vietnam of the Sixties. Interspersed with these years of international conflict have been economic fluctuations on the domestic front.

Today, this section of Montana is a part of one of the largest wheat-producing areas in the world. Poverty is relatively unknown. Students in the schools are predominantly from farm families. They may live on the family farm and commute to school, or they may live in one of the identified towns, with the father commuting to the farm.

Devotion to education has been steadfast; citizens of these communities have the same respect for the value of education as did the homesteaders. They are aware, however, that advances in technology, increase in the need for knowledge, and employment trends indicate a need for improving

the quality of education for these rural children. This report will concern itself with one approach for providing educational opportunities that is being contemplated by persons residing in five school districts on the Hi-Line--that approach being the sharing of services.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to investigate the feasibility of sharing services and programs among and between five neighboring schools in north-central Montana on the Hi-Line (Kremlin, Gildford, Hingham, Rudyard, and Inverness).

Purpose of the Study

The recognized need to provide quality education for all students is not a problem only for the ghetto; it is not a problem only for Appalachia; it is a problem, too, for students in sparsely-populated rural areas in Montana. Students in these small schools generally participate in a curriculum confined to the traditional courses required of all students. Little provision can be made for satisfying individual student needs and individual student interests. That a selection of elective courses can be provided at all is a tribute to administrative imagination and teacher dedication.

While representatives of the community (the school board) and the administrative staff recognize the value of such courses as industrial arts, home economics, and vocational offerings to prepare the non-college-bound student for the world of work, lack of funding for facilities, equipment, and staff hinders curriculum development to include such courses.

Small enrollment and a limited tax base restrict funds, also, for the service people considered essential to a more urban school, such as reading consultants, curriculum specialists, and guidance counselors. Effective counseling for some purposes can be provided by the teacher, but in the small school it is usually the responsibility of the administrator. Since his is also the final decision on disciplinary matters, recognized principles of counseling are subverted.

Because prospective teachers may prefer a more sophisticated environment, competent staff is not always available. While a teacher may be fully certified in the major area for which she has contracted to teach, her minor area will be a factor in what courses are taught during the period of her contract. Extensive teacher turnover can wreak havoc with elective offerings, or even with required courses, in the curriculum. (Example: The mathematics teacher employed this

year has a minor in French. Should the school offer French I this year? What if she is not satisfactory? What if she is satisfactory but chooses not to return? What if next year's mathematics teacher has a minor in German?)

These and other disadvantages severely limit the educational opportunities for rural students. While there are numerous advantages inherent to the small school situation which will be spoken to in subsequent chapters, an approach which could result in improving the quality of education in these schools should be explored.

This paper deals with the appropriateness of sharing services as a means for strengthening the programs and services available to youth in the identified schools. Quality is measured in terms of how much or how little or a particular program or service is available. It is assumed that youth enrolled in the cited districts could receive instructional benefits through the utilization of shared services among and between these districts. It shall be the purpose of this paper to identify existing programs and services in the cited schools, and to explore the appropriateness of expanding their availability to nearby and neighboring schools through a shared endeavor. Practical recommendations will then be made.

General Questions to be Answered

1. Would shared services be appropriate to small schools on the Hi-Line in north-central Montana?
2. Are there indications that the cited schools would be receptive to shared services?
3. Has the concept of shared services been utilized and proved effective in other areas of Montana and throughout selected areas of the United States?

General Procedure

The writer reports on a recently-attended meeting for administrators and school board members from ten schools, four of which are included in the five schools under study. This meeting was devoted to the topic of sharing services between and among these schools, with Northern Montana College as the prime agency, and each of the ten schools as a cooperating agency. Development of legislation permitting school districts to expend money for shared services is traced through recent literature and the current supplement to Montana School Law. Attention is given to the Articles of Agreement for North Montana Shared Consultant Services developed and adopted at that meeting.

Discussions with administrators and school board members of the cited schools, and a review of data relevant to

these five schools obtained from the Office of the Superintendent of Schools of Hill County provide the factual information necessary to determine whether shared services would indeed be appropriate in the context in which they are being considered.

These data will include:

- A. Enrollment
- B. Personnel
 - 1. Administrative
 - 2. Instructional
 - a. Number
 - b. Certification status
 - c. Major and minor areas of preparation
 - 3. Non-teaching
- C. Curriculum
- D. Facilities
- E. Teacher turn-over
- F. Pupil-teacher ratio
- G. School district census
- H. School district taxable valuation

Discussions with administrators, school board members, and community members of the five schools under study provide information concerning the acceptability of shared services among and between these particular schools.

Existing services between and among the identified schools which can be considered shared are discussed. Literature concerning inter-district cooperation throughout the United States is explored.

Limitations

The study is limited to five schools in Hill County on

the Hi-Line in north-central Montana (Kremlin, Gildford, Hingham, Rudyard, and Inverness). The study is further limited in that it concerns itself with only a modest beginning in the sharing of services. Because innovations may, on paper, sound relatively simple to implement because of the lack of "red tape" in small schools, caution is necessary in order to avoid a too-hasty approach, which could result in confusion and misunderstanding.

Definition of Terms

Shared Services - the providing of a program or service for youth through the combined efforts of one or more school districts.

Curriculum - any and all activities under the guidance and supervision of the school.

Elementary school - Grades 1 through 8.

Secondary school - Grades 9 through 12.

Summary

The Hi-Line of north-central Montana is a series of small towns located a short distance apart which sprang up on the edges of the Great Northern Railway as it moved across Montana to the West Coast. These small towns were the community centers for settlers who acquired property under the Homestead Act. Residents of each small town and the sur-

rounding area established a school to meet the needs of their children. Over the years, these schools have advanced educationally; however, members of the community are aware that because of the sparse population and the resulting inadequacy of funds, educational opportunities for the children must be improved.

One approach for the providing of quality education for these rural children is presently being considered. That approach is the sharing of programs and services among and between five neighboring schools in Hill County. This study would investigate the feasibility of this approach, limited to the five schools, and further limited to a modest beginning.

Deterrents to quality education in the existing structure are: limited curriculum; lack of service people, such as reading consultants, curriculum specialists, and guidance counselors; lack of competent staff; teacher-turnover; and the basis for nearly all the disadvantages, lack of funds. Recognizing that there are advantages, too, in this type of structure, an approach which could result in improving the quality of education should be explored.

This exploration includes a report on a workshop meeting devoted to shared services for four of the cited towns and other towns in north-central Montana, attended by ad-

ministrators and school board members. Data obtained from discussions with administrators and school board members of the identified districts, and data relative to those districts secured from the Office of the Superintendent of Schools of Hill County provide factual information for determining the appropriateness of sharing services in these schools.

Acceptability of this concept among people concerned in the identified schools is explored, and existing shared services are discussed. A review of the literature concerning inter-district cooperation throughout the United States is included.

On that basis, an attempt is made to determine if the sharing of services between and among the cited schools would be appropriate.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Critical attention is being focused on the concept of inter-district cooperation among small, rural schools as a means for improving educational opportunities for students in these schools. A rural school is considered to be one which is located in open country or in a village with a population of less than 2500. More than one-third of the people in the United States are directly concerned with this type of school (National Education Association, 1961). Almost by definition, a rural school is a small school, a small school being identified as one enrolling 200 students or less (Carleton, 1966; Oliver, 1966).

There has been much discussion concerning the disadvantages of limited enrollment. Oliver (1966) dislikes the word "disadvantages," and would prefer to use the word "difficulties." As he sees them, among these difficulties are limited staff, facilities, community resources, finances, and educational leadership.

Cawelti (1966) is concerned with the accreditation troubles of small schools and describes criteria violations among schools enrolling fewer than 200 students: no organized guidance program, unqualified teachers, unqualified administrators, inadequately-trained librarians, lack of

comprehensive offerings, inadequate buildings or facilities, inadequate library, no preparation period for teachers, and lack of clerical help. He also questions the wisdom of no electives for the non-college-bound.

Conant (1959) is the most vociferous critic of small schools encountered in the literature. He deplores the limited curriculum and asserts that we are wasting the most valuable property we have--our youth, suggesting that immediate steps be taken to effect reorganization for a more productive education for these children.

As a result of a study made in Oregon (Ford, Hite & Koch, 1967), the following conclusion was drawn:

The educational advantages found in the remote high schools studied are presently outweighed by disadvantages. The disadvantages arise from outdated and inadequate curricula and methodology and from activities and facilities which are too limited [p. 35].

The small school also has its advocates. Oliver (1966), who considers the disadvantages as difficulties, maintains that few teachers mean few pupils, and the opportunity for individualizing is excellent. He also finds the amount of community cooperation and flexibility of the small school organization to be distinct assets.

Increased cooperation of a teacher with other teachers and a more diversified background due to fulfilling a varied role in a small school also are advantages to be considered,

this necessary participation enabling the teacher to become closer to the students and to see them from a new perspective (Gallant & Zimmer, 1966).

A definitive list of genuine advantages inherent to the small school, according to the National Education Association Department of Rural Education (1957) is:

smaller class size, many opportunities for teachers and administrators to know children and their families well, a close identification of all the people in the community to the school, ease of communication, a high degree of informality in relationships, and an almost unlimited potential for flexibility in operation [p. iii].

Despite the discussion concerning the advantages and disadvantages, 15 million children are currently being educated in small, rural schools (Bohrson & Stutz, 1966). It would seem reasonable then to build upon the recognized strengths through an approach which has been utilized in sections of the United States and has recently had its inception in the State of Montana, this approach being inter-district cooperation, or "shared services."

Impetus was given to the idea of cooperation among districts by Congress' interpretation of certain phrases of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Under Title VI--General Provisions--which included a definition of terms, the term "local education agency" was defined as it had been defined earlier in the National Defense Education Act.

This definition was as follows:

A local education agency is a board of education or other legally constituted local school authority having administrative control and direction of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school, district, or political institution having administrative control and direction of a public elementary or secondary school [Isenberg, 1968, p. 246].

As stated, this same definition had been used in the National Defense Education Act, and "local education agency" had been interpreted to mean the local school district. This interpretation resulted in any sort of cooperative venture between districts being declared ineligible for funds, since actual control still rested with each local district. After deliberation, the Senate Sub-Committee decided that regional agencies would be eligible, and the definition of "local education agency" was rewritten:

a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control and direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary and secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or such combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary and secondary schools. Such term also includes any other public institution or agency having administrative control and direction of a public elementary or secondary school [Isenberg, 1968, p. 248].

As a result of the new interpretation, districts in states throughout the nation banded together to pursue a common goal of strengthening their education programs with

the aid of federal funds. Of the 750 proposals under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act submitted the first year, 217 were approved. 105 of these approved proposals were from multidistrict projects (Isenberg, 1968).

Along with submitting proposals for federal funds, districts have also budgeted for the sharing of services. The Texas Small Schools Project is a cooperative between the Texas Small School Association and the Texas Education Agency, financed by participating schools. The Texas Education Agency provides the services of the project director and three staff members. This project was begun in 1961 with 18 pilot schools; participating schools in 1965 numbered 112. The schools are grouped according to locality for convenience in working together. Areas in which they have cooperated include: in-service training, mutual problems of teachers and administrators, curriculum guides, and the employing of consultants and personnel from other schools and colleges. Representatives of member schools have participated in the demonstration and evaluation of new instructional materials, and have attended summer workshops at the University of Texas.

Many innovations have been made possible in the schools through the in-service training periods and consultant services. The innovations include flexible schedules; an enriched curriculum through multiple classes; programmed

instruction; and correspondence courses. The schools have also implemented creative elementary instruction, using high school students to give science demonstrations and to help in physical education classes. Team learning, whereby students with comparable skills study together and help each other, is used. Another innovation is a seminar for gifted students, based on purposeful critical thinking, inquiry and discussion. This effort is a combined one between the project schools, cooperative colleges, and the Texas Education Agency (Bitters, 1966).

The Upper Midwest Small Schools Project includes as members twelve North Dakota schools and one Montana school. Fees are 25¢ per pupil for a minimum of \$75 and a maximum of \$175 per school. This small schools project is governed by a five-member board, including the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Dean of the College of Education of the University of North Dakota, and three members on a rotating basis from the participating schools. These schools are concerned with a limited curriculum, inadequate materials and equipment, and the fact that school administrators are often full-time teachers. Through their group and regional meetings and a newsletter, a variety of novel approaches is being used, including multiple classes, use of the amplified telephone, flexible scheduling, in-service education, audio-

visual aids, and programmed instruction (Sturges, 1966).

In Nebraska in 1965 there were 2546 school districts, with only 163 of these districts enrolling more than 300 children. Among other problems, educators were concerned with no provision being made for exceptional children, no supervisory service, inadequate libraries, incomplete guidance, non-existent health services, and no adult education. A bill was recently passed that allowed Nebraska to divide its wide expanse of territory into 19 service areas, each unit governed by a board elected by the people. The purpose of this division into larger service areas was to provide specialized education services (guidance, health, etc.), to share services between local districts, and to have the ability to contract for educational services with any state or federal agency which could provide such services (Schroeder, 1967).

The Western Small Schools Project, covering a five-state western area, the Catskill Area Project in Small School Design in New York, the Rocky Mountain Area Project for Small High Schools in Colorado--all follow the pattern of being concerned with alleviating some of the disadvantages of the small school by a shared endeavor (Bohrson & Stutz, 1966). Areas of concern of all cooperative programs examined were limitations in curriculum, guidance, libraries, health

services, qualifications of teachers and administrators, and facilities and equipment.

Heesacker and Jongeward (1969b) in their study identified some of the shared services currently in progress throughout the United States. They found they could group these functions into three broad classifications: (1) Services focused on the needs of pupils; (2) services to help teachers meet the needs of pupils; and (3) services to facilitate the educational program. Their investigation showed that services focused on the needs of pupils were being provided in the areas of attendance; guidance and counseling; health services and special education; media, materials and libraries (including amplified telephone, mobile classrooms, and computer-assisted instruction); and special teachers (including remedial teachers, pre-school services, fine arts programs, and vocational education teachers).

Services which help the teachers meet the needs of pupils were found to include consultant services, in-service training programs, professional libraries, curricular services and instructional materials. Services to facilitate the education program are being shared in the realm of personnel recruitment, cooperative purchasing, research, organizational planning, developing channels to

provide additional programs, and ancillary services.

Heesacker and Jongeward (1969b) suggest "the fact that some rural districts are now providing a wide variety of programs to their youth can be interpreted as evidence that, given proper leadership, others can also [p.16]."

Montana, too, is currently exploring the advantages of the sharing of services, and advisedly, since the median-size high school in Montana in 1965 enrolled 116 students (Carleton, 1966). In February of 1969, State Representative Francis Bardanouve of Harlem sought the help of Dr. Frank Heesacker of Northern Montana College in formulating a bill authorizing cooperative purchasing between school districts. Bardanouve and Heesacker, with the assistance of Dr. George Bandy of Northern Montana College, Mr. Phil Ward of the State Department of Public Instruction, and several men from rural shared services areas drafted House Bill 448, which passed with a large majority and resulted in Section 75-3738, School Laws of Montana, 1969 Cumulative Pocket Supplement. School districts could now legally expend funds in a cooperative enterprise.

Six districts in Ravalli County propose the transportation of students between vocational-agriculture facilities in Hamilton and an industrial arts complex in Corvallis. These districts are currently investigating the possibilities of

consultant help and computer services. They already have adult basic education classes at three locations, with proposals submitted for a vocational guidance and vocational education coordinator, speech therapist, educational development center, and central purchasing.

School districts in Glasgow, Opheim, Nashua, Scobey, Poplar, and Wolf Point have applied for money for consultant help. (They have already budgeted locally for this item, however.) Utilizing rural shared services, they are exploring flexible and modular scheduling, curriculum development, and instructional systems. Increased traveling by teachers between schools, and provisions for a van to transport materials and equipment are being considered by the school districts of Broadview, Ryegate, Rapelje, and Lavina (Heesacker and Jongeward, 1969a).

The most recent development in shared services is the formation by ten north-central Montana school districts of the North Montana Shared Consultant Services. The stated purpose of this group is to "improve education in the co-operating schools through a program of shared study and consultant services among the participating schools and Northern Montana College [Articles of Agreement, 1970]." Member schools are Chester, Box Elder, Havre, Gildford, Hingham, Big Sandy, Dodson, Chinook, Rudyard, Kremlin, and

Northern Montana College. The Board of Directors of the organization consists of the chief administrative officer and one board member from each participating school. The Executive Board includes one member from a Class A school, one from Class B, one from Class C, one director at large, and one director from Northern Montana College--the Dean of Education or his appointee. The project coordinator is Dr. Frank Heesacker, who "knows more about rural shared services than any man alive [Bandy, 1970]."

Types of possible consultant services that will be provided are: teacher in-service training, remedial services, school program evaluation, public information, psychological services, counseling services, federal programs coordination, cooperative purchasing, curriculum development, textbook selection, and research. This organization has particular relevance to the problem being considered, since four of the five schools under study are members of the group.

A review of the literature related to the appropriateness of shared services indicates that "small schools can be good schools Through working together, good schools can become better schools [Heesacker & Jongeward, 1969b, p. 123]." The practicability of utilizing this approach in five Hi-Line schools is explored in the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

General Procedures

A review of the literature and discussions with persons intimately involved with inter-district cooperation have indicated that there may be implications for strengthening programs and services in all small schools by the application of this principle. Therefore, data has been gathered concerning the five cited schools to determine if a rudimentary pattern of cooperation can be formulated to enhance the educational opportunities for students in these schools.

The five schools under study are located on United States Highway Number 2, a paved highway maintained with particular care by the Montana State Highway Department, since it is the only link in the federal highway system through northern Montana. These five towns lie directly west of Havre, the seat of government of Hill County. For comparative purposes, the distances between these towns are as follows: Havre to Kremlin, 19 miles; Kremlin to Gildford, 10 miles; Gildford to Hingham, 6 miles; Hingham to Rudyard, 6 miles; and Rudyard to Inverness, 6 miles. The total distance between Kremlin at one extreme of the continuum and Inverness at the other extreme is 28 miles, a modest distance in light of today's transportation methods and highway system. Each of the

schools enrolls students in grades 1 through 12, enrollment ranging from 86 at the smallest school to 187 at the largest.

In the sharing of programs, emphasis is given to developing the concept insofar as high school students are concerned; the sharing of services includes benefits which could also be derived by students in the elementary sections of the schools.

Demographic data pertaining to each school was obtained from the records on file in the office of the Superintendent of Schools of Hill County. Elementary and high school enrollment figures for each town are reported, and the administrative structure is examined with a view to determining whether a variation in the basic pattern would be appropriate.

The instructional staffs are quantified, with attention being given to the certification status and major and minor areas of preparation of each teacher in each high school under study. This information is used to decide if the sharing of programs would be practicable so far as the qualifications of instructional staff would apply, whether the sharing would allow for curriculum expansion, and also as an aid in the search for exemplary programs which may not previously have been considered possible.

Data concerning the availability of service personnel such as guidance counselors and school nurses were collected

and reviewed to ascertain if an alliance of school districts would be better able to provide these essential services to students in the identified schools. Article 4 of the "Charter of Education for Rural Children" (National Education Association, 1957) charges the schools as follows:

Every rural child has the right through his school to health services, educational and vocational guidance, library facilities, recreational activities, and when needed, school lunches and public transportation facilities at public expense. Such special services, because they require the employment of specially qualified personnel, can be supplied most easily through enlarged units of school administration and the cooperation of several small schools [p. 36].

General practices observed in schools without this professional help would indicate that the premise of equal opportunity to this right for all children is a fallacy. In a small school, when a child suffers an injury or becomes ill, usually the superintendent or the coach or a teacher with one academic credit in first aid is summoned, and all school personnel attend with apprehension until the parent arrives. If contact cannot be made with the parent, as sometimes inadvertently happens, the crisis is compounded. A county health nurse, no matter how dedicated, does not occupy an "on-call" position for emergencies in counties which cover as much territory as do the ones in Montana. An investigation of the possibility of a more convenient

source for health services would seem worthy of attention.

With reference to guidance services, it is recognized that because of the close contact of the teacher with the student in a small school, the teacher is in an enviable position so far as the knowledge of the individual student is concerned (Oliver, 1966). Realistically, however well the teacher knows the student, guidance is not the teacher's specialty and should more profitably be left to the professional. In a small school, the administrator is often required to assume the role of the guidance counselor. Since the role of the guidance counselor and the role of the administrator are almost mutually exclusive, very little benefit is observable. Educational guidance should be available to all students, and vocational guidance is essential, especially for the employment-bound. This is particularly true for the students in rural schools who have not had occasion to perceive at first hand the world of work outside their limited sphere.

Because the rate of teacher-turnover is a serious consideration so far as state accreditation is concerned, a critical look is taken at the rate of attrition of teachers at each school. It cannot be assumed that cooperation between schools would affect this turnover rate; however, it is possible that increased teacher involvement in this new

approach would serve as a motivating factor in a teacher's renewing of a contract.

The proportion of teachers to students is investigated, since this balance or imbalance would reflect on the advisability of utilizing the shared concept. Overloading a particular teacher who is qualified in a specific area would serve no discernible purpose. Data was gathered pertaining to the non-certified personnel in each school, such as bus drivers, teachers' aides, clerical staff, food service personnel, and custodians.

Since transportation may be a critical factor in the moving of students from one school to another, the availability of buses and their drivers is considered. "The school bus is thus becoming an extension of the classroom It is just as logical to use the school bus to facilitate the learning experiences of pupils as to use a library or a laboratory [Morphet, et al, 1967, p. 482]."

Teachers' aides, the para-professionals, can contribute extensively to relieve the teacher from time-consuming tasks and details which have little to do with the teacher's responsibility in the education of children. So, too, can a secretary and her clerical staff deliver the administrator from the burden of a multitudinous array of paper work, leaving him free to engage in his primary duties in improving class-

room instruction and building and improving the curriculum. (It should be noted that in the small school in Montana, the superintendent of the school acts as both the secondary principal and the elementary principal.)

Since it was conceivable that duties of food service and custodial people would be increased or decreased by the implementation of shared services and programs, their availability was explored. In addition to information concerning the personnel at each school, existing facilities were considered, in order to discover whether the physical environment of the school would contribute to the capability of a particular school to provide for a specific program on a collaborative basis.

School district census figures are examined, with a view to determining if there are visible trends in school-age population which indicate the advantage of establishing certain programs or services in one school rather than in another. While no attempt is made to form conclusions concerning the financial and budgetary aspects of a shared endeavor, taxable valuations of the districts under study were obtained, which used together with enrollment in the several districts, and applied to the state foundation program formula, provide a general over-all financial picture for reference purposes. State accreditation standards for high schools

and elementary schools are compared with facts obtained concerning each school under study.

With the understanding that some services among these schools are currently being operated in a manner that can be considered shared, an exploration is made into the success of these services and their acceptability by the districts involved. The receptiveness of school board members and administrators to the cooperative enterprise as evidenced by their participation in the organization of the North Montana Shared Consultant Services is discussed.

Upon consideration of data obtained and impressions gathered, a realistic determination is made as to whether or not inter-district cooperation between these five schools is, in fact, appropriate, and if so, what constitutes a reasonable beginning.

CHAPTER IV

Current Status of the Schools Under Study

Can the educational program of five schools, located within close proximity to each other on a well-paved, well-maintained, and well-traveled highway in north-central Montana be improved?

These schools are small schools as can be seen by the enrollment figures in Table 1.*

TABLE 1
Enrollment Figures

	Kremlin	Gildford	Hingham	Rudyard	Inverness
Elementary	53	52	101	135	82
Secondary	33	39	40	52	39

While the state makes no requirement for accreditation purposes concerning elementary school enrollment, standards for four-year high schools require a total enrollment of 25 students. It is evident that these five schools conform to the standards; it is also evident that the removal from

* All demographic data was obtained from each district's School District Fall Report, 1969, as submitted to the State Department of Public Instruction and the Office of the Superintendent of Schools of Hill County.

any district of two or three families could alter the situation with dispatch. This fact is never far from the minds of those responsible for the educational program. They are aware that the difference between a "good" school and a non-accredited school can hinge on factors completely unrelated to the school itself. These administrators do not allow themselves the luxury, however, of fretting about what might happen; they are concerned with providing the optimum educational benefits for the students enrolled, since

(a) there are at present and there will always be a need for a large number of small schools; (b) the educational program of every small school can be greatly improved; and (c) the extent to which needed improvements are actually realized will depend in large measure upon the vision and leadership exercised by those whose job is the administration of these small schools [National Education Association, 1957, p. iii].

It would seem to be time, then, for "vision and leadership," and it is here that each administrator, with the support of his school board, can make a substantial contribution.

As reported earlier in the study, the administrator of each school is the superintendent, who serves also in the capacity of elementary principal and secondary principal. It might also be added that he serves frequently as guidance counselor, school nurse, and custodian's helper. Only one of the schools under study (Kremlin) reports the employment of a full-time secretary. It is obvious, then, that at

least in some of the schools, administrative duties include considerable paper work and attention to clerical details. Discussions with administrators indicate that these required functions consume time which could more profitably be spent in instructional leadership and curriculum study leading to possible revisions and rational innovations.

Because the sharing of programs in this study will be confined to the high schools, as mentioned in Chapter III, data concerning only high school teachers' qualifications will be reported. Some of the high school teachers are listed as "shared-time" teachers, since they have the responsibility for students in grades seven and eight. For the purpose of this study, the shared-time teachers will be considered full-time teachers, since they do teach on a full-time basis in grades 7-12. The number of teachers at each school were reported as follows:

TABLE 2
Number of Teachers

	Kremlin	Gildford	Hingham	Rudyard	Inverness
Full-time	5	6	3	8	3
Part-time	0	0	5	2	4

State accreditation requirements are that all teachers must have valid Montana teaching certificates, and that high schools must employ at least three full-time teachers, or the equivalent, in addition to the administrator. Except for three teachers, all of the teachers listed in Table 2 possess Class II certificates; the three exceptions have Class V certificates. The traditional offerings are represented at each of the schools: English, mathematics, social studies, science, and physical education. Business education, too, is offered at each school. Two of the schools (Rudyard and Kremlin) have qualified personnel in a foreign language. At only one (Rudyard) is there a certified teacher in industrial arts; at that school, too, home economics is a part of the program.

Besides business education, home economics, and industrial arts, the only program which could be considered vocational is an auto mechanics program at Inverness, in which classroom instruction is given at the school, with practical experience being provided by a local automotive shop.

The Great Falls Tribune of July 28, 1970, announces recent additions to the curriculum at Hingham High School for the 1970-71 academic year. These new additions to the traditional offerings include home economics, instrumental music, psychology, economics, Pacific Northwest, business

mathematics, trigonometry, anatomy, and anthropology.

Kremlin High School is adopting the elective English curriculum to begin with the opening of the 1970-71 school year. Rather than the customary Freshman English, Sophomore English, etc., students may elect on a semester basis courses in the English curriculum. Examples of these courses to be offered the first year are the Modern Novel, Folk-lore and Mythology, Drama, Creative Writing, Writing for Publication, Poetry and the Short Story, Basic Speech, Advanced Speech, and Basic Composition. The subjects are offered on a non-graded basis, any students grades 9 through 12 being permitted to enroll in any subject. If the class advisor and the English teachers think the subject might be a bit sophisticated for the student's ability and maturity, they may discourage him, but he will not be denied enrollment if he desires to pursue that particular elective. Each student must enroll in one of the courses each semester; thus when he completes his high-school program, he will have had the four years of English required for graduation. The only specific course requirements for each student are one semester of Basic Composition and one semester of Basic Speech. Plans are to adopt some new courses each year to provide the students with a wide range of electives.

Individual study projects will also be implemented at

Kremlin in the autumn of 1970, with a variety of offerings being made available, including anthropology, entymology, music theory, advanced shorthand, leathercraft and a host of others, depending upon student interest and teacher availability. Federal funding for courses in microbiology (National Science Foundation) and secretarial practice (Vocational Act of 1963) has also been requested.

Because of the time factor, recent curriculum additions and innovations for the remaining schools for the ensuing academic year were not available to the writer. However, it is evident from the new programs at Hingham and Kremlin that "vision and leadership" are indeed being employed.

All schools conform to the standards for course requirements for graduation as established by the State Department of Public Instruction--a total of 16 credits including four units of English, one unit of American history, one-half unit of American government, two units of mathematics, one unit of science, and one unit of physical education and health.

In view of the current emphasis on individualized instruction, the pupil-teacher ratio at the five schools as reported in Table 3 would indicate that there exists a prime opportunity for employing this principle. State accreditation standards require that the pupil-teacher ratio be no more than 25 to 1.

TABLE 3
Pupil-Teacher Ratio

Kremlin	Gildford	Hingham	Rudyard	Inverness
7-1	6-1	8-1	7-1	6-1

Collected data indicate teachers' aides at two of the schools--one serving part time at Inverness, and two part-time aides being employed at Kremlin. The aides in Kremlin work only in the elementary section of the school. The low pupil-teacher ratio undoubtedly accounts for the lack of interest in using aides in the high schools.

Not only to comply with accreditation standards, but to provide stability in the education program, teacher-turnover must be a matter of concern. Accreditation standards state that teacher-turnover should not exceed 50 percent in schools with ten or fewer teachers. All cited schools approximate this number in their fall reports of 1969.

None of the schools reports the employment of a school nurse, depending upon the county school nurse for periodic testing on an irregular schedule among all schools in the county. (No criticism is implied here; the multiplicity of

demands on the time of the county school nurse is apparent.)

All schools except Kremlin report compliance with the requirements for a guidance counselor (a certified teacher with 15 quarter-hours in guidance work), and all schools report adequate libraries. It is indicated that school plants and facilities observe the standards which state that

the school plant and facilities must be adequate for the number of pupils enrolled and curricula offered, and must be so constructed and equipped as to safeguard health and protect pupils and staff against fire and other hazards [Standards for Accreditation of Montana High Schools, 1967, p. 11].

Maintenance at the schools is furnished by custodians at each school, with Inverness reporting the employment of two custodians; Kremlin, one custodian and one custodian's helper; and each of the other schools listing one person functioning in this capacity.

School buses are available at each school with the following number of drivers reported as being currently employed: Rudyard, one, full-time; Inverness, two, part-time; Hingham, one, part-time; and Kremlin and Gildford, none. In the schools with no regularly-employed bus drivers, faculty members or members of the community with chauffeur's licenses are utilized for athletic events, speech trips, and other extra-class activities. In those schools, transportation is not provided for students to and

from school.

School census figures for the five-year period 1965-1969 indicate a gradual decline in four of the five districts, with a decline at Inverness being shown for the past three years. (See Table 4.)

TABLE 4
School Census Figures - 1965-1969

Year	Kremlin	Gildford	Hingham	Rudyard	Inverness
1965	107	121	152	242	122
1966	111	118	156	257	128
1967	113	121	156	234	139
1968	103	117	150	229	132
1969	100	111	149	209	132

These figures imply that the Hi-Line area direction is consistent with the national trend of rural to urban movement.

As stated in Chapter III, no attempt was made in this study to formulate conclusions or make recommendations concerning the financial advantages or disadvantages of shared services; however, a report of some financial characteristics of each school district can provide a reference for reflection. (See Table 5.)

TABLE 5

Financial Characteristics of the Five School Districts

Name of School	ANB		Max. Permissive Budget		Taxable Valuation
	Elem.	Sec.	Elem.	Sec.	
Kremlin	53	33	30,477.12	46,145.55	872,236.00
Gildford	52	39	29,924.44	52,252.15	962,027.00
Hingham	101	40	55,954.00	53,204.00	990,222.00
Rudyard	135	52	72,449.10	64,883.00	1,195,166.00
Inverness	82	39	46,130.74	52,252.15	957,279.00

Kremlin - District Number 19 Hingham - District Number 24

Gildford - District Number 20 Rudyard - District Number 26

Inverness - District Number 28

The information on Table 5 is provided for reference only, from taxable valuations and Average Number Belonging figures provided by the Office of the Superintendent of Schools of Hill County (1969), with further computations being made by the writer.

Concluding the presentation of data obtained, attention should be given to cooperation that is currently being experienced between and among the cited schools. Seven schools in this area constitute the Hi-Line Unit of the Montana Education Association. The schools are Kremlin, Gildford, Hingham, Rudyard, Inverness, Joplin, and Box Elder. Administrators from these schools meet together as the Hi-Line Administrators Association, and coaches from the schools have their cooperative organization. The year of 1970 saw three of the schools involved in cooperative purchasing of supplies. The Mobile Vocational Guidance Project, serving schools in six counties and funded under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, has made periodic stops at each of the schools. Students visit the unit in small groups and receive vocational guidance through the use of a number of audio-visual aids and conferences with the counselor.

Cooperation of member schools with Northern Montana College in the North Montana Shared Consultant Services has been

previously discussed. With the possible exception of the Hi-Line Unit of the Montana Education Association, all of these shared endeavors have been received with enthusiasm and participated in with vigor, indicating that the concept of shared services is workable if it is appropriate.

Conclusions and recommendations concerning this appropriateness are reviewed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Fleeting references have been made through this report regarding the intrinsic advantages of the small school. A careful scrutiny of these advantages is now proper. The term "involvement" has recently received fresh emphasis in modern society. To be involved and to participate actively in one's own sphere gives one the strength, the integrity, and the "wholeness" to become an active, committed participant in the world beyond that sphere. Nowhere is there more freedom and opportunity for this participation than in the small school. A junior in high school has a sincere conversation with a third-grader; a sophomore and a fifth-grader share experiences and their lunches with mutual enjoyment. Audio-visual equipment becomes as available and familiar to each student as does a chalk-board eraser to a student in a large school where audio-visual tasks are delegated to a select few.

Consider one of the small schools under study (Kremlin), where 32 of the 33 high school students are working members of the newspaper staff. No sympathy is asked for the 33rd student. His choice is to "come in and stand around and get in the way." Since he is a husky, good-natured boy, he is immediately pressed into service for trips to and from

the supply room. Three junior high school boys whose interest in English is less than profound beseech the advisor to the school newspaper to be appointed sports reporters, since all high-school boys are too involved in sports to fulfill that responsibility. Writing for a purpose on a subject in which they have knowledge and interest provides motivation previously absent in the area of English usage.

As mentioned before, any high-school boy who is interested is involved in sports. The adage is, "All you have to do to make the basketball team is show up and be warm." Perhaps the quality of basketball is not as high as in larger schools (and some would argue this), but every boy is involved--not only a chosen few. Intramural organizations in larger schools attempt to remedy this deficiency, but the magic of being "on the varsity" is lost for most students.

With a small amount of foresight, the drama coach can arrange so that dramatic activities can be enjoyed by any stage-struck student. Particular attention is given to the number of students desiring roles in plays, and plays are chosen with the number of characters as one of the criteria for selection, so that there is a part for everyone who wants one. Teachers work closely with other teachers, the students, the parents, and the entire community. A friendly

relationship is possible, along with the professional relationship. Knowing the experiential background of each student provides one more way for directing the right learning opportunities to the right student.

Flexibility in the small school must be considered one of its most important advantages. Because of the small number of students, schedules can be arranged to provide the maximum educational benefit. Ease of communication within the system assures that a change in daily procedure can be implemented without abrasiveness. Communication with those external to the system can be conveniently arranged. None of the parents is only an anonymous signature on a report card. He is the next-door neighbor, the postmaster, or the auto mechanic. The teacher sees him often outside the school environment; communication, then, is fluid within the school environment. The student does not consider the teacher to be a person who appears at eight a.m., disappears at four p.m., and is completely disembodied during the interim. In small towns, the teacher is sometimes the bus driver, sometimes a confidant, and quite often a second-baseman. Finally, he is a person, and as such, is absolved from contriving methods for achieving the much-sought "rapport" with the student.

Upon considering some of the advantages in a small-school situation and being aware of the short-comings, it

would seem that the sensible solution would be to capitalize on the assets and to begin to formulate a plan to minimize or eliminate the short-comings. This report is concerned with whether the sharing of programs and services could be used to accomplish these objectives.

The most glaring deficiency noted is the lack of curriculum choice for the student, particularly in the realm of vocational education. It is recommended that as a beginning in remedying this weakness, a sharing of programs currently being offered in at least one school be implemented promptly. Criteria contributing to the practicability of this recommendation include the following established facts: distances between the five schools are minimal; transportation facilities are adequate; the highway is well-paved and properly maintained; and schedules are flexible.

It is therefore recommended that interested students from any of the identified schools be transported to Hingham for home economics, to Rudyard for industrial arts, and to Kremlin for secretarial practice. It is further recommended that schedules of all school be synchronized in order that optimum advantage may be taken of transportation. For example: One bus might take students from Kremlin, Gildford, and Hingham to Rudyard for industrial arts, returning

with students from Rudyard, Hingham, Gildford, and Inverness to Kremlin for secretarial practice, since the same students would seldom be interested in both programs. The return trip could be made by the same method. Alternate scheduling could be arranged for the home economics classes. The maximum distance any student would travel would be the 28 miles required for a student from Inverness who wished to participate in the secretarial practice course at Kremlin, which lies at the opposite end of the continuum. The minimum distance would be six miles.

Discussions between the administrators at each school and the assigned teachers in the specific programs would determine the time segment necessary to provide the desired education benefit from the programs. In view of the stated enrollment at each school, it is not reasonable to assume that the pupil-teacher ratio in any one class would exceed the state standard of 25-1. Food service facilities and personnel at each of the three schools are adequate for the extra students; however, it would seem more practical and convenient to avoid becoming involved with the practice of sharing meals, for reasons of wasted time and increased paper work. If students are to be transported between schools for a two-hour time block, it should be arranged so that part of this valuable time is not spent at meals. The confusion

of keeping accounts of what students are eating meals at which school on a certain day would also be eliminated.

Anticipated results are not limited to augmented learning experiences, but would include social interaction among students and teachers of all schools. Depending upon the success of sharing of these programs, it is recommended that further investigation be made into other programs which might be shared, particular individual studies. Teachers in each of the schools have interests and knowledge in a plethora of fields; so, too, do community members, who have a great deal to offer and are usually pleased to be used as resource people.

A recommendation for the sharing of services would be the employing of a registered nurse to be situated in one of the three interior towns on the continuum, preferably Hingham, since it is centrally located, and the nurse would be no more than 15 minutes away from any school. Besides being available for emergencies, the school nurse could insure early detection of visual and auditory problems, which contribute so extensively to learning difficulties, and other physical maladjustments which hamper the educational growth of the child. Heesacker and Jongeward (1969b) suggest that she could also be used in health classes, home visitations, the identification of diseases, and the planning of balanced meals for the food service.

Advantage should be taken by the schools of their membership in North Montana Shared Consultant Services by availing themselves of the psychological, remedial, and counseling services offered--thereby supplementing the school nurse's responsibility for problems of a physical nature only. Many educational learning problems are related to difficulties not of a physical nature; a source of consultant help for children whose learning is being stifled by educational, personal, and social problems would be of utmost benefit to the student and to the school. In-service training programs for teachers should also be utilized through the consultant services, as well as assistance with curriculum revision.

From data reported, it does not appear that the employment of qualified teachers is an insurmountable problem for the five cited schools; with the recent increase in the number of teachers available in the northwestern section of the United States, it is not anticipated that this problem will become acute.

A recommendation which is not related to a shared enterprise, but which is evident from data reported, is that a full-time secretary should be employed by each school to liberate the administrator from the confines of his office. The administrator in the small school is involved in nearly every operation of the school. He should be freed from the

paper work, since his primary function is "to serve as the vehicle or implementing machinery for putting what is known about desirable educational experiences into practice [National Education Association, 1957, p. 32]."

Firm recommendations, then, include the sharing of industrial arts, home economics, and secretarial practice, currently offered at Rudyard, Hingham, and Kremlin respectively, among and between the five schools. Also recommended is the employing of a school nurse to meet the health service needs of the five schools. The employment of a full-time secretary for each school, while not related to a cooperative endeavor, is emphasized. Continued use should be made of North Montana Shared Consultant Services at Northern Montana College. These recommendations will constitute the modest beginning originally proposed.

A Look Ahead

As recommended, depending upon the success of the suggested shared programs, efforts should be made to investigate other programs which could suitably be shared. Examination should be made as to whether the administrative unit should be adjusted; perhaps a superintendent responsible for the general administration of three schools--or even five schools--with a principal or an administrative assistant located at

each school should be considered. The Consultant Services at Northern Montana College should be utilized to the fullest extent. It is hoped that some provision would be made for the gifted children through a cooperative enterprise with that branch of the University System. More effective counseling procedures through the use of these services would be desirable.

With the decline of population evident in the reported school census figures, the possibility exists that consolidation may be imminent. It is recommended that in this event, each school district retain its elementary school; the consolidated high school be built in a central location, divorced from any particular town; and that no lines of communication be ignored to acquaint community members with the educational necessity for the move. No blame can attach to citizens of the community, treasuring "their" school, who resist the thought of consolidation. In these days of large farm operations, there is often no reason for the town to exist if the school is not there. A sense of identity would be lost if consolidation were to occur.

These people, however, are the descendants of the hardy pioneers of Hill County, and their reverence for education is no less than that of the homesteaders. It is hoped that among the advantages which may accrue from shared services,

one may be that the spirit of cooperation derived from sharing would aid in a smooth adjustment to whatever the future should indicate.

A farmer with a big crop to harvest has a job too big for one man. It has long been traditional for rural neighbors to help each other. There is no thought of weakness, for the very magnitude of the task dictates the need for aid [National Education Association, 1957, p. 97].

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