



*New York State Archives*

**New York State Education Department Office of Counsel  
School District Centralization Files B1104**

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## Overview of the Records

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<b>Repository:</b>	New York State Archives
<b>Summary:</b>	These files contain proposals for central school districts that were approved or rejected by voters. Files include: applications including statistical, financial, and narrative information; memoranda from the Bureau of Rural Administrative Services summarizing local sentiment and expressing the bureau's opinion on proposed centralization; petition requesting a special meeting to vote on the proposal; minutes of the special meeting laying out a central school district; and correspondence concerning the proposal.
<b>Creator:</b>	New York (State). Education Department. Office of Counsel
<b>Title:</b>	School district centralization files
<b>Quantity:</b>	18 cubic feet
<b>Inclusive Date:</b>	1935-1980
<b>Bulk Date:</b>	1944-1962
<b>Series:</b>	B1104
<b>Sponsor:</b>	This series' description was enhanced as part of the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project (SIFEPP), in March 2009. The New York Community Trust - Wallace Special Projects Fund provided funding for this project.

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## Arrangement

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Arranged by year in which centralization was proposed, then alphabetically by name of proposed school district.

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## Administrative History

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The legal process of organizing a central school district is described in Chapter 820 of the Laws of 1947 (Article 37, Sections 1801-1808 of the new Education Law which replaced the earlier compilation of 1909).

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 consolidation was created by the Joint Legislative Committee on the State Education System in 1947. 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

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The series consists of files related to proposed central school districts, including files for centralization proposals approved and rejected by voters.

Centralization files contain the following: application for laying out central school district, submitted by the district superintendent of schools; memoranda from the Bureau of Rural Administrative Services of the State Education Department offering its opinion on the proposed centralization and commenting on local sentiment for or against centralization; tally sheet of the number of voters in each district who are for or against the proposed centralization, prepared by Bureau of Rural Administrative Services; petition of the qualified voters of the proposed central school district for a special meeting to decide whether a new district should be organized (petitions are on separate forms for areas within and without incorporated villages); border

issued by the Commissioner of Education laying out the new central school district (usually with multiple copies for posting); certificate by district superintendent of schools stating that copies of the order were received and filed and copies posted in public places; notice (in the form of a poster) of special meeting of the voters to vote on proposed central school district, with affidavit of publication of same; minutes of special district meeting giving result of vote on centralization and, if the new district was approved, result of election of a new board of education; and correspondence of district superintendent of schools, village superintendent of schools (if any) and various State Education Department officials and private citizens relating to the proposed centralization.

More specifically, the applications for laying out a central school district include: district number; town(s) in which the district is located; whether union free, village or common school district; enrollments in grades 1-6, 7-9, 10-12; number of teachers; current expenses for preceding year; amount of bonded indebtedness; assessed valuation; full valuation; tax rate on assessed valuation; a narrative description of the program of the proposed central school district; estimated cost(s) of new building(s); estimated annual cost of transportation; estimated annual budget; a map of the existing and proposed districts; and other "information and remarks" (usually blank).

The series contains many maps which were submitted as part of the application process for laying out a rural central school district. The application form specifically asked for a map of the proposed district, preferably on a U.S. Geological Survey topographic map showing contours, railroads, and highways. Consequently the bulk of the maps are annotated versions, usually in color, of the relevant quadrangle section of such print maps. These maps show the following requested information: boundaries of the proposed central rural school district in heavy outline; boundaries of each existing district in light outline; location of present school buildings; adjoining district boundaries; locations of the nearest high schools on all sides; and improved and unimproved highways.

Other maps are blueprint or whiteprint copies of standard highway maps, or other hand drawn maps that are also annotated, usually in color. These are apparently in response to another question on the application for an outline of the proposed central rural school district's organization. These maps typically show requested information on the location of central rural schools and branch schools, and routes and facilities for transportation of pupils.

Title, legend, and scale information is present for only some maps, and the size ranges from 30 x 40 cm to 86 x 71 cm.

The records span close to two decades; a few files appear to be missing, as they are marked by "out" cards.

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## Related Information

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### Related Material

15672Series 15672, School District Centralization and Reorganization Files 1948-1975, contains correspondence related to the applications located 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

15671Series 15671, Bureau of School District Organization, district superintendent county files relating to appointments and organization orders

Series B0472, School District Centralization and Reorganization Files 1924-1974

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## Use of Records

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### Access Restrictions

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

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## Access Terms

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- Topographic maps
- Application forms
- New York (State)
- Maps (documents)
- Memorandums
- Minutes (administrative records)
- Petitions
- Education

- **University of the State of New York**