

THE PLACE OF THE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL IN THE
MONTANA EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Investigations in Education, Education 501
Montana State College
August, 1959

P378
Am 93p
cop. 2

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Montana is a peculiar state. Its topography changes from the low, rolling, treeless plains of the eastern border to the ruggedness of the Rocky Mountain Continental Divide of the West. Its rainfall averages only about fifteen inches a year¹ keeping the land from producing all that the fertile soil could yield. This scant rainfall is one reason why only 675,000 people² have chosen to live on Montana's 147,138 square miles.³ In this sparse population--about four people per square mile--lies the root of many of Montana's problems.

In the early development of Montana the Homestead Act⁴ played an important role. Under this act 160 acres of land were given to those desiring them enough to live on these acres and to make improvements on them for five years.

The average farm unit in Montana today contains 1,859.3 acres⁵. A major economic readjustment was involved in the conversion of these unstable 160-acre homesteads into the modern economically secure, but ten times larger ranches of today. The difficulties involved in this transition had a direct bearing on many of Montana's school problems of the past and of today.

¹Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 23, p. 191.

²Montana Almanac, 1957 edition, Montana State University.

³Collier Encyclopedia, vol. 11, p. 110.

⁴U. S. Statutes at Large (1925), vol. 12, chap. 75, p. 392.

⁵1954 Census of Agriculture, vol. 2, p. 379.

One of these problems was that of school districts. The Homestead Act attracted many people and school districts were formed to meet the educational needs of these people. This movement reached a peak during the early 1920's when some 2500 school districts operated roughly 3300 schools, most of them one-room rural units.⁶

Soon, however, many of these people were forced to move in order to make a livelihood. Old school districts were left nearly vacated while some new ones were formed where these people finally located.

Montana still has the problem of working out a feasible high school districting program in the face of its wide area, its sparse population, and the over abundance of common school districts.

Statement of the Problem

As Montana grew, her responsibility to provide educational facilities also grew. At the turn of the century the county high school developed as one means of providing good high school facilities for the youth of Montana.

Now, sixty years later, although the need is the same, the approach has been radically changed. It is the current belief of many that good high school facilities for the youth of Montana can be most advantageously provided by reducing the number of high schools in the state.

⁶Stout, Tom, Montana, Its Story and Biography, vol. 1, pp. 505-506.

The purpose of this investigation was to study the county high school movement in its relationship to other types of high schools in Montana because the writer feels the county high school no longer meets the needs it was established to meet. It was the hope of the writer to find some evidence to either point toward justification of the continued existence of the county high schools or toward establishing that they had outlived the purpose for which they were created.

Justification of the Study

Not long after the last county high school was established (Garfield County High School, 1928)⁷ the abolishment of some county high schools began. In 1934 Chouteau County High School was voted out of existence by the school electorate.⁸ More recently, Teton County High School was abolished in 1947, followed by the abolition of Carbon County High School in 1951.⁹

In the general election of 1956 the abolishment of two county high schools, Gallatin County and Fergus County, were presented to the people for vote. This is an indication that the problem is a current one. The results of these two elections were interesting. While

⁷Trumper, May, Twentieth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1928, p. 56.

⁸Cunningham, R. S., "News Notes", NEA Journal, September, 1933, p. 28.

⁹Personal letter written by James H. Tindal to Earl H. Felbaum on September 26, 1956.

Gallatin County High School was abolished¹⁰, Fergus County High School was not.¹¹ Evidently there are arguments both for and against county high schools. Therefore, a study of the place of the county high school in Montana is justified.

Procedures

As a first step, literature was reviewed to see what others have said about county high schools. A brief history, giving the background of Montana's educational program, was compiled. In order to obtain specific data the reports of Montana high schools to the State Department of Public Instruction in Helena, Montana, were investigated.

A study of the role the county high school has played in Montana education, in general, was made by comparing the per pupil cost of the county high schools with the per pupil cost of the district high schools. This comparison was followed by a closer look at four selected county high schools which were paired with comparable district high schools in the areas of finance and transportation. This pairing was made on the basis of enrollment and number of teachers.

As a final step a questionnaire was sent to each of these four county and four district high schools to obtain local information.

¹⁰"Republican Hold on County Apparently is Broken Now", Bozeman [Montana] Daily Chronicle, November 7, 1956, p. 1.

¹¹"Poll Results Announced 16 Counties", Great Falls [Montana] Tribune, November 9, 1956, p. 13.

Many interesting facts were found in the history of the Montana school program which were of value in understanding the place of the county high school in Montana. The reader will find a brief history of Montana high schools in chapter two.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MONTANA HIGH SCHOOLS

Education has played an important role in the progress of the United States. The tenth amendment to the federal constitution gave each state the authority and the responsibility to oversee the education of the children within the state. Even before Montana was admitted to the Union on November 8, 1889, the people residing in the territory were concerned about education.

Tuition or "subscription" schools were supported by voluntary contributions from interested people and by tuition fees paid by the parents of the children who attended. A number of these schools opened during the 1860's with the first of them beginning operation in 1863.¹ Not all authorities agree as to the order in which they began. Abbott thinks the first school to be organized was the one in Nevada City in Alder Gulch, taught by Miss Kate Dunlap, and the second one was opened in Bannack sometime in October of 1863 and was taught by Miss Lucia Darling.²

Burlingame agrees as to the date of the first, but intimates that there was another school in Bannack, taught by a Mrs. Zoller, which lasted only two months.³

These were days in American life when our concept of free, publicly supported schools was being modified to include the high school.

¹Abbott, H. C., Montana in the Making, p. 229.

²Ibid., p. 230.

³Burlingame, H. G. and Toole, K. R., A History of Montana, vol. 2, p. 371.

Provision was made for laying out and organization of school districts by the First Legislative Assembly in Montana in 1865.⁴

Virginia City was the first community to organize a school district under this law. It was also the first to have a public school building.⁵ Abbott contends that even when public schools were set up by this legislative body, the idea of private support of schools by interested people, rather than by general public taxation, was foremost in the minds of the law makers.

Other sessions of our state legislature have made many valuable additions to the state's plan for education. They provided for the creation of a State Board of Education in 1893, a year which proved to be very outstanding in the history of Montana institutional life.

During the days of Montana's beginnings, the academy held the leading place in American education beyond the elementary school level. High schools were few and only poorly developed. Academies filled the gap between the common schools and the universities. Several such schools were established in Montana territory. They furnished instruction in Latin and Greek, some courses in the sciences such as physics and chemistry, and advanced courses in English, bookkeeping, public speaking, and other popular subjects.

The public high school movement in Montana began in 1876 with the opening of a secondary school in Helena⁶ which had a three-year course

⁴Abbott, op. cit., p. 234.

⁵Ibid., p. 235.

⁶Burlingame Toole, op. cit., p. 377.

which was strongly college preparatory. Dr. Burlingame has referred to this single course as the "collegiate course".⁷

Bozeman is credited with having opened the second high school in 1878, being followed in the same year by Deer Lodge.⁸

Table 1 shows the twelve newly formed high schools in existence by 1889.

TABLE 1. MONTANA HIGH SCHOOLS AND YEAR OF ORGANIZATION BY 1889*

Town	Year of Organization	Town	Year of Organization
Helena	1876	Livingston	1888
Bozeman	1878	Miles City	1888
Deer Lodge	1878	Boulder	1889
Butte	1879	Lewistown	1889
Missoula	1884		
Dillon	1885		
Anaconda	1889		

*Burlingame Toole, op.cit., p. 378

The next decade saw the addition of several more district high schools in the state. This slow growth of the high schools and the scattered population of the state led to the origin of the "County Free High School" law which was approved by the legislature on March 3, 1899.⁹

Abbott agrees with many educators when he claims, "As population

⁷Ibid., p. 377

⁸Ibid., p. 377

⁹Revised Code of Montana (1947), sec. 75, pg. 1603.

decreases... the operation of a good high school becomes a financial burden and per pupil costs rise to extremely high levels."¹⁰

He further points out that many of the smaller towns have decreased in population. The 1950 census bears this out. Hence, he supports the idea of combining high schools to reduce costs and improve offerings.

Many educators with an eye to the future thought that the idea of one large high school to serve a larger area would be met in the creation of county high schools. Thus, 20 of Montana's 56 counties established county high schools during a period of less than three decades. These schools with the years in which they were created are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. COUNTY HIGH SCHOOLS IN MONTANA AND YEAR OF ORGANIZATION*

Town	Year of Organization	Town	Year of Organization
Fergus	1899	Granite	1904
Gallatin	1899	Powell	1904
Beaverhead	1900	Carbon	1905
Flathead	1900	Dawson	1906
Jefferson	1900	Missoula	1906
Park	1900	Choteau	1913
Sweet Grass	1901	Wibaux	1916
Teton	1901	Lincoln	1920
Broadwater	1902	Carter	1920
Custer	1902	Garfield	1928

*Harmon, W.E., Eleventh Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1910, p. 24.

¹⁰Abbott, op. cit., p. 422.

The people designing the county high school law intended that it would set a pattern of establishing new high schools in centrally located populated areas.

It is interesting to note that only Broadwater County High School, July 21, 1902, was originally formed as a county high school.¹¹ All the others merely replaced district high schools which had been formed previously in the county. This is not as it was intended as shown in a report of State Superintendent W. E. Harmon.

"It was expected that the law of 1899 should provide for county high schools centrally located and should in no way affect the city high schools already established. The rural districts have not given thought to this. When elections have been held for the establishment of these high schools, they have invariably been established at the county seat of the county and the city high school has been abolished."¹²

The county high school law did not keep other high schools from being formed. Many of the small towns which sprung up in Montana during this period aspired to having their own district high schools.

One State Superintendent, H. A. Davee, in 1914 wrote concerning the small town and the county high school.

"...numerous smaller towns have grown up in many of the counties of the state, and these are more accessible to many people of the county than is the county seat where the county high school is located. These comparatively new towns are the places where the new high schools are being organized. Now since the conditions which made the county high school not only possible but necessary have ceased to be, I am of the opinion that it would equalize the burden of taxation and the opportunities for a high school education to levy a high school tax county wide, and apportion it among the several districts doing accredited high school work, in proportion to the number of students attending."¹³

¹¹Burlingame Toole, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

¹²Harmon, W. E., Ninth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1906, p. 22.

¹³Davee, H. A., Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1914, p. 15.

Only those high schools having a four-year program which met other requirements were accredited. In 1910 there were 29 accredited high schools of which only 14 were district high schools which had four-year accredited programs. At this time there were more county high schools than district high schools. It was not long until this lead was taken by the district high school.

Table 3 shows the 14 district schools existing in 1910 and the year in which they were organized.

TABLE 3. ACCREDITED DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS IN MONTANA IN 1910 AND YEAR OF ORGANIZATION*

Town	Year of Organization	Town	Year of Organization
Helena	1876	Forsyth	1900
Butte	1879	Fort Benton	1901
Anaconda	1889	Havre	1902
Great Falls	1892	Columbus	1903
Billings	1895	Glasgow	1904
Hamilton	1895	Chinook	1907
Virginia City	1896	Pony	1910

*Harmon, W. E., Eleventh Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1910, p. 25.

There were other elementary school districts offering high school work. They were not included in Table 3 as they did not have a four-year program which was necessary to be fully accredited. These schools were called village schools and are listed in Table 4 with the year they began operating.

TABLE 4. VILLAGE SCHOOLS IN MONTANA AS OF 1910 AND THE YEAR OF ORGANIZATION*

Town	Year of Organization	Town	Year of Organization
Whitehall	1892	Cascade	1909
Wibaux	1903	Eureka	1909
Culbertson	1905	Harlowtown	1909
Belgrade	1906	Sheridan	1909
Columbia Falls	1908	Victor	1909
Hinsdale	1908	White Sulphur Springs	1909
Stevensville	1908	Roundup	1910
Thompson Falls	1908	**Laurel	
Belt	1909	**Libby	
Bonner	1909	**Malta	
Bridger	1909	**Twin Bridges	

*Harmon, W. E., Eleventh Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1910, p. 27.

**Dates not found in Biennial Reports of Montana State Department of Instruction.

It was interesting that the years 1909 and 1910 had great increases in the number of these schools. 13 of the 22 village schools were formed during this time.

Three of the schools in Table 4, Stevensville, Belt, and Victor were fully accredited by 1912 along with the newly formed high school at Flains.¹⁴

The combination of increased population and the larger percent of people attending high school caused the number of high schools to increase greatly in Montana in the 1920's. Table 5 shows this growth.

¹⁴Harmon, W. E., Twelfth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1912, p. 20.

TABLE 5. NUMBER AND TYPES OF ACCREDITED HIGH SCHOOLS IN MONTANA WITH ENROLLMENT OVER A TEN YEAR PERIOD IN TWO-YEAR INTERVALS, 1917--1927*

School Year	Number of High Schools					Enrollment
	1 Yr.	2 Yr.	3 Yr.	4 Yr.	Total	
1917--1918	17	33	22	84	156	11,660
1919--1920	38	41	19	103	201	14,517
1921--1922	15	41	31	128	215	19,173
1923--1924	1	40	21	142	204	19,762
1925--1926	4	23	10	155	192	20,941
1927--1928	3	18	15	160	196	22,232

*Trumper, May, Twentieth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1928, p. 56.

It was noticed that the number of schools offering the four years of high school increased while the number of schools offering less than four years decreased.

The growth in the number of high schools did not continue. In 1956 there was a total of 184 public high schools in Montana.¹⁵ This is a decrease of 12 in the 28 years. Table 5 shows an increase of 50 high schools in the ten-year period, 1917--1927.

During the days of Montana's early growth her high schools increased greatly in number. In 1867 there was one public high school in Montana and in 1927, 60 years later, there were nearly 200 accredited public high schools. However, due to changes in population and transportation facilities many schools have consolidated until there are only about 170 in 1959.

¹⁵Condon, H. H., "Your Schools Today", Biennial Report of the Public Instruction, 1954-1956, p. 75.

There are today only 16 county high schools since four of the 20 have been abolished. The four that have been abolished are Choteau, Teton, Carbon, and Gallatin County High Schools.

Because these have been abolished perhaps there are enough factors operating against the county high school to justify abolishing all of the remaining ones.

A comparison of the two types of high schools is found in chapter three.

CHAPTER III

A FINANCIAL COMPARISON OF THE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOLS
WITH THE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS IN MONTANA

It has been pointed out that Montana is a peculiar state with regard to education. In this chapter it will be shown that high schools in Montana have a great range in enrollments and in per pupil costs. In September of 1956, enrollments varied from a high of 2304¹ at Billings Senior High School to a low of 9 at Ismay High School.²

The Montana Educational Directory for 1955-1956, issued by the State Department of Public Instruction, lists 154 district high schools with a total enrollment of 23,282. It also gives an enrollment of 7,317 for the 17 county high schools.

Since schools vary so much in enrollments it is not adequate to refer to total expenditures. It is necessary to know the number of dollars spent per pupil to make a valid comparison between schools.

All public schools need buildings but they do not all spend the same amounts for them year by year. Therefore, monies spent for capital outlay and debt service were not included in the financial comparison of schools. Similarly, tuition paid to other districts and other supplementary expenditures, such as school lunch and transportation, were also excluded.

In 1955-1956 the per pupil cost exclusive of capital outlay, debt service, and some minor supplementary expenditures of all 154

¹Condon, M. N., Montana Educational Directory, Montana State Department of Instruction, 1955 - 1956, p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 23

district high school in Montana was \$429.30. The per pupil cost of the 17 county high schools for the same year was \$309.66.

Comparison of All County High Schools With
All District High Schools in Montana

In 1955-1956 there were 17 county high schools. Table 6 gives a panoramic view of these schools showing the numbers of teachers, the enrollments, the total expenditures, and the per pupil costs.

TABLE 6. PER PUPIL COSTS FOR THE 17 COUNTY HIGH SCHOOLS IN MONTANA FOR THE YEAR 1955 - 1956.

School	Staff*	Enrollment*	Expenditures*	Per Pupil Costs
Broadwater	14	145	\$80,740.86	\$768.96
Jefferson	5	78	42,936.24	550.46
Wibaux	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	83	37,284.41	449.21
Garfield	7	103	42,927.59	416.77
Carter	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	120	47,178.47	393.15
Sweet Grass	11	202	72,296.98	392.56
Beaverhead	16	324	114,114.27	352.20
Granite	6	105	36,663.49	349.18
Powell	17	333	111,101.47	333.64
Custer	29	582	187,968.76	322.97
Fergus	23	420	132,693.10	315.94
Lincoln	9	190	59,394.69	312.60
Park	23	551	167,722.76	304.40
Gallatin	31	705	208,345.78	295.53
Flathead	46	1160	320,798.93	276.55
Dawson	23	525	140,583.59	267.78
Missoula	71	1691	444,288.04	262.71

*Montana Educational Directory, op. cit., pp. 30 - 31.

*From the 1955-1956 financial reports on file at the State Department of Public Instruction in Helena, Montana.

An interesting comparison of district and county high schools is found by examining the per pupil costs broken down according to various budgetary items. Hence, four such categories, general control, instructional costs, operation of plant, and auxiliary agencies, were used.

General control includes such items as school board expenses, business office, salary and office expense of the district superintendent or of the county high school principal.

Instructional costs included salaries of supervisors, salaries of teachers, textbooks and supplies for instruction.

Operation of plant costs combine maintenance and operation and include cost of repair and janitor's wages.

Auxiliary agencies include expenditures for libraries, rent, insurance, social security, and other fixed charges.

The term total expenditures as here used applies to the total of these groups. It was mentioned earlier that this excludes money spent for capital outlay, debt service, tuition paid to other districts, transportation, and other expenses, many of which change from year to year.

In the area of general control the per pupil expenditures for the 17 county high schools were \$25.44 compared with \$71.18 for the 154 district high schools. Table 7 shows this and other facts in tabulated form.

TABLE 7. PER PUPIL COSTS OF THE TOTAL EXPENSES OF THE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOLS LISTED WITH THOSE OF THE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS FOR 1955--1956*

Type of Expenditure	Per Pupil Costs		
	County High Schools	District High Schools	Difference
General Control	\$ 25.14	\$ 71.18	\$ 45.74
Instructional Costs	213.80	271.62	57.82
Operation of Plant	54.31	62.13	7.82
Auxiliary Agencies	16.11	24.37	8.26
Total	\$309.66	\$429.30	\$119.64

*From the 1955-1956 financial reports on file at the State Department of Public Instruction in Helena, Montana.

There was a significant difference in the per pupil instructional cost, as the county high schools spent \$57.82 less for each child enrolled than did the district high schools.

Under operation of plant the county high school again enjoyed a cost advantage with a per pupil figure of \$54.31 whereas the district per pupil cost was \$62.13.

Similarly, the per pupil cost for auxiliary agencies gave the county high school a savings of \$8.26.

When these are added up we find a total of \$119.64 difference in per pupil costs in favor of the county high schools.

These consistent differences are explained in part by average enrollments. The district high schools had an average of 115 pupils whereas the county high schools averaged 130. This fact supports the idea mentioned in a previous chapter, that a large school can be operated with greater economy than a small school.

This gives a general picture of the place the county high school holds in Montana education with respect to finances. Conclusions to be drawn, however, can be facilitated by a more specific comparison of selected schools.

Comparison of Four County High Schools
with Four District High Schools

In order to get a more valid comparison, four county high schools were chosen and compared with four district high schools which had enrollments and staffs of nearly the same size. Table 8 lists the county high schools with the comparable district high schools.

TABLE 8. TYPE, ENROLLMENT, AND STAFF OF SELECTED COUNTY HIGH SCHOOLS LISTED WITH SELECTED COMPARABLE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS FOR 1955-1956*

County High Schools			District High Schools		
School	Staff	Enrollment	School	Staff	Enrollment
Missoula	71	1691	Butte	73	1781
Park	23	551	Havre	21½	452
Sweet Grass	11	202	Browning	10	180
Jefferson	5	78	Augusta	5½	52

*Montana Educational Directory, op. cit., pp. 6, 7, 9, 30, 31.

The expenses compared in this part of the study were classified into the same categories as used in the comparison of all the county high schools with all the district high schools.

The two largest schools selected were Missoula County High School and Butte Public High School. A comparison of their expenditures is found in Table 9.

TABLE 9. GENERAL CONTROL, INSTRUCTION COSTS, OPERATION OF PLANT, AND AUXILIARY AGENCIES EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL OF BUTTE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL AND MISSOULA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, 1955--1956

Type of Expenditure	Per Pupil Costs		
	Butte Public High School	Missoula County High School	Difference
General Control	\$ 15.83	\$ 21.26	\$ 5.43*
Instructional Cost	202.39	191.33	11.06
Operation of Plant	45.09	34.43	10.61
Auxiliary Agencies	22.55	15.64	6.91
Total	\$285.88	\$262.71	\$23.15

*Indicates county high school expenditure greater than district high school.

In all except general control Missoula County High School spent less per pupil than did Butte Public High School. The total difference amounted to \$23.15. A large amount of money is involved when enrollments are in the neighborhood of 2000 pupils.

Park County High School, in Livingston, was paired with the district high school in Havre. In this comparison the county high school was much more economical in two categories than the district high school. However, the total difference revealed that Park County High School spent \$74.10 less per pupil than Havre High School. Table 10 gives a breakdown of the per capita expenditures.

TABLE 10. GENERAL CONTROL, INSTRUCTIONAL COSTS, OPERATION OF PLANT, AND AUXILIARY AGENCIES EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL OF HAVRE HIGH SCHOOL AND PARK COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, 1955-1956.

Type of Expenditure	Per Pupil Costs		
	Havre High School	Park County High School	Difference
General Control	\$ 22.64	\$ 29.61	\$ 6.97*
Instructional Cost	270.97	215.15	55.82
Operation of Plant	67.72	41.23	26.49
Auxiliary Agencies	17.18	18.39	1.21*
Total	\$378.50	\$304.40	\$74.10

*Indicates county high school expenditures greater than district high school.

Again the county high school proved to be more economical than the district high school. In this case it was partly due to the fact that Park County High School had 99 more pupils enrolled.

The case of Havre and Livingston the enrollments were nearly 1000 less than either Butte or Missoula. This reduction in enrollment is accompanied by a rise in the per pupil costs. The larger were about \$275 per pupil while the smaller were more than \$300.

This cost increased still more with Sweet Grass County High School and Browning High School, which had enrollments of only about 200 and per pupil costs of nearly \$400.

The small differences in the per pupil costs of these two schools are shown in Table 11.

TABLE 11. GENERAL CONTROL, INSTRUCTIONAL COSTS, OPERATION OF PLANT, AND AUXILIARY AGENCIES EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL OF BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL AND SWEET GRASS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, 1955--1956

Type of Expenditure	Per Pupil Cost		
	Browning High School	Sweet Grass County High School	Difference
General Control	\$ 18.86	\$ 2.18	\$16.68
Instructional Cost	250.20	280.72	30.51*
Operation of Plant	89.92	87.09	2.83
Auxiliary Agencies	22.78	22.57	.21
Total	\$381.76	\$392.56	\$10.79*

*Indicates county high school expenditure greater than district high school.

The smallest high schools compared, Jefferson County High School and Augusta High School, each had fewer than 100 students enrolled. It was found in the comparison that schools of this size spend about \$600 for each pupil. This is just about twice the amount spent per pupil by Butte and Missoula. It was also found that greater differences existed in the various categories than in the case of Sweet Grass and Browning. Table 12 shows the expenditures of Jefferson County High School and Augusta High School.

TABLE 12. GENERAL CONTROL, INSTRUCTIONAL COSTS, OPERATION OF PLANT, AND AUXILIARY AGENCIES EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL OF AUGUSTA HIGH SCHOOL AND JEFFERSON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, 1955--1956

Type of Expenditure	Per Pupil Costs		
	Augusta High School	Jefferson County High School	Difference
General Control	\$ 11.67	\$ 73.80	\$ 62.13*
Instructional Cost	453.79	238.60	165.19
Operation of Plant	119.53	144.94	25.41*
Auxiliary Agencies	54.94	43.12	11.82
Total	\$639.93	\$550.46	\$ 89.47

*Indicates county high school expenditures greater than district high school.

Although there were a few occasions, in specific categories, where the district high schools spent less per pupil than did the county high schools, these were usually small. The county high schools, in the four comparisons cited, proved to be the more economical of the two types of high schools.

Since the statewide general picture also shows the county high schools to have spent less per pupil than the district high schools, it would be difficult to contend that county high schools should be abolished for reasons of finance.

There are some feasible explanations why the county high schools have spent less money per pupil than the district high schools. One might be that the county commissioners appointed the school board in the case of the county high schools. Due to political pressure upon the

county commissioners, this practice may tend to produce a more conservative school board. It is entirely possible that this has resulted in a more conservative curricular offering requiring less expenditure in the county high schools. However, the Montana Legislative Assembly, in 1959, made it possible for a county high school to have an elected board. Another reason might be the difficulty in getting the people of a wide area, such as the county, to agree upon the increased taxation to provide for increased school expenditures.

The validity of these reasons for the smaller expenditures of county high schools needs to be investigated before any general conclusions are drawn.

The writer felt there were some reasons why the county high school has outlived its usefulness. These reasons and some recommendations are to be found in chapter four.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Montana education began in the early 1860's. The first high school began in Helena in 1867. This was the start of a fast growing network of publically supported high schools in Montana.

The county high schools came into Montana's history at the turn of the century and eventually 20 county high schools were established. Four of these schools, Choteau County, Carbon County, Teton County, and Gallatin County have been abolished.

During the time that the county high schools were being established more than 200 common school districts with high schools were created.

Since 1933 another type of high school organization entered the picture. This was the high school district high school. There are at present some 150 of these schools. They are the same high schools which were organized as common school district high schools, but are now supported by larger high school districts.

In a comparison of the total per pupil costs of all Montana's district high schools and the corresponding costs of the 17 county high schools in existence in 1955--1956, it was found that the per pupil cost in the county high school was \$119.64 less than that in the district high schools. It was also revealed that the average enrollment of the county high school was 430 compared to an average of 145 in the district high schools.

In a detailed comparison the the two types of schools, four county high schools were paired with four comparable district high schools. The expenditures of these pairs of schools were then compared by categories: general control, instructional costs, operation of plant, and auxiliary agencies.

In only 35 per cent of the categories in which comparisons were made were the expenditures of the county high school higher, and even in these the differences in per pupil costs were only slightly higher. In the 65 per cent of the cases where the districts paid more per pupil the differences were much larger. Only once was the total per pupil cost of the county high school more than that of the comparable district high school.

The cost per pupil rose from about \$300 to roughly \$600 as the enrollments decreased. This fact supports the contention that larger schools result in reduced costs.

Conclusions

Due to the limited scope of the study the conclusions are not many. However, evidence brought forth did lend itself to two quite definite conclusions.

First, if county high schools in Montana are to be abolished, grounds justifying such action will have to be based on evidence other than that found in the per pupil expenditures of the county high schools.

A second conclusion is that the establishment of high school district high schools has lessened the need for county high schools in Montana.

Recommendations

This study should be of some interest to those who are still confronted with the question of whether or not to abolish their county high school. Therefore, the author would suggest the following recommendations:

In counties where there are high school district high schools as well as a county high school, the county high school might as well be abolished. Funds are appropriated to the county high school from the county-wide high school tax in the same way as the other high schools in that county. It can have an elected school board as the others do, and it remains a county high school in name only.

In counties where a county high school is the only high school and the county line serves to form a satisfactory school district boundary. The county high school may remain the best answer to their school problems.

Finally, there is need for further study to determine means of facilitating the abolishment of the county high schools that are not needed. This would involve an investigation of the curriculum offered by the two types of schools, the number of special levies passed by county high schools in relation to the number passed by district high schools and other pertinent factors.

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