# Public School Organization and Administration

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# PREFACE

The characteristic which distinguishes a successful enterprise from others is management. Business men hold that the success of a corporation is dependent nine parts on management and one part on all other factors, including luck, a maxim equally applicable to a public-school system. All endeavors that tend to improve the services which the schools are rendering are concomitants of organization and administration.

Although nearly a hundred years have elapsed since the appointment of the first superintendent of schools, little conscious effort to train men and women for administrative and supervisory positions was made until the beginning of the present century. During the past three decades an unprecedented amount of published materials has been made available in these fields, and today universities and teachers' colleges provide for those anticipating professional careers in public-school administration and supervision training programs no less extensive than those made available for medicine, law, or engineering.

This volume endeavors to apply, in a comprehensive manner, modern principles of management to the organization designed for the administration of the major functions of local school systems. Due consideration is given to the historical and other related aspects of the problem, but the emphasis is placed upon the newer developments which have occurred during recent years and which are modifying public-school administration. The purpose has been to analyze critically standards and practices in the light of such scientific evidence as is available and in terms of the conditions which may be found in the better schools of progressive school districts.

To keep this treatise from becoming too voluminous, the author has found it necessary to differentiate and select the content. For this reason administrative techniques have not been dealt with except as it was found essential to do so in the discussion of principles or in the application of them.

All public-school work is intricately interdependent; and since management has to do with every phase of school work, the isolation of individual topics for separate treatment was found most difficult.

Therefore, in order to treat each major topic as a coördinated whole, and in order to avoid constant reference to other sections of the book, the discussion of certain aspects of the work has been repeated whenever necessary.

This treatise deals largely with the principles of organization and administration of school districts. Wherever the state government is involved in the management of the public schools, the interrelationships have been treated specifically along with the discussion of the local issues. The last chapter of this book is reserved for a separate general treatment of the states and their relation to the public schools within their jurisdiction.

The increasing participation of principals, supervisors, and teachers in the management of the schools demands that all members of the professional corps have a better appreciation and basic understanding of the school problems. The number of lay persons who have and should have fundamental interests in public-school organization and administration is increasing. The classes in adult education, the reading circles, and the extension courses which are now provided through various agencies offer a wide range of opportunity for the patrons of education to become better acquainted with the schools and with the philosophy and principles underlying the governmental machinery set up to operate them.

This basic treatment has been arranged to meet the needs of the various groups described above, but primarily to function as a text for the introductory course in public-school organization and administration usually prescribed in the training programs prepared for superintendents, principals of elementary and secondary schools, and supervisors of instruction. It is hoped that the work may serve for study and discussion in teachers' meetings and as a handbook and source reference for school boards and administrative officers.

A syllabus has been prepared for use with this text, to guide instructors, to aid students, and to facilitate the reading for those in extension classes who do not have access to a comprehensive library.[1]

The topics and problems at the end of each chapter have been prepared to assist the students in relating general principles to the schools of the state in which they are primarily interested.

Appended to each chapter is a selected bibliography which includes references to sources in which a distinctive point of view is ex-

[1] Fred Engelhardt, *Public School Organization and Administration Syllabus.* Ginn and Company, 1930.

pressed in regard to the subject or in which an extended treatment of important topics may be found.

The factual basis upon which the work has been developed has been the many recent studies that have been made in the fields of which this book treats. The author has drawn liberally upon the production of all professional workers in education, and to these he is greatly indebted. Innumerable suggestions have come from the various professional yearbooks, research bulletins, periodicals, and journals. Special reference must be made to *The American School Board Journal, Educational Administration and Supervision, The Elementary School Journal, The Journal of Educational Research, The School Executives Magazine,* and *The School Review*; to the publications of the National Education Association, the National Society for the Study of Education, and the United States Office of Education, and to the research publications of the various universities and colleges.

It is with gratitude that the author acknowledges indebtedness to a number of graduate students who have been associated with him during the past five years and whose efforts have made available a wealth of factual material for use in the development of this book. Mr. Henry J. Otto, Assistant in Administration, has contributed to this work by his reading of the manuscript and by his criticisms. Most of the drawings were prepared by the Medical Art Shop of the University of Minnesota.

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## CHAPTER I

### School-District Organization

The local legal unit through which public education is administered in most of the states in the Union is called a school district.[1] Before the law the school district is a corporation.[2] Whether these corporate school divisions of the state comprise areas of only a few sections, congressional townships, or entire counties, their innate powers or functions are not materially altered.

The rights and responsibilities of school districts are limited by statute and are modified by legislative action. A school corporation has no inherent powers. The people residing within each incorporated area are thus associated as a *body politic* for the transaction of public-school business, and as agents of the state they are required to maintain schools as specified in law.

The mode of subdividing a state for school administrative purposes and for creating new school-district units within the state system is not the same in all commonwealths; in fact, the legal procedures which operate have been materially modified since the colonial period. The spheres of authority granted the school districts are conspicuously unlike in the various sections of the United States. Subsequent analyses will reveal many dissimilarities in the jurisdictions over local school affairs which have been granted to the several types of school districts in any one state.

The powers which the legislature delegates to local school districts are intended to provide the means whereby the people may accomplish the tasks which are associated with operating public schools.

[1] The term "school district" is not used generally in the school law of Massachusetts.

[2] A corporation is an association of one or more persons authorized in law to transact business as an individual. A corporation is an artificial person created by statute. School districts and municipalities, in many respects, have certain corporate powers similar to those which are granted railroad, manufacturing, and public-utility companies.

In addition to the fundamental rights granted to a corporation, the statutory provisions enacted for the conduct of school affairs may be separated into three divisions:

The powers given to the local electorate or voters which enable them to maintain and operate schools.

The defined authority and duties which are prescribed for the various officials or persons associated in the conduct of the enterprise.

The activities which the school district is required to or may choose to engage in.

These responsibilites and powers include functions, activities, and practices which will be treated in full in so far as they have to do with the organization and administration of a local school system and in so far as they are related to such offices of the states and the nation as are concerned with educational affairs.

## The Civil Divisions of the State

The states of the Union are also subdivided to facilitate the conduct of civil activities.[1] The county, the parish, the township, the city, the town, and the village are among the titles given to define the areas which became local governmental units. In the majority of instances these civil divisions, with the exception of the counties, are corporate entities having full jurisdiction over local affairs. The differences in the powers and the authority granted to them are as varied[2] as those of the school districts.

The civil units of administration adopted in the country were patterned after those of Europe. As they now exist they range from prototypes of the systems from which they originated to corporate organizations of the most modern type which have resulted from an endeavor to meet the needs of an increasingly complex social order. In most part the changes which have been made in the government of the civil divisions are not the result of a factual revaluation of the network of the existing civil communities concerned nor a conscious

[1] In the colonial period many cities were granted special charters by the governors of the colonies. Then after the Revolution the legislatures of the states took over the charter-granting authority. While the states were developing general policies for governing local subdivisions, many special charters were granted to cities and to school districts. Subsequently, special legislation of all kinds was superseded by general laws. The original charters were perpetual and have created much confusion wherever general laws for civil and educational subdivisions of the states were enacted.

[2] See any standard text on municipal government.

effort to establish a more economical and efficient unit. As in the case of the school districts, the people usually have only permitted slight adjustments in the plan of government. These were outcomes of compromises to meet the strain of rapid growth or to alleviate current political or social unrest and dissatisfactions. The result is that one may find in all states unnecessary duplication of governmental offices and expenditures of public funds, as well as an overlapping of authority resulting in unduly high cost with correspondingly inefficient public service.

Each state and the local governmental subdivisions cling as long as they can to the *status quo*. Change in the plan of government is not generally encouraged by the people. With the years public activities become institutionalized, sacred traditions are developed about them, and the existing order is modified with great difficulty. The people soon forget the origin of governmental practices, and they do not anticipate the time when changes must be made to meet new situations. The problems of government are, indeed, too complicated for the average citizen to understand. In time an increasing number of persons find employment in positions created to carry on governmental affairs, and a larger percentage of the population becomes dependent directly or indirectly on the public funds expended. Any program for reform is usually handicapped by a conflict of interests. The citizen must decide between public welfare and his individual needs. The result is frequently the defeat of progressive measures, lost in the confusion of misleading statements, blind partisanship, and selfish personal concern.

## The Civil Subdivision and the School District

The civil subdivisions created within a state may or may not be designated as school districts. In the cases in which they are so designated, the municipal corporations, as a whole, are independent of the incorporated school districts occupying the same area.[1] Thus the same electorate may represent two or more distinct and inde-

[1] Each city, incorporated town, borough, or township in this commonwealth now existing or hereafter created shall constitute a separate school district to be known . . . as the School District of —— [Early school law].— *School Law of Pennsylvania*, 1923, Art. 1, Sect. 101.

The county boards of education are authorized, empowered, directed, and required to maintain a uniform and effective system of public schools throughout their respective counties. . . . The county board of education shall divide the county into appropriate school districts . . . [Reorganization act of 1916] (*Public School Laws of Maryland*, 1927, Chap. IV, Arts. 41–45). The student should observe that these school districts within the county are not corporate entities; they are in reality subdistricts, responsible to the county.

For school purposes the state is divided into common, special, and independent school

pendent public corporations, each of which is designated by law to perform or render definite, prescribed local services. In many cases the school districts have included within their boundaries one or more or part of one or more civil corporations. On the other hand, there are cities which, by early state laws or special charter, were given complete or partial jurisdiction over local public education.[1] A study of the history of the developments of city systems and school systems shows that in the majority of instances municipal control over school affairs came about during the early history of the states when the educational responsibilities were being neglected by the state legislatures. As a general rule the states and the courts have recognized the city school systems as agencies of the state and not of the local municipality in all public-school affairs, even though the boundaries of the city and school districts by chance happen to be one and the same. Wherever this principle is not recognized for all activities associated with the operating of the schools, one finds constant serious and disturbing controversies between city and school authority, particularly in relationship to financial matters.[2]

### Cities and Other Incorporated Places as School Districts

The economic and social changes which accompanied and grew out of the rapid growth of the cities made progress in education in the urban centers more possible than in the rural areas. In 1790 there was but one city in the United States of thirty thousand inhabitants and over; in 1920 the Federal census reported 247 cities in this

districts each of which shall be a public corporation.— *Laws relating to the Public Schools of Minnesota*, 1927, Chap. I, Art. 1.

The following kind of school districts . . . shall be established and are hereby recognized: . . . common-school districts, joint-school districts, rural high-school districts, joint rural high-school districts, independent school districts, joint independent school districts, independent school districts, Class A, joint independent school districts, Class A [Laws of 1921].— *School Laws of Idaho*, 1927, Sect. 1.

Every county in this commonwealth shall constitute one county school district, provided that in any county in which there is an independent graded-school district, or city school district containing a city of the first, second, third, or fourth class, the county school district shall be composed of the remainder of the county outside . . . [Act of 1916].— *Common School Laws of Kentucky*, 1926, Chap. XI.

Each town shall constitute a single district for school purposes [Early law].— *Laws relating to the Public Schools of New Hampshire*, 1927, Chap. CXIX.

The school districts of the state shall be styled, respectively, city school district, exempted village school district, village school district, rural school district, and county school district.— *School Laws of Ohio*, 1922, Sect. 4679.

[1] For examples review the city charters of St. Paul (Minnesota), Buffalo and Rochester (New York), and Boston and Springfield (Massachusetts).

[2] N. L. Engelhardt and Fred Engelhardt, *Public School Business Administration*, Chap. V. Teachers College, Columbia University, 1927.

population group. The total number of incorporated communities in the United States in 1920 (Table I) was 15,692. Practically each of these places has also been incorporated as a separate public-school district. These centers of population, even though they are not all designated as cities, have much in common in so far as public education is concerned, and hence can be treated as one large group of school districts.[1]

The differences between the rural and the urban population centers are becoming less and less significant in many of the states; in fact, considered from any economic, social, or educational aspect, the differences that may be found within selected sections of large cities are more extreme than those that are assumed to differentiate the rural inhabitants from the urban. Everything that tends to improve the economic status of those who live in the open country tends to decrease their isolation and hence to remove those traits which characterized them as different. For this reason the attempts that have been made to develop special plans for the organization and administration of rural schools are less and less justified. In reality it is the very large city that is confronted with unique problems which require specialized study and treatment.

**Table I. Distribution of Population in the United States (1920 Census)**

| Population Groups | 1920 | | 1910 | | 1900 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | B | A | B | A | B |
| 1,000,000 or more | 3 | 9.6 | 3 | 9.2 | 3 | 8.5 |
| 500,000–1,000,000 | 9 | 5.9 | 5 | 3.3 | 3 | 2.2 |
| 250,000–500,000 | 13 | 4.3 | 11 | 4.3 | 9 | 3.8 |
| 100,000–250,000 | 43 | 6.2 | 31 | 5.3 | 23 | 4.3 |
| 50,000–100,000 | 76 | 5.0 | 59 | 4.5 | 40 | 3.6 |
| 25,000–50,000 | 143 | 4.8 | 119 | 4.4 | 82 | 3.7 |
| 5000–25,000 | 1,180 | 11.3 | 979 | 10.6 | 748 | 9.9 |
| 2500–5000 | 1,320 | 4.3 | 1,106 | 4.2 | 893 | 4.1 |
| Less than 2500 | 12,905 | 8.5 | 11,832 | 8.9 | 8,930 | 8.3 |
| Total incorporated places | 15,692 | 59.9 | 14,145 | 54.7 | 10,731 | 48.4 |

A = number of incorporated places. B = percentage of total population.

In the earlier period certain municipalities in the Eastern states fostered within their boundaries a number of separate school districts operated independently of one another.[2] The disorder and confusion

[1] The Federal Census report classes all incorporated places of less than twenty-five hundred population as rural. The educational problems of many of these communities are like those of much larger centers.

[2] The city of Hartford includes the town of Hartford and is divided into nine school districts, each of which operates its own elementary school.

which were the inevitable result of maintaining independent schools in the subdivisions of a municipality brought about consolidation. The small districts which were incorporated to form the cities lost their identity as the cities expanded. Sectionalism within the civil unit, however, dies slowly, and it has taken even large centers of population many years to realize that desired educational services could be secured more effectively and economically by coöperation and by pooling resources. The records show that in some localities in New England the union of all the schools of town and city was of recent origin.[1]

An analysis of the evolution of municipal government and public-school administration reveals the fact that the public as a whole accepted more or less skeptically many of the changes which in later years were realized as the foundation of the progress that had been made. There still persist among the practices followed in the administration of schools, as will be subsequently shown, those which originated at a time when the people in each subdivision of a city maintained their own local schools.

### The City and the State

City development was well under way before the state governments had fully regained their lost sovereignty over the public schools. A period of years passed during the early history of the states before a state educational philosophy came to the surface and before a state-wide school program had reached even the embryonic stage. In the meantime, as already pointed out, legislatures had enacted laws granting charters to many municipalities, with provisions which gave them a degree of control over the local school. This early interlocking of educational and municipal affairs brought about in the administration of the public schools of the state later complications which at that time were not apparent. In some states even today the authorities cannot agree as to the extent to which the city officials, in the capacity of municipal officers, shall have jurisdiction over the citizens of the city elected to, and acting in, the capacity of school-board members.[2]

There has been a growing tendency for the states to interfere less and less with the cities and the administration of their local affairs, and thus to extend municipal "home rule." In fact, through the

[1] Said city shall be a consolidated school district and all the powers, obligations, rights and property of the town, whether as a town, or consolidated school district, shall be vested in said city. — *Laws Relative to the Schools of Connecticut*, 1921; Special Act, Meriden, 1922, p. 213.

[2] N. L. Engelhardt and Fred Engelhardt, *Public School Business Administration*, Chap. V. Teachers College, Columbia University, 1927.

charter, the power of initiation in local matters has been transferred from the state legislature to the city.

The local voters adopt and amend their charters without as much as a "by your leave" to the legislature. They organize the local government and confer such powers upon it as they think best. To the legislatures is left in most home-rule states a certain checking power, a power of control to prevent abuses, but this is quite different from its former power of deciding all things in advance. In states where home rule is not the fact, the legislature prescribes for cities each thing they may do, without saying whether the function is a municipal one or not. In home-rule states cities simply go ahead doing whatever they think they have power to do. If any question comes up, the courts decide whether the thing being done is or is not a municipal function. Each city under home rule may have a charter notably different from that of every other. Special legislation is enacted by each city for itself.[1]

The state, on the other hand, as intimated above, considers those municipalities which are school districts as a part of the state school system, and holds the local school officials responsible to its sovereignty for all their actions. Leadership in education has been assumed by the state as a function of the state. Under this theory the city has no more rights in regard to educational affairs than any other local school district. The power of local initiative in the city in regard to schools is effective only after the minimum requirements established by the state have been met.

The basic principle that places the cities within a state school system is well substantiated in the plans by which some of the Western states were subdivided, and which in many cases included in some school districts a city and an extended rural area. In referring to the act that created the Boise Independent School District, which included the city of Boise, the Survey Staff investigating the organization of the schools called attention to this significant fact in the following statement, which is presented here as an excellent illustration of the principle: "These powers have been granted by the state of Idaho for the benefits of such of the state's schools as happen to be within this district, and those powers were granted to the school district and not to the city."[2]

The school districts of Denver, San Francisco, and Philadelphia include the municipality and the county in which the city is located. In the state of Minnesota the majority of cities is included in school districts the boundaries of which embrace many acres of the countryside.

[1] William Anderson, *American City Government*, p. 63. Henry Holt and Company, 1925.
[2] J. B. Sears, *The Boise Survey*, p. 24. World Book Company, Yonkers, 1920.