



New York State Archives

**New York State Education Department Bureau of School
District Organization School District Centralization and
Reorganization Files B0472**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	This series consists of correspondence, petitions, applications, maps, reports, and other documents maintained by the Bureau of Rural Administrative Services (later the Bureau of School District Organization) related to centralization of school districts. The series contains files on completed centralizations as well as proposed centralization plans that were rejected by the Commissioner of Education or by school district voters. The records document hiring teachers, constructing schools, establishing new bus routes, and determining the ratio of state funding.
Creator:	New York (State). Education Department. Bureau of School District Organization
Title:	School district centralization and reorganization files
Quantity:	90 cubic feet
Inclusive Date:	1924-1974
Series:	B0472
Sponsor:	This series' description was enhanced as part of the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project (SIFEPP), in May 2009. The New York Community Trust - Wallace Special Projects Fund provided funding for this project.

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Arrangement

Subseries 1, Centralization and Reorganization Files Before 1945, is organized into further subseries by genre of material. Subseries 2, Centralization and Reorganization Files After 1945, is organized alphabetically by the name of the proposed school district. Subseries 3, Files of Inactive Centralization Cases, is organized alphabetically by name of school district. Subseries 4, Master Plan Revision Recommendations, is organized alphabetically by name of county.

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Administrative History

The consolidation of small rural school districts into larger central school districts was first enacted into law in Chapter 55 of the Laws of 1914, which provided for the formation of "Central Rural Schools." The first rural central school district was created in 1924. In 1925, the Cole-Rice Law (Chapter 673 of the Laws of 1925) was enacted, which provided state financial aid for transportation and school construction in order to encourage rural school districts to consolidate. The pace of centralization increased in the 1930's, but the process of centralization was criticized as piecemeal by the Regents' Inquiry into the Character and Cost of Public Education in 1938. In response, the Bureau of Rural Administrative Services was created in 1943 to facilitate the process of school district centralization, and a Master Plan for School District Reorganization was created by the Joint Legislative Committee on the State Education System in 1947. The Bureau of Rural Administrative Services was renamed the Bureau of School District Organization in 1964. By 1959, the number of school districts in New York State had fallen to under 2,000, down from around 10,000 in 1925. Overall, the movement toward centralized school districts was reflective of a national trend towards greater involvement by state governments and state education agencies in the administration and funding of public schools.

The Education Department has responsibility for supervising all educational institutions in the state and the Commissioner of Education exercises a quasi-judicial authority by which he may review actions of local school boards and officials. Applications for forming central school districts are reviewed by the State Education Department, and the orders laying out such districts are issued by the Commissioner of Education.

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Scope and Content Note

This series consists of correspondence, petitions, applications, maps, reports, and other documents maintained by the Bureau of Rural Administrative Services (later the Bureau of School District Organization) related to the proposed creation, and additions to, central school districts. The records reflect the Bureau's role in providing assistance to school districts wishing to centralize, and in carrying out NYSED policy on centralization, as stated in the Master Plan for School District Reorganization. The series contains files on completed centralizations as well as proposed centralization plans that were rejected by the Commissioner of Education or by school district voters.

Most of the correspondence is between bureau personnel and school district superintendents, school board members, community members, local political leaders, and others regarding the creation of centralized school districts. Topics in the correspondence include the administrative issues related to centralization, such as hiring teachers, constructing schools, establishing new

bus routes, and determining the ratio of state funding to local funding applied to the costs of centralization. Also present in the correspondence are discussions within and outside NYSED on the advisability of a given centralization proposal, as well as discussions of public attitudes towards such proposals. Petitions include those administered by school district personnel in favor of holding a special meeting to vote on whether a central school district should be created, as well as occasional petitions submitted by community groups in opposition to centralization plans. Maps in the series generally show the proposed boundaries of central school districts within a given county, as well as the boundaries of existing school districts that would comprise the new school districts.

The series also consists of applications submitted by the district superintendent of schools, for a commissioner's order to create a central school district. Each application contains a list of existing school districts, along with their towns, numbers of pupils, numbers of teachers, costs of maintenance, bonded indebtedness, assessed valuations, and tax rates. Included in each application is a description of borders for the proposed school district, a list of new bus routes and facilities required, and a hand-drawn map of the proposed school districts.

Also included in the series are correspondence and reports from school district personnel and school board members recommending revisions to the Master Plan for School District Reorganization.

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Related Information

Related Material

15672Series 15672, School District Centralization and Reorganization Files 1948-1975 contains similar documentation

B1104Series B1104, School District Centralization Files, contains applications for central school districts similar to those found in this series

11120Series 11120, Files of Master Plan Studies, contains documentation related to the revision of the Master Plan for School District Reorganization in 1958

11121Series 11121, Correspondence with District Superintendents, contains a great deal of correspondence on school district reorganization

B0476Series B0476, Certification Files Regarding State Aid and Reorganization, documents the adherence of school district building practices to reorganization plans.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of the material.

Access Terms

- Education
- New York (State)
- Education
- University of the State of New York
- New York (State). Education Department