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Ann Elledge Shortt
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THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSINGS
DUE TO DECLINING ENROLLMENT
ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN ILLINOIS

by

Ann Elledge Shortt

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

May

1983

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THE LONG-TERM EFFECT OF SCHOOL CLOSINGS
DUE TO DECLINING ENROLLMENT
ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN ILLINOIS

The purpose of this study was to determine the long-term impact of a variety of policies effecting school closings in elementary school districts in Illinois. There were two specific objectives. The first objective was to determine the long-term impact of school closings, due to declining enrollment on eight factors: the community, the students, the teachers, the curriculum, the school budget, the administration, the use of closed school buildings, and the general quality of education. The second objective was to compare the long-term impact of effective-smooth school closings and ineffective-problem school closings on school districts. Sixty-one (61) elementary suburban and rural school districts in Illinois that had closed at least one school, due to a decline in enrollment, prior to 1977 were targeted for this study. Fifty (50), or eighty-two (82) percent, of the districts returned completed questionnaires. During the past ten years, these fifty districts closed a combined total of 136 schools due to declining enrollment. Eight superintendents participated in interviews. Four of the superintendents represented districts identified as having the most effective school

closings and four represented districts identified as having the least effective school closings. Districts with effective and ineffective school closings were identified in a previous study.

In summary, this investigation indicates that closing schools, due to a decline in enrollment, generally has a positive long-term impact on the overall quality of education in the district. Specifically, when schools are closed, student achievement tends to increase; community support tends to increase; there is a substantial financial savings; and the curriculum does not suffer and in most instances, it is actually strengthened because of better coordination and consolidation of services and programs.

There were no drastic differences in the quality of education between those districts identified as having the least effective school closings and those districts identified as having the most effective school closings. However, superintendents of the districts identified as having the most effective closings, on the average, managed to maintain their positions in the district twice as long as superintendents of districts identified as having the least effective school closings.

This investigation found that generally the community remained supportive of education in the district regardless of the intensity of anger and frustration expressed at the actual time of a school's closing. School administrators should recognize that in making the decision to close a school, however the decision is made, the long-term effect on the quality of education will most likely be positive.

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A note of appreciation is extended for the endless words of encouragement from Mrs. LaVerne Hendrix during the writing of this dissertation. A special expression of appreciation is extended to my husband for his understanding, support and assistance.

VITA

Ann Elledge Shortt was born in Wilkesboro, North Carolina on August 30, 1947. She attended West Wilkes High School, graduating in 1965.

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Mrs. Shortt has served on boards, committees, and held offices in numerous professional and civic organizations. She was inducted into the Alpha Sigma Nu Jesuit Honor Society and was awarded the President's Medallion from Loyola University of Chicago, in 1982.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The closing of schools due to a decline in enrollment has become a widespread national phenomenon during the past decade. In June 1981, there were approximately six thousand closed school buildings in at least forty states.¹

Social scientists generally agree that the closing of many of the nation's public schools due to declining enrollment is typical and predictable evidence of the cycle theory, which pertains to all important social institutions. The first phase of this "predictable" cycle is dynamic growth, characterized by rapid expansion and self-confidence. During this phase, the institution expects and is expected to solve any problems presented even, the impossible ones. The phase of dynamic growth in public schools occurred during the fifties. The second phase of the cycle is marked by conflict. In this phase every new solution usually fails and self-confidence generally erodes. During the sixties, it became obvious that the public schools could not solve societal ills and to make matters worse, thousands

¹Shirley Boes Neill, American Association of School Administrators Critical Issues Report: Declining Enrollment and the Closing of Schools (Arlington, Virginia, 1981), p. 6.

of students who could not read and write were graduating from the nation's high schools. The third phase of the cycle is characterized by decline. The public schools entered the period of decline in the seventies.²

Dozens of articles and reports have been written on the complex problems of decline in enrollments and the closing of public schools. Generally, these articles and reports have focused on the lack of planning for periods of decline, the lack of forecasting techniques, community opposition to school closings, state aid formulas, the use of closed school buildings, and staff reductions. Though all of the above mentioned areas are relevant, they provide an insight into only a small and often fragmented part of the total picture. Based on information contained in these studies, educational researchers have predicted that public school administrators would respond to the present state of decline as "just another crisis to be weathered, rather than solved...and administrators would continue to use crisis management rather than long-range comprehensive planning."³

²Lewis B. Mayhew, Educational Leadership and Declining Enrollments (Berkeley, California: McCutchan Press, 1974), pp. 11-16.

³Paul Berman and Milbrey McLaughlin, "The Management of Decline: Problems, Opportunities," Declining Enrollment: The Challenge of the Coming Decade (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 308.

It would seem important at this time, after a decade of declining enrollments and closing of schools, to investigate the effects of these drastic developments in the American school system on the community, the students, the teachers, the administrators, and most importantly on the question of the effect school closings have on the quality of education.

The Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the long-range impact of a variety of policies effecting school closings in a number of elementary school districts in Illinois. The basic thesis to be investigated in this study will concern the effects of school closings on the community, the students, the teachers, the curriculum, the administration, the school budget, and the use of closed school buildings. All of these issues directly, in one way or another, relate to the policies and procedures adopted by the superintendent, the school board and the parent and teacher organization in the period that preceded the actual closing of a school or schools.

It is clear from the evidence that in some districts the closing of a school or schools was based on a carefully worked out long-range plan, while in other districts decisions were made and schools were closed with

little or limited preparation. The advantages and disadvantages of these two modes of operation in dealing with the complex question of school closings are an integral part of this study.

Research for this study has been guided by the following major questions:

1. Community. Has community support and involvement increased or decreased since the closing of a school?
2. Students. Has student achievement for the district increased, decreased, or remained the same? Has there been a change in the number of student dropouts, absences, or expulsions?
3. Teachers. Have the terms of the collective bargaining agreement become more favorable to teachers? Is it easier to dismiss incompetent teachers? Are teachers more involved in making school district related decisions? Do teachers have difficulty in coping with the closing of a school?
4. Curriculum. Has there been a reduction in the programs or courses being offered? Has the pupil/teacher ratio changed? Are there more split or combination classes? Are there fewer program innovations? Are there fewer purchases of instructional materials?
5. School Budget. Has the closing of a school resulted in a financial savings for the district?

6. Administration. Do administrators operate under a long-range plan? Has the role of the superintendent changed as enrollment declined? Are administrators more effective leaders due to a decline in enrollment and the closing of schools?
7. Closed Buildings. Are closed buildings being sold, leased, demolished, used to produce income, used for community activities or standing vacant?
8. General. Are students in the school district receiving an education equal to or better than they received prior to the closing of a school or schools? Are there any long-range advantages to the closing of a school? Can the closing of a school or schools have a salutary effect on the quality of education?

Significance of the Problem

Since 1971, public school enrollment in Illinois has declined by 19.7 percent.⁴ The fifty (50) school districts which participated in this study have closed a combined total of one hundred and thirty-six (136) schools since the 1973 school year. Illinois ranks tenth nationally in the number of schools closed due to a decline in enrollment.⁵

⁴National Center for Education Statistics, Projections of Education Statistics to 1988-89 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 13.

⁵Ibid.

Thousands of man-hours and thousands of dollars have been used by local school districts to prepare the community for the closing of a school or schools. The state and federal governments have compiled dozens of documents and held scores of conferences to assist local school administrators and boards of education cope with decline and the closing of schools.

Even a preliminary analysis of the accumulated data, which were obtained from the fifty (50) school administrators in the identified school districts, indicates a wide variety of approaches to school closings. The question of the effect of these varied approaches on the recognition and the solution of the problems of declining enrollment constitutes the crucial significance of this study.

The issue is important for two basic reasons, first, is the need to accumulate accurate scholarly information on important new developments in the history of American education. Second, on a more practical level, such a study may provide some guidance and enlightenment to those districts that may soon face the issue of the painful task of closing a school.

Method and Procedure

As previously stated, the purpose of this study is two fold: to investigate the long-term impact of school closings, due to a decline in enrollment, on school districts and to compare the long-term impact of effective-smooth closings and ineffective-problem school closings on school districts.

A variety of effects of school closings was researched including: the long-term impact on the community, the teachers, the curriculum, the administration, the school budget, the use of closed school buildings, and the general quality of education. The population for this study was sixty-one (61) elementary suburban and rural school districts in Illinois that closed schools prior to the 1977-1978 school year. A study by Robert (1978) identified each district as having either an "effective-smooth closing" or an "ineffective-problem closing."⁶

A questionnaire and interview instrument were designed to obtain the necessary data from the identified school districts. The interview instrument was designed

⁶David S. Robert, "An Analysis of the Decision Making Process in Illinois Public School Closings," (Ed.D. dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1978), p. 52.

to closely parallel the questionnaire. The interview instrument provided an opportunity for the superintendent to elaborate, clarify, and describe personal experiences. The four superintendents of the school districts identified by Robert (1978) as having the least effective school closings, and the four superintendents of the school districts identified as having the most effective school closings were interviewed.⁷

The questionnaire was designed to provide data on the long-term impact of school closings on eight factors:

1. the community
2. the students
3. the teachers
4. the curriculum
5. the administration
6. the school budget
7. the use of closed school buildings and
8. general.

The questionnaire was submitted to the author's dissertation committee and to selected school administrators to establish a numerical "favorableness rating." The questionnaire was administered to several randomly selected school administrators for field testing. The question-

⁷Ibid., p. 59.

naire was then mailed to the superintendents of the identified school districts.

The identified school districts were ranked into quadrants from the most effective school closings to the least effective school closings per Robert (1978).⁸ The superintendents' responses to each factor on the questionnaire were tabulated and analyzed.

This study is divided into two specific areas for analysis. The first area is a comparative analysis of the responses from the two extreme quadrants. The extreme quadrants are composed of the respondents with the most favorable rating (37-45) and the least favorable rating (0-29). The analysis consists of a breakdown of responses by percentage in each questionnaire category and a further relative comparison of the percentage responses from the least effective to the most effective quadrants. An average favorableness rating score and a difference of agreement rating are computed for each questionnaire category and utilized in the analysis.

The second area of analysis is to determine what long-term effect school closings have on school districts. The universe of respondents who participated in the study was utilized. As in the first area of analysis, mentioned

⁸Ibid., p. 57.

above, the analysis consisted of a breakdown of responses by percentage in each questionnaire category and then a comparison was made of the percentage responses received from each participant in the study. An average favorableness rating was also determined for each of the questionnaire categories.

Definitions

Ineffective-Problem School Closings a school closing characterized by active teacher opposition; disagreements between the school board and the superintendent which slowed the decision to close; implementation of the closing repeatedly delayed due to community opposition; community groups taking legal action against the school board; and the controversy over the school closing jeopardized the superintendent's relationship with the school board.

Effective-Smooth School Closings a school closing characterized by emphasis on the human problems i.e. community impact, educational programs, safety rather than fiscal issues; community acceptance of the enrollment and fiscal projections as reasonably accurate; community perception of the administration and the school board to be responsive to community suggestions and concerns; media reporting of the issues relating to the closing in a positive and constructive manner; community acceptance of the proposed disposal of the closed

building; and letters to the school board, administration, and the news media tended to be constructive.

Long-Term Impact the effect of decisions, actions, reactions or attitudes relating to school closings over an extended period of time (at least five years or more).

Quadrants groupings of school districts into four subsets characterized by the effectiveness of the school closing. The most effective quadrant has a score of 45-47 points; the second ranked quadrant has a score of 34-36 points; and the third ranked quadrant has a score of 30-33 points; and the least effective quadrant has a score of 0-29 points on a scale developed by Robert (1978).⁹

Limitations of the Study

In dealing with questionnaires, the researcher is always presented with the problem of subjective information or partially and unintentionally slanted information. This handicap, while real and important, can be minimized by a comparative analysis of responses from school districts which are comparable in size and socio-economic conditions.

It is obvious for practical reasons, that it is impossible to design a questionnaire which would encompass all

⁹Ibid.

or even most aspects of the investigation. Such a questionnaire would be unwieldy and the responses would probably be inadequate to deal with this limitation, the questionnaire which was used, centered on key aspects of the problem under investigation. Importantly, the questionnaire made it possible for the superintendents to point to their own evaluation of the effects of their actions on their performance and on their school districts.

The documentary research is limited to reports available to the general public. This information proved to be sufficient for the purposes of the study.

Summary and Overview

The purpose of this study is to determine the long-term impact of a variety of policies effecting school closings in a number of elementary school districts in Illinois. The basis thesis investigated in this study concerns the long-term effects of school closings on the community, the students, the teachers, the curriculum, the administration, the school budget, and the use of closed school buildings.

Chapter I includes the purpose and the rationale for this study. Also included in Chapter I are the procedures used to collect the data for the study, the limitations imposed upon the study, and the definition of terms used in the study.

Chapter II provides a selected review of the related literature. The review of the literature focuses on the following areas: trends in enrollment decline; the impact of declining enrollment and the closing of schools on the administration, the personnel, the school budget, the curriculum, the uses of closed school buildings; and the positive aspects of decline.

Chapter II presents the method of research, the procedures for conducting the study, and the methods of data analysis. The plan for analysis focuses primarily on the data gathered from the survey instrument.

Chapter IV includes the presentation and analysis of the information obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews. The material is organized into three separate parts: the long-term impact of effective-smooth school closings versus ineffective-problem school closings; the long-term impact of school closings, due to a decline in enrollment, on school districts; and interviews.

Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions, recommendations, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature reviewed for this study is divided into eight areas. The areas include: trends in enrollment decline; the impact of declining enrollments and the closing of schools on the administration; the impact of declining enrollments and the closing of schools on the school budget; the impact of declining enrollments on personnel; the impact of declining enrollments on the curriculum; the use of closed school buildings; and positive aspects of decline. A summary of the pertinent points gleaned from each of the areas is also included at the end of the chapter.

Trends in Enrollment Decline

The topic of declining enrollment was not mentioned in the professional literature prior to July, 1972. From 1972 to 1982, enrollments in the nation's public schools have declined, though not uniformly or universally. In thirteen states, including Illinois, enrollment has declined more than 15 percent.¹⁰ The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education has projected an average national drop from

¹⁰Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 12.

the 1979 level of 2.85 million students graduating from high school, to an 18 percent drop in 1986, a 13 percent drop in 1988, a 26 percent drop in 1991, and a 22 percent drop in 1995. The Northcentral Region is projected to have a greater drop in students than the national average with a drop of 23 percent in 1986, a drop of 20 percent in 1988, a 32 percent drop in 1994, and a 28 percent drop in 1995.¹¹

From 1950, the total number of students in public elementary and high schools increased 61.7 percent reaching a high of more than 46 million in 1971.¹² The number of teachers increased during this period from 960,000 to 2.2 million nationwide. Expenditures rose from 5.8 billion dollars to more than 50 billion dollars. Adjusted per-pupil expenditures climbed from an average of 450 dollars in 1950 to 1,041 dollars in 1971. Federal funds for elementary and secondary education increased twenty-fold, while state funding rose by an average of 700 percent.¹³ Davis and Lewis (1978) concluded:

The struggle to cope with growth created an implicit expectation that growth would continue.

¹¹High School Graduates: Projections from the Fifty States, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (Boulder, Colorado, 1981), p. 15.

¹²Digest of Educational Statistics, National Center for Educational Statistics (Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 30.

¹³Ibid., p. 5.

Administrators and school boards were caught with rising enrollments, crowded and outmoded facilities, and teacher shortages. Given the burgeoning economy, increasing revenues, and expandable budgets, the answer was to build, to recruit, and stay out in front in growth. The times created an expansiveness of mind lasting well beyond when the demographic signs indicated that growth was slowing.¹⁴

Eventually, enrollment decline in the 1970's reached a point at which closing and consolidating schools became essential. By 1981, 6,000 schools were closed in at least forty states.¹⁵ Doran (1982) reported that 9,000 public elementary schools closed or consolidated due to a decline in enrollment, by the fall of 1982.¹⁶

A combination of factors brought about this tremendous decline in enrollment in the nation's public schools. A decrease in the birthrate was the direct cause. However, the cause of the decline in the nation's birthrate is complex and difficult to discern. Dembowski, Gay, and Owings (1979) report that the birthrate diminished due to improved contraceptive techniques, changing views of the woman's role in society,

¹⁴Russel G. Davis and Gary M. Lewis, "The Demographic Background to Changing Enrollments and School Needs," Declining Enrollments: The Challenge of the Coming Decade (National Institute of Education: Washington, D.C., 1978), p. 19.

¹⁵Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 6.

¹⁶Bernadette Doran, "Population Experts Say a Surprise Package Might Soon Arrive at Your Schools," American School Board Journal 169 (1982), p. 19.

improved economic conditions, and greatly increased mobility.¹⁷

Following World War II, the economy entered a period of sound growth, returning war veterans found employment and began to raise families. The birthrate quickly grew and the "post World War II baby boom" brought rapid increases in enrollment in the public schools during the 1950's and 1960's. In early 1950, the national rate of births per thousand was 3.8.¹⁸ During the 1960's, social scientists agree that change occurred in societal social and sexual mores. Oral contraceptives became readily available and widely accepted. Family planning became an important issue as zero population growth became a national trend. Women began to not only have fewer children but to have them later in life. It became socially acceptable for women to choose either to marry later in life or not to marry at all. Also during the 1960's, more and more women began to seek employment outside the home, transportation became less expensive allowing more mobility; and the suburbs grew rapidly.

Dembowski, Gay and Owings (1979) explain that the declining birthrate in the United States was not recognized as a problem as late as the mid 1960's, for a number of reasons.

¹⁷Frederick L. Dembowski, Geneva Gay, and Jeffery Owings, The Effects of Declining Enrollment on Instructional Programs (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Arlington, Virginia, 1981), p. 6.

¹⁸Series P-25, No. 277, "Fertility Expectations of American Women" (U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 3.

First demographers and educators failed to see the indicators that would cause them to revise their estimates of future populations. This is partly due to the fact that the data were not generally collected and available. Second, there was a pervasive belief that the growth patterns that had been occurring since the early 1950s were good and in the country's best interest. Because of the booming economy, most people felt that the social problems could be solved by spending more money.¹⁹

By 1977, the birthrate had declined to 1.8, a decrease from the 1957 high of 3.8.²⁰ In 1978, the number of births began to swing upwards. Although statisticians find it difficult to project the number and timing of births, the Bureau of the Census expects the number of births to continue rising moderately through the mid-1980s. Around 1987, births are expected to begin another decline.²¹ A study completed by Fishlow (1978) concluded that there will very likely be as many children in elementary school in 1995 as there were in the peak year of 1970-71.²²

¹⁹Dembowski et al., "The Effects of Declining Enrollment on Instructional Programs," p. 8.

²⁰Bureau of the Census, U.S. Population Estimates and Projections, Series P-25, Numbers 704 and 807.

²¹Ibid.

²²Harriet Fishlow, "Demography and Changing Enrollments," Declining Enrollments: The Challenge of the Coming Decade (National Institute of Education: Washington, D.C., 1978), p. 61.

Based on a birthrate of 2.1, the United States Census Bureau expects kindergarten and elementary school enrollments to decline through 1982, swing upward in 1983, and continue to rise through the 1980's. The impact of a larger student population will not be felt in enrollment of sixth graders (twelve year olds) however, until 1990. Secondary school enrollment will not be affected by the increase in births until after 1990. Secondary school enrollments are expected to continue their gradual decline through the 1980's, reflecting the decline in births during the 1960's and 1970's.²³ There is an exception, the special education population is expected to increase during the 1980's at an extraordinary nonproportionate rate to the decline of the total population. More than ten percent of the school aged population, according to research estimates, will need specialized educational services.²⁴

Doran (1982) suggests a number of factors that could result in an increase or decrease in the projected birthrate of 2.1. Economic instability may discourage couples from taking on the cost of a family. It costs between 50,000 and 100,000 dollars to rear a child to adulthood, the differential

²³Bureau of the Census, Series P-25, Numbers 704-807.

²⁴Projection of Educational Statistics to 1982-83, 1973 Edition (National Center for Education Statistics: Washington, D.C.), p. 11.

being primarily the cost of education. Chemicals, pesticides, pollutants, carcinogens, radioactivity, venereal diseases and stress can cause reproduction dysfunction in both men and women. More favorable economic conditions could encourage couples to have more children. Many experts believe the key factor to increased fertility is a "relative feeling of well being." Even if the birthrate increases certain regions of the country may not experience growth in school enrollment. Population migration trends point to the South and West as having continuing growth, while the North and Northcentral areas will continue to decline in school aged population.²⁵

The American Association of School Administrators Critical Issues Report on Declining Enrollment (1981) notes that the expert demographers with the federal and state governments are at times helpful in supplying data on national and regional population trends, but neither can give a district the hard, sure data on which administrators and boards of education can act with confidence. A district must develop these facts for itself.²⁶ A number of forecasting methods have been developed to assist administrators with the task of projecting future enrollments. Shaw (1980) summarizes the seven most pop-

²⁵Doran, "Population Experts Say a Surprise Package Might Soon Arrive at Your Schools," p. 20.

²⁶Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 11.

ular techniques: (1) Population Ratio Forecasting; (2) Law of Growth Principle; (3) Bell Telephone Method; (4) Method of Analogy; (5) Multiple Factor Method; (6) Forecasting by Analysis; and (7) Cohort-Survival Method of Forecasting. Shaw prefers the Cohort-Survival Method because it is simple and straightforward and the data requirements are reasonable and usually readily available.²⁷

The Impact of Declining Enrollment and
The Closing of Schools on the Administration

It is evident that declining enrollment and the closing of schools have created perplexing and difficult problems for superintendents and boards of education. The literature is lacking in investigations into the changes which have occurred in the administrator's role and in the organizational structure of the district. The most often reported solution, from the literature, to the crisis brought about by declining enrollments is to develop long-range plans for organizational decline.

Berman and McLaughlin (1978) noted that the problem of recognizing, assessing, and planning for decline is not

²⁷Robert C. Shaw, "How Accurate Can Enrollment Forecasting Be?" NASSP Bulletin, November, 1980, p. 13-20.

solved by simply acquiring the needed information or by hiring "demographic specialists." The authors' concluded that unless school districts engage in long-term comprehensive planning rather than short-term crisis management that in all likelihood the delivery of educational services will decline.²⁸

This view was supported by Divoky (1979), "If ever there was a time for long-range planning, both at the state and local levels this is it...don't try (administrators) to simply tough it out by muddling through each crisis as it hits."²⁹ The American Association of School Administrators Critical Issues Report on Declining Enrollment recommends that school districts include the following in the planning process:

1. Gather facts about the physical condition of school buildings.
2. Gather facts about the educational services the schools offer.
3. Acquire the views of the citizens through public hearings, public opinion polls, written comments and expressions at board meetings.
4. Project population and student enrollment.
5. Devise and offer alternatives to school closings or consolidations.

²⁸Berman and McLaughlin, The Challenge of The Coming Decade, p. 307.

²⁹Diane Divoky, "Burden of the Seventies: The Management of Decline," Kappan, October, 1979, p. 88.

6. Prepare timetables for school closings.
7. Prepare timetables and procedures for reduction in force.
8. Estimate, prophesy, or guess the consequences of board actions taken to cope with declining enrollment.
9. Appoint a committee composed of citizens to serve as a long-range planning task force for the district.³⁰

Gordon and Hughes (1980) propose that administrators develop a precise set of criteria for determining which school or schools to close. The criteria to be considered includes the following:

1. Age of buildings
2. Capacity of buildings
3. Buildings with the lowest enrollment
4. Rate of population decline
5. Maintenance costs per student (divide the total maintenance costs of the building for one year by the building capacity)
6. Energy costs per student (divide total energy expenses for one year by the building capacity)
7. Conversion/recycling potential of the building
8. Change in the nature of the area served by the school
9. Racial balance³¹

³⁰Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 16.

³¹William M. Gordon and Larry W. Hughes, "Consider This Before Closing Schools," American School Board Journal, February, 1980, p. 32.

The authors further recommend that a citizens' advisory council be formed and provided with the data from the nine items listed above. The advisory council can then make recommendations based on objective data.³²

Wholeben (1980) presents views similar to those of Gordon and Hughes. However, Wholeben recommends that the board members and the administrators clearly understand the turmoil and rhetoric they will experience after an announcement is made to close a school. He explains, "Their keys to success in such an undertaking are initiative and integrity."³³

Fredrickson (1981) has written that the current period of enrollment decline offers school districts an ideal opportunity for program and facility re-evaluation and long-range planning. He further states, "Any long-range plan should evaluate current programs in light of statutory and educational trends, estimate the existing facilities' ability to accommodate change, determine the community's potential economic growth, include annual student censuses and enrollment projections, prepare for possible closures, and provide for effective communication with the public."³⁴

³²Ibid.

³³Brent Edward Wholeben, "How to Determine Which School to Close," NASSP Bulletin, November, 1980, p. 12.

³⁴John H. Fredrickson, "Long-Range Planning and the Enrollment Decline," paper presented at the Annual Educational Conference of the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators, Oconomowoc, 14 May 1981.

A number of studies have focused on the planning and decision making process administrators and boards of education have employed in closing schools. Klinger (1981) studied twelve school districts in New Jersey that had experienced a 20 percent decline in enrollment during the years from 1971 to 1978. The essential questions the author investigated in the study were (1) Will school districts utilizing long-range planning to solve declining enrollment problems tend to have a greater chance of implementing major decisions than districts using short-range planning? (2) Will community groups having a history of supporting school board decisions and new emerging groups tend to become active and forceful in their criticism of the board when confronted with the board's major declining enrollment decisions and resulting impacts? The study's findings indicate that administrators and school boards facing severe declining enrollments, will have to implement a comprehensive long-range plan in order to carry out a recommendation to close a school. The study further indicated that school boards confronted with declining enrollments will face conflicts with their communities regardless of whether they practice a sacred or secular decision making style. The study confirmed the notion that community groups having a history of supporting the school board do become active and forceful in their criticism of the board's decisions. The predominantly opposing group was the local PTA followed by the local teach-

ers' organization.³⁵

Robert (1978) analyzed the process of decision making in sixty-one public school districts in Illinois that had closed a school due to an enrollment decline. The districts were ranked into quadrants identifying them as having either smooth closings or traumatic closings. Robert determined that those districts with smooth closings tended to have a higher level of community involvement, operated under a long-range plan, and closed schools based on written criteria. The author concluded: (1) the higher the level of local fiscal resources the more likely the district will have problems in a school closing; (2) two-way communication that solicits community input can increase the potential for a smooth closing; and (3) school districts were generally following the recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Declining Enrollment.³⁶

Wood and Boyd (1981) identified in a study of declining enrollments and the difficulty of closing neighborhood schools three factors which characterize social links between schools and neighborhoods. These factors are transiency, involution, and community boundaries. The authors determined

³⁵Joseph Albert Klinger, "The Impacts of Declining Enrollment: Alternative Scenarios for New Jersey School Districts," (Ed.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1981), p. 162.

³⁶Robert, "Decision Making Process in Illinois School Closings," p. 170-172.

that the schools least disruptive to close are those in neighborhoods high on transiency and low on involution, tradition and clarity of external boundaries. The authors' suggest that school administrators consider these factors when determining which school to close and to remember that "it's easier to close a brand new school than one that's forty years old."³⁷

Fisher and Shaw (1979) conducted a study of fifty school districts in the North Central Region which had closed schools due to declining enrollment. The study found that the resistance to a school closing is of rather short duration and is not likely to have a permanent negative impact on the school district. Over seventy percent of the superintendents surveyed indicated that they would make no changes in their procedures if faced with the possibility of closing another school.³⁸

Leadership Skills

As stated previously, the literature is seriously lacking in studies focusing on leadership styles and specific skill requirements and their impact on managing decline. How-

³⁷Peter W. Wood and William L. Boyd, "Declining Enrollment and Suburban School Closings," Educational Administration Quarterly, Fall, 1981, p. 117-119.

³⁸Henry K. Fisher and Robert C. Shaw, "Declining Enrollment and School Closings," North Central Association Quarterly, Summer, 1979, p. 15-18.

ever, Nyquist (1977) suggests a new style of management to cope with the problems of decline. He refers to it as "decremental planning" or "management of decline." This particular style of management recognizes that no single strategy will apply in every situation and at all levels of education, but that each school district, county, and state will have to deal with their respective aspects of decline. The roles each administrator must perform may differ from school to school within the same school district. Communication and cooperation between the various levels of education are required to meet the challenge of management of decline. Specific job descriptions and role definitions are needed for each level of education with regards to declining enrollment to avoid duplication of effort and confusion.³⁹

Dembowski, Gay, and Owings (1979) reported that declining enrollments present administrators with numerous and complex problems that will require more than management skills. The authors' conclude: "Administrators must possess long-range planning skills, organizational skills, and forecasting skills which will enable them to deal creatively with decline. Educational management needs to be replaced by educational leadership."⁴⁰

³⁹Ewald Nyquist, "A Positive Approach to Decremental Planning for Maximum Benefits," NASSP Bulletin, March, 1977, p. 54.

⁴⁰Dembowski et al., "The Effects of Declining Enrollment on Instructional Programs," p. 20.

Eisenberger (1977) supports this train of thought, and further stresses that management of decline in addition to specific skill techniques, will require more precise leadership abilities. She states, "Decline management demands a keener sense of balance and proportion in the allocation of scarce resources, a deeper understanding of human behavior, and a greater awareness of the priorities for the future."⁴¹

Hellweg (1978) conducted a study of elementary school principals in Minnesota to determine if enrollment trends impacted on the role of the principal. The general conclusion of the study was that there is a difference in the role of elementary school principals in declining enrollment school districts when compared to the role of principals in nondeclining enrollment school districts. Principals in declining enrollment districts spent more time at meetings and less time on supervision. Principals in districts with declining enrollment perceived themselves as having more autonomy in making budget decisions than did principals in districts with nondeclining enrollment.⁴²

Thomas (1980) identified the leadership qualities

⁴¹Katherine E. Eisenberger, "Declining Enrollment: Implications for the School Curriculum," NASSP Bulletin, March, 1977, p. 48.

⁴²Adele H. Hellweg, "Comparison of the Role of the Elementary School Principal in Declining and Nondeclining Enrollment School Districts," (Ph.D. dissertation University of Minnesota, 1978), p. 179.

that contribute to effective school closures as:

1. ability to listen
2. ability to synthesize
3. ability to tolerate ambivalence
4. ability to be decisive despite conflict
5. ability to be open, trusting, and accepting of those who oppose school closings
6. ability to understand the complexity of human relations.⁴³

Thomas further explains, "It is difficult to summarize the type of leadership needed in declining enrollment school districts. One thing, however, is certain: school leaders are needed who are sincere, credible, and compassionate. They must be able to stand by difficult decisions, to place quality education above everything else, and to attain objectives while still preserving democratic principles."⁴⁴

Keough (1979) is in agreement with the views of other authors on the need for training administrators to manage decline. However, Keough is quite somber as he explains,

Deeply ingrained in our American way of life is the shibboleth that problems have solutions. Regardless of the degree of analytical skills brought to bear or the level of introspection applied, the reality is that not all problems have solutions...there are however, courses of action that can be implemented to prepare for and modify the impact of decline.⁴⁵

⁴³M. Donald Thomas, "Administrative Leadership in School Closures," NASSP Bulletin, November, 1980, p. 22.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁵William F. Keough, Jr., "Declining Enrollments: A New Dilemma for Educators," Fastback 116, (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation: Blomington, Indiana, 1978), p. 40.

School Budget and Declining Enrollment

The consensus of the literature is that the most visible effects of declining enrollment are economic. The American Association of School Administrators Critical Issues Report on Declining Enrollment (1981) concluded that the financial pressure on most school districts is so severe that no quick or short-range approaches will bring much relief. "It is obvious that declining enrollments have spotlighted the deep-seated and persistent problems of school finance."⁴⁶ The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that public school expenditures rose in constant 1975-1976 dollars from 47 billion dollars in 1965 to 67 billion dollars ten years later, and are projected to reach 76.9 billion dollars in 1982.⁴⁷ These figures give an indication of the problem faced by school districts: as enrollments decrease the cost of education increases. This problem is discussed by Leppert and Routh (1978):

State aid funding mechanisms, developed during periods of growth, tend to relate state allocations to student count, either directly or indirectly. Thus, during a declining period, state funds are reduced in proportion to the district's loss of students.

⁴⁶Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 67.

⁴⁷Digest of Educational Statistics, p. 34.

The fundamental problem is that the cost of delivering educational services does not diminish in direct proportion to the loss of students.⁴⁸

Dembowski, Gay, and Owings (1979) defined the financial problem faced by school districts with declining enrollment as being, "how to reduce expenditures in proportion to decreased revenues." Since revenues are tied to enrollment through state aid formulas, the essential task is to reduce expenditures with enrollments. The authors explain that declining enrollments affect the economics of education in some rather unique ways: "During periods of economic and population growth, money is quite easily obtained and is often used by school administrators to control the level of conflict among interest groups in the school district. As the money buffer is eliminated, administrators can no longer 'buy' their way out of problems. Thus, administrators are forced to use other alternatives to satisfy the needs of diverse pressure groups." The authors conclude, "The predictable results of the 'economic buffer' is that the level of conflict in school districts has risen."⁴⁹

A number of writers have predicted that less money will result in fewer program innovations, a higher ratio of

⁴⁸ Jack Leppert and Dorothy Routh, "An Analysis of State Finance Systems as Related to Declining Enrollments," Declining Enrollments: The Challenge of the Coming Decade (National Institute of Education: Washington, D.C., 1978), p. 206.

⁴⁹ Dembowski et al., "The Effects of Declining Enrollment on Instructional Programs," p. 17.

pupils to teachers, and lower morale. Definitive studies on these topics are lacking. However, the few studies available on educational productivity have stated that it is not clear that pupil achievement is affected by reductions in pupil/teacher ratios or with an increase in per pupil expenditures.

Bedell (1980) conducted a study to determine whether or not declining enrollment can be associated positively with conditions which may be expected to influence program quality negatively in Southeastern Michigan. The author concluded that declining enrollment districts had finances most effected. The data showed that while districts were accelerating to the highest millage levy, expenditures per pupil, and higher teachers' salaries, their state aid was decreasing. The districts identified the decline of employee morale as the most important effect of declining enrollment.⁵⁰

Concerning the issue of whether closing a school saves the district money, Andrews (1974) surveyed forty-nine school districts that had experienced enrollment decline prior to 1974. He concluded that 33.3 percent of the school districts did save money by closing schools and that 50 percent did not save money by closing schools. The lack of savings was attributed to increased transportation costs, reduced school support, increased

⁵⁰ William M. Bedell, "The Impact of Declining Enrollment on Curriculum, Staffing, and Financial Patterns in Selected School Districts in Oakland and Wayne Counties of Southeastern Michigan," (Ed.D. dissertation Wayne State University, 1980) p. 173.

vandalism, decreased property values, and disruption of elementary programs. The remaining 16.7 percent of school districts indicated that the closure had cost the district more money.⁵¹

In summarizing the issue of school budgets and declining enrollment, the consensus of opinion is that educational costs will continue to increase in the face of declining enrollment because inflation will never be completely checked; building program bonding and operating costs continue despite falling enrollments; salaries based on training, experience, and seniority continue to rise, while staff reductions cannot keep pace with the decline in enrollment; more mandated educational programs and services force an increase in costs, often without benefit of matching revenues; and fixed costs in the area of employee benefits are, to a large extent, subject to state and federal regulations.⁵²

Personnel and Declining Enrollment

Dembowski, Gay, and Owings (1979) report that school districts with declining enrollments have two basic choices: (1) lower the pupil/teacher ratios and hope for corresponding

⁵¹R. L. Andrews, "The Environmental Impact of School Closures," (Ed.D. dissertation University of Washington, 1974), p. 142.

⁵²Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 72.

educational changes, or (2) reduce staff through a number of methods and retain high pupil/teacher ratios. They further explain that staff reduction is a volatile issue and in an era of collective bargaining, tenure laws and affirmative action, that it can be a difficult problem to solve.⁵³

These basic choices were confirmed in a study conducted by the National School Boards Association in 1975. The school districts which participated in the study reported that the cutting of staff was a first step in dealing with declining enrollment.⁵⁴

In 1980, forty-one of the fifty states had laws relating to reduction in force. In general, the state laws accepted as justifiable the following reasons for reducing staff:

- (1) enrollment decline
- (2) fiscal, economic or budgetary stringencies
- (3) reorganization or consolidation of school districts
- (4) changes in the number of teaching positions
- (5) curtailment of programs, courses, and services⁵⁵

⁵³ Dembowski et al., "The Effects of Declining Enrollment on Instructional Programs," p. 17.

⁵⁴ Declining Enrollment, Report 1975-1, (National School Boards Association: Washington, D.C.), p. 9.

⁵⁵ Current Trends in School Policies and Programs, National School Public Relations Association: Arlington, Virginia, 1976), p. 29.

Most experts agree that knowledge of state law and state board of education policies are essential for the school administrator in preparing for reductions of personnel. The National School Public Relations Association suggests that local school districts develop their own policies for staff reductions. To make the reduction of staff more humane, early planning is advised and also provisions for:

- (1) cutting all other expenses before terminating full-time personnel;
- (2) potential consideration as substitute teachers for those being terminated; and
- (3) plans for retraining or reassignment.⁵⁶

Lombardi (1974) agrees that staff reduction will present the fewest problems when objectives are clearly defined, and procedures are clearly developed to ensure due process. He also suggests that the faculty participate in policy development; receive early warning of possible reductions; and that viable opportunities be provided for reassignment, retraining, and rehiring.⁵⁷

A consequence of reduction in personnel is that the average age of the faculty will be somewhat older. In New York City, for example, the median age of the teaching force

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ John Lombardi, "Reductions in Force: An Analysis of the Policies and Their Implications," Topical Paper Number 48, (Eric Clearinghouse: Los Angeles, California, 1974), p. 36.

went from under thirty in the early seventies to over forty in 1976. Divoky (1979) reports that administrators admit that educational programs, while stable, are suffering because of the lack of young new teachers who traditionally bring fresh ideas and vitality to a school. To offset the effects of an older teaching staff, the author suggests that inservice training programs be strengthened.⁵⁸

A second consequence, of reductions in staff can be increased workloads for remaining personnel, which may lead to a decline in morale. Bedell's study (1980), previously discussed in this chapter, identified a decline in employee morale as an important effect of declining enrollment.⁵⁹ Salvi (1981) studied the perceived job satisfaction of school personnel in school districts with high and low declining enrollment. He concluded:

Participants from school districts with a high rate of declining enrollment were less likely to be as satisfied with their job as those participants from school districts with a low rate of declining enrollment. In school districts with a high rate of declining enrollment, the younger teachers and those with the least years of tenure perceived their organizations as further from participatory management than did the older teachers with the most years of service.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Divoky, "Burden of the Seventies," p. 89.

⁵⁹ Bedell, "The Impact of Declining Enrollment," p. 170.

⁶⁰ Anthony D. Salvi, "Perceived Job Satisfaction and Organizational Structure in School Districts with High and Low Declining Enrollment," (Ed.D. dissertation Fordham University, 1981). p. 186.

In summary, declining enrollments produce more stable, experienced, and older staff which may require more staff development programs. Employee morale may also decrease with enrollment decline, especially among younger staff members.

The Impact of Declining Enrollments on the Curriculum

The American Association of School Administrators Critical Issues Report on Declining Enrollment (1981) reported that the impact of decline on the instructional program at the elementary and secondary level can erode the quality of education. Specifically, the impact of decline at the elementary school level can adversely effect the instructional program by increasing the number of teachers who are shared among buildings; by making it more difficult to provide individualized instruction in subjects; and by requiring teachers to teach all subjects to students ranging over two or three grade levels. In secondary programs, declining enrollments may eliminate electives; decrease or eliminate activity programs; reduce and impair staff inservice programs; eliminate the use of teacher aides; and require teachers to teach classes outside of their major area of preparation. In order to counter-act the negative impact of decline on the instructional program, the report suggests that administrators act decisively by re-organizing grade structures and engaging in long-range planning.⁶¹

⁶¹Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 61.

Eisenberger (1977) reported findings similar to those of the AASA Critical Issues Report. She concluded that in communities where lowered enrollments have already been reached and where little planning ahead was accomplished, secondary educators did not have the time or skill to consider the impact of declining enrollment. She explained, "The net result has been massive program cutbacks, staff reductions, course eliminations, and a community that has learned to live with less. For many the expanded curriculums, rich in electives and alternate learning opportunities, have been retrenched to 'bare-bones' state mandates."⁶²

Keough (1978) also supported the contention that declining enrollments coupled with declining resources can greatly effect the quality of the instructional program. He explains:

At the elementary level, program reduction plans usually effect class size, elementary specialists in art, music, physical education; and the classroom support personnel in reading, guidance, library and media. Ironically, it's these special areas that have been most recently added to the elementary school to enrich its program.

At the secondary level, the electives are usually the first to go. Low enrollment or special interest advanced courses in foreign languages, literature, or math are also vulnerable. In some districts, total program areas are eliminated, athletics, jun-

⁶²Eisenberger, "Declining Enrollment: Implications for the School Curriculum," p.48.

ior high foreign language, or supportive services such as remedial reading, resource rooms, and counselors.

An additional threat to the instructional program is the elimination of coordinators or program administrators. While the program itself may remain, the removal of the coordinator can result in a program's "slow death" by neglect.⁶³

A few studies have indicated that enrollment declines have not always been detrimental to the educational program. A case study of a cross section of declining districts in Minnesota, concluded that while there were staff cutbacks, program cutbacks did not result. School districts reacted to the decline in enrollment by adjusting course offerings. For example, one year courses were compressed into one semester.⁶⁴

Roedekohr (1973) conducted a study of declining enrollment's impact in Colorado school districts. He concluded that large school districts react differently to declining enrollment than small school districts, and large school districts can adapt to decline better because they have more options and alternatives available to them. He further concluded, that school districts with declining enrollments have lower dropout rates and higher achievement scores, hire fewer

⁶³Keough, Fastback 116, p. 26.

⁶⁴State of Minnesota, State Planning Agency, document entitled, Managing School Districts with Declining Enrollment, (University of Minnesota: St Paul, Minnesota, April, 1976), p. 6.

teachers capable of teaching in more than one subject area, attempt fewer educational innovations, and experience problems in maintaining a comprehensive educational program.⁶⁵ (Roedekohr's study has been criticized for making conclusive generalizations based on a small sample. The study was completed in 1973, at the earliest stage of decline.)

During the 1978-1979 school year, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development sponsored a study of the effects declining enrollment has had on instructional and supervisory programs. Questionnaires were mailed to 310 school districts nationwide and ninety-five (95) of the districts responded with completed questionnaires. The sample included districts with increasing and decreasing enrollments for comparison purposes. The study concluded:

- (1) Seventy-one (71) percent of the school districts experiencing decline used alternative educational strategies as opposed to only 57 percent of the districts with increasing enrollment;
- (2) An increase or decrease in the quality of education appears to depend upon the extent of decline and the actions taken;
- (3) Declining enrollment districts saw more of an increase in the dropout rate than did increasing districts;
- (4) The effects of declining enrollments on instructional programs are mixed, with a few exceptions, as enrollments declined---enrollment in the academic core subjects, especially science and so-

⁶⁵Mark Roedekohr, "Adjustments of Colorado School Districts to Declining Enrollments," (Ph.D. dissertation University of Nebraska, 1973) p. 154.

cial studies declined;

- (5) Most school districts, regardless of enrollment declines, actually increased program offerings in most curriculum areas, however, declining enrollment districts greatly reduced the number of courses actually taught while keeping the course offerings in the curricular materials, and;
- (6) The districts that were greatly effected by enrollment declines reported that the quality of their educational programs deteriorated the most...the idea that declining enrollments may be used to increase the quality of the instructional program is true only to the extent that such improvements do not require additional financial expenditures.⁶⁶

To summarize the effects declining enrollment and the closing of schools have had on the curriculum, the studies reported here are mixed in their findings. Several researchers reported that the impact of declining enrollments adversely effected instructional programs and eroded the quality of education, while other researchers reported findings which hinted that declining enrollments may not be totally devastating to the quality of the instructional program or the quality of education. However, none of the studies could be considered to have focused on the long-term impact of declining enrollment on the curriculum.

The Use of Closed School Buildings

The literature is pervasive with guidelines and sug-

⁶⁶Dembowski et al., "The Effects of Declining Enrollment on Instructional Programs," p. 81-93.

gestions on how to select which school to close, how to reduce maintenance costs, and ways to utilize closed school buildings.

The Illinois Department of Planning and Research studied fifty-five (55) school districts in Illinois which had experienced enrollment shrinkage and surplus space resulting in the closing of eighty-nine (89) schools. The two most important criteria for selecting the school to be closed were determined to be (a) changes in the school age population in the area served by the school and (b) the maintenance cost of the building. The report recommends that once a district definitely identifies it has shrinkage and surplus space, a survey then be made to determine the magnitude of the problem and its expected duration. The PTA leaders, principals, teachers, and other representatives of the community should be involved in the survey process. After the magnitude of the problem has been determined, extensive planning and research are required. The community is then informed of the surplus space problem and possible alternative solutions. The final step, before the board's decision on how best to use the surplus space, is to hold a series of community hearings at which alternatives can be discussed.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Illinois Department of Planning and Research, Facilities and Declining Enrollment, (State Board of Education: Springfield, Illinois, 1975), p. 7.

The American Association of School Administrators Critical Issues Report on Declining Enrollment (1981) recommends that school districts choose one of the following options for empty school space:

- (1) conversion,
- (2) joint occupancy,
- (3) leasing classrooms, or
- (4) community use.⁶⁸

Savitt (1979) suggests that options include using closed buildings for alternative educational programs, leasing all or part of the building, selling the school, or mothballing.⁶⁹ Posilkin (1981) recommends that districts consider joint occupancy. The author reports on Montgomery County, Maryland where joint occupancy agreements have been signed with tenants in 60 of 182 surplus buildings. Examples of tenants include: day care centers, centers for students with special learning needs, social service agencies, and artists' studios. The joint occupancy program earns 350,000 dollars per year and allows the Montgomery County Schools to serve a variety of community needs.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 43-46.

⁶⁹Robert F. Savitt, "Utilization of Surplus School Buildings," NASSP Bulletin, March, 1977, pp. 31-34.

⁷⁰Robert Posilkin, "Turn Unused Classrooms into Big Bucks by Following These Guidelines," American School Board Journal, February, 1981, pp. 25-26.

Keough (1978) recommends that the choice between selling or leasing a building be made after careful consideration of future district needs. Selling an unused building should be considered as a last resort according to the author. He advises that "moth-balling" a facility may be an open invitation to vandalism and rapid deterioration, therefore, the lending or leasing of a building to a community service agency so the facility can serve the community as well as provide revenue is preferable.⁷¹

The AASA Report noted seven possible barriers that may prevent school officials from making decisions on disposing of a closed school building:

- (1) Zoning laws and restrictions which seek to preserve the character of a neighborhood, control traffic, and even outdoor signs.
- (2) Local ordinances or other legal provisions which allow only nonprofit organizations to use the schools.
- (3) Deeds that preclude use of public schools for nonschool purposes.
- (4) Need for public referendum to authorize the sale of school property.
- (5) State legislative authority (often delegated to the municipality) which controls the disposition of vacant school buildings.
- (6) Environmental considerations.
- (7) Resolutions and other protest actions by neighborhood associations seeking to bar the turn-over of school buildings for noneducational uses.

⁷¹Keough, Fastback 116, p. 24-26.

The report recommends that school officials overcome possible barriers by thoroughly researching property deeds, as well as, legislation pertaining to ownership and use of buildings, and by actually developing local policies and guidelines for the disposal of underutilized property.⁷²

Ringers (1981) studied the development of policies and guidelines for the management of underutilized school space in Arlington, Virginia. He concluded that the process of developing policies creates an awareness of the issues, the alternatives, the constraints in various actions, and may reduce the potential for conflict.⁷³

Fox (1975) studied forty-one (41) schools closed in Los Angeles County, California and concluded that most districts should have closed schools a year earlier than the actual closing. The sale of schools ranged from 300,000 dollars to more than 900,000 dollars, while the mean annual income from leased buildings was approximately 43,000 dollars. He also found that closed schools were either reutilized for other educational programs or converted to generate income. Districts saved approximately 100,000 dollars in personnel and support services for

⁷²Neill, Declining Enrollment, p. 49.

⁷³Joseph Ringers, Jr. "Managing Underutilized Facilities During a Period of Declining Pupil Enrollment, A Descriptive Study of Arlington, Virginia, (Ed.D. dissertation University of Virginia, 1980), p. 175.

each school closed.⁷⁴

Crain's Chicago Business reported recently that suburban school districts in Cook County, Illinois have leased 52 of 86 empty school buildings generating thousands of dollars of income for the districts. Uses of the closed buildings included: a complex of offices, apartments, community service agencies, and condominiums.⁷⁵

Divoky (1979) reported numerous ways that underutilized school buildings across the country have been converted, including: multi-purpose malls, hotels, bakeries, shopping centers of social services, medical clinics, and restaurants.⁷⁶

Positive Aspects of Decline

The potentially positive long-term impact of declining enrollment and the subsequent closing of schools is the least researched aspect of decline. A few writers have indicated that there might possibly be some positive aspects of decline including, Berman and McLaughlin (1978). The authors posed the question; "Are school districts willing to

⁷⁴Andrew J. Fox, "Reutilization of School Facilities as a Result of Pupil Enrollment Decline," (Ed.D. dissertation University of Southern California, 1975), p. 168.

⁷⁵Crain's Chicago Business, September 6, 1982.

⁷⁶Divoky, "Burden of the Seventies," p. 90-91.

adopt significant changes in the way they manage their affairs and do they have the capacity to effectively manage these changes?" In short, according to the authors, enrollment decline may either initiate crises that could erode educational delivery or present an opportunity for school districts to develop the capacity for effectively managing change. The authors conclude, "Most likely districts will muddle through decline and pragmatically deal with crises as they come along."⁷⁷

Nowakowski (1980) a Chicago freelance writer, conducted interviews with two superintendents and noted:

Declining enrollment is turning out not to be such a problem. Rather than the dreaded consequences initially associated with a school's plummeting population, declining enrollment is emerging as a positive stimulus in motivating administrators, teachers and business managers to discover innovative strategies to cope with it. And it's these strategies that have starting, and often dramatic effects on a school district that can turn out to be blessings.⁷⁸

However, only two empirical studies in the professional literature suggest potentially positive implications. These studies were previously reviewed in this chapter. They were conducted by Rodekohr (1973) and Dembowski, Gay, and Owings (1979). Specific evidence supporting the potentially positive long-term effect of declining enrollment and the closing of schools on the quality of education is lacking.

⁷⁷Berman and McLaughlin, The Challenge of the Coming Decade, p. 315.

⁷⁸James A. Nowakowski, "Hidden Opportunities in Declining Enrollments," American School and University, April, 1980, p. 40.

Summary

Eventually, enrollment decline in the 1970's reached a point at which closing and consolidating schools became essential. By the fall of 1982, nine thousand schools were closed or consolidated across the nation. The causes and consequences of declining enrollment are numerous, complex, and interrelated.

School closings and staff reductions may produce low morale. The most often reported solution to the crisis created by declining enrollment is to plan for organizational change.

The consensus of the literature is that the most visible effect of declining enrollment is economic. The effect declining enrollment and the closing of schools has on the instructional program is mixed. Many experts recommend joint occupancy as the most suitable use for closed buildings. Districts are discouraged from actually selling surplus buildings.

Declining enrollment could be a blessing in disguise, since the reduction in quantity, does not have to be a reduction in quality. However, there is a lack of empirical studies on the long-term impact declining enrollment has on the quality of education.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The method of research is presented in this chapter. The procedures for conducting the study and the methods of data analysis are also presented.

Population

Robert (1978) identified sixty-one (61) elementary suburban and rural school districts in Illinois that closed schools due to enrollment decline between 1973 and 1977. Each district was further identified as having either an effective-smooth school closing or an ineffective-problem school closing. Superintendents of the four districts described by Robert as having the most effective-smooth closing and superintendents of the four districts described as having the least effective-problem closing were interviewed.

Robert differentiated between effective-smooth closings and problem-ineffective closings by establishing nineteen characteristics which appeared in the literature to be discriminating factors in school closings. The nineteen characteristics were then presented to a panel of fourteen superintendents and college professors with first-hand experience relating to school

closings for analysis and refinement. A survey instrument composed of three sections: background and general information regarding the school district; identification of decision making components utilized in closing schools; and a description of the characteristics of the district's most recent school closing, was designed. (See Appendix A) A scoring format was established for the section with the description of the characteristics of the most recent closing. Each response indicating a problem closing was given three points and each response indicating a smooth closing was given zero points. The two middle responses received one and two points. The responses were reversed intermittently so that some statements were negatively stated and some positively stated. The panel of educators had previously established which statements were indicators of problem closings and which statements were indicators of smooth closings. Adding the points from the fifteen responses provides an overall effectiveness score of school closings from zero to forty-five. A total score close to zero describes a traumatic closing, while a total score close to forty-five describes a smooth closing.

The survey instrument was mailed to one hundred and sixty superintendents in school districts who had closed school buildings from 1973 to 1977. Eighty-nine districts returned completed questionnaires. Sixty-one districts had closed schools due to a decline in enrollment. These sixty-one districts were

categorized into four quadrants by their effectiveness score. Thirty-one districts fell into the lower two quadrants and thirty fell into the upper two quadrants. The schools within each quadrant were not evenly distributed because several schools had the same score at either the bottom or top of two quadrants. All schools with similar scores had to fall into the same quadrant. The breakdown was fourteen schools in the lowest quadrant, seventeen and thirteen respectively, in the next two quadrants and seventeen in the highest quadrant. See Table 1.⁷⁹

TABLE 1

Smooth-Effective Closings	Problem-Ineffective Closings
Quadrant I	Quadrant III
Score 37-45	Score 30-33
N=17	N=17
Quadrant II	Quadrant IV
Score 34-36	Score 0-29
N=13	N=14

⁷⁹Robert, "Decision Making Process in Illinois School Closings," pp. 57-59.

Collection of Data

To obtain information from the superintendents in the identified school districts for this study, a questionnaire was utilized. To gather more thorough data, eight of the superintendents were interviewed.

Questionnaire

The survey instrument was divided into two major sections (see Appendix B). Each superintendent was asked to provide:

Section A: School District Overview which includes-

- Current student enrollment
- Number of schools in the district
- Number of years tenure the superintendent has in the district
- Number of schools closed due to a decline in enrollment
- Date of last school closed due to a decline in enrollment
- Number of schools closed for purposes other than a decline in enrollment
- Number of schools superintendent has been involved in closing during tenure in district

Section B: This section was divided into a series of questions concerning eight specific areas of impact-

1. Community

2. Students
3. Administration
4. Curriculum
5. Teachers
6. School Budget
7. Use of Closed School Buildings
8. General

Superintendents, in most instances, were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 the effect declining enrollment and the closing of schools has had on each of the eight areas in Section B of the questionnaire. The superintendents were also encouraged to respond with narrative statements for purposes of clarification and introspection.

Field Testing

A review of the literature indicated the lack of empirical data on the long-term impact of school closings, due to a decline in enrollment, on school districts. A questionnaire was designed and submitted to the author's dissertation committee and to five school administrators who possessed considerable knowledge of the problems associated with school closings. The panel was asked to review the questions within the eight areas and to determine a "favorableness" rating for each possible response. The panel agreed that a rating scale based

on a variation of the Likert method would be most workable.⁸⁰ The rating scale is composed of weighted responses 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. A numerical rating of 1, on the scale, indicates low favorableness; a numerical rating of 3 indicates a neutral response, in most cases; a numerical rating of 5 indicates the most favorable rating; with a rating of 2 being a less favorable response; and a rating of 4 being a more favorable response.

The questionnaire was field tested with six school administrators not included in the sample. No major changes were made in the research instrument.

Interview and Examination of Public Documents

Eight (8) of the superintendents participated in an in-depth interview (see Appendix C). The interview instrument closely paralleled the questionnaire by focusing on the following:

1. Professional experience of the superintendent
2. Perception of the impact declining enrollment and the closing of schools has had on-
 - a. the community
 - b. the students
 - c. the teachers

⁸⁰ Victor H. Noll, Introduction to Educational Measurement (Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 1965), pp. 353-359.

- d. the administration
 - e. the curriculum
 - f. the school budget
 - g. the use of closed buildings
 - h. the general quality of education
3. Personal perception of advantages and or disadvantages of declining enrollment and the closing of schools

primarily, in developing the interview instrument, a structured interview format was used. Englehart (1972) suggests that the structured interview is a superior method of gathering accurate data and may also provide validation for a mailed questionnaire.⁸¹ Consideration was also given to an open-ended technique, which according to Best (1970) allows individuals to freely verbalize while permitting the interviewer to obtain information at several different stages. This serves as a check on the accuracy and reliability of the responses.⁸²

The examination of documents was limited to pertinent information available to the general public in the eight districts. Newspaper articles and reports prepared for public distribution provided the most beneficial information.

⁸¹ Max Englehart, Methods of Educational Research (Rand McNally: Chicago, 1972), p. 97.

⁸² John W. Best, Research in Education (Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1970) pp. 186-187.

Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated in this study:

1. Community. Has community support and involvement increased or decreased since the closing of a school?
2. Students. Has student achievement for the district increased, decreased, or remained the same? Has there been a change in the number of student dropouts, absences, or expulsions?
3. Teachers. Have the terms of the collective bargaining agreement become more favorable to teachers? Is it easier to dismiss incompetent teachers? Are teachers more involved in making school district related decisions? Do teachers have difficulty in coping with the closing of a school?
4. Curriculum. Has there been a reduction in the programs or courses being offered? Has the pupil/teacher ratio changed? Are there more split or combination classes? Are there fewer program innovations? Are there fewer purchases of instructional materials?
5. School Budget. Has the closing of a school resulted in a financial savings for the district?
6. Administration. Do administrators operate under a long-range plan? Has the role of the superintendent changed

as enrollment declined? Are administrators more effective leaders due to a decline in enrollment and the closing of schools?

7. Closed Buildings. Are closed buildings being sold, leased, demolished, used to produce income, used for community activities or standing vacant?
8. General. Are students in the school district receiving an education equal to or better than they received prior to the closing of a school or schools? Are there any long-range advantages to the closing of a school? Can the closing of a school or schools have a salutary effect on the quality of education?

Procedures

The questionnaire, instructions for completion, self-addressed stamped envelope, and cover letter (see Appendix D) were mailed to the sixty-one (61) superintendents in the targeted school districts. Ten days later, a second letter (originally typewritten), a questionnaire, self-addressed, stamped envelope, and instructions for completion were mailed to the superintendents who had not responded to the initial request (see Appendix E).

Fifty-two (52) of the sixty-one (61) questionnaires, or 85 percent, were returned to the researcher. Table 2 indicates how each questionnaire was handled by the respondents.

Table 2

Treatment of Questionnaires by Respondents

Type of Response	N	Percent of Total
Respondent Completed: Demographic Information and All Eight Areas of Impact	50	82%
Respondent Completed: Demographic Information only	1	1.5%
Respondent Returned Blank Questionnaire	1	1.5%
Respondent Did Not Return Questionnaire	9	15%
Total	61	100%

The questionnaire was divided into two sections for analysis:
1. overview of school district and 2. eight areas of impact.

Each of the eight superintendents, representing the most effective and the least effective school closings, was contacted by telephone and asked if he would participate in an in-depth interview. All eight agreed to participate. The interviews were conducted with the researcher keeping detailed notes.

Analysis of Data

After receiving the questionnaires and completing the interviews, the data were tabulated and analyzed. Each respondent was assigned a numerical code to insure confidentiality. Question 18, from the questionnaire, was examined to determine, if for any reason the information contained within the questionnaire, was invalid. None of the questionnaires were found to be invalid.

For the purpose of analysis, the data were divided into two sections. The first section is composed of the school district overview and the eight areas of impact. The second section is composed of the interviews.

School District Overview and Eight Areas of Impact

Each of the eight areas of impact directly correspond

to the major research questions and were analyzed accordingly. A frequency tabulation was recorded of the responses to the school district overview. These responses were later used in the analysis of five of the major research questions.

The next step was to tabulate and chart the responses to the eight areas of impact. Responses were graphically displayed by school district and subsequently by individual category area according to the four effectiveness quadrants per Robert (see Table 1 page 52).

In completing the questionnaire's eight areas of impact, the superintendents were directed to indicate their response to each question or statement by circling a numerical "favorableness" rating from 1 to 5. The scale was further clarified by a brief description above each extreme i.e., the most favorable (5), the least favorable (1). However, there were three questions, numbers 11, 13, and 16, which required a different method of response. Question number 11 directed the respondent to provide a "yes" or a "no" answer on five effected areas of the curriculum. The yes/no responses were translated to a more compatible favorableness rating scale to aid in tabulation and interpretation. The translation was accomplished by equating "no" responses with a positive or more favorable rating and "yes" responses with a negative or less favorable rating. For example:

Responses		Rating
5 "no" and 0 yes	=	5 Most Favorable
4 "no" and 1 yes	=	4
3 "no" and 2 yes	=	3 No Change or Neutral
2 "no" and 1 yes	=	2
1 "no" and 4 yes	=	1 Least Favorable

(there were no responses of 5 "yes")

This question was analyzed by utilizing the average favorableness rating and by examining each individual component which comprised the total question.

Question 16 was an open-ended question regarding the respondents perception of the long-range advantages to school closings and therefore, not translatable into a numerical rating scale of 1 to 5. This question was analyzed by tabulating the total number of positive responses and the total number of negative responses and then dividing by the universe of respondents to obtain a percentage.

Question 13, requested that the respondents indicate how closed school buildings were being utilized in their districts. This question was specifically included as a point of information for the researcher not for comparative purposes.

Interpretation of the data, representing the eight areas of impact was divided into two separate phases. Phase I was a gross school district ranking by individual category which contained the universe of responses in a graphic display

format. Phase II was a direct comparison of school districts on either end of Robert's effectiveness spectrum i.e., most effective school closing with a point score of 37-45 (Quadrant IV) versus the least effective school closing with a point score of 0-29 (Quadrant I), and the individual category responses which led to each effectiveness conclusion.

In analyzing each question in Phase I, with the exception of questions 13 and 16, the percentage of the respondents selecting each of the five choices was computed by dividing the total sum of responses by the number of respondents. The percentages then provided the researcher with a ready means for comparing the school districts and the overall impact of declining enrollments. A further means of analyzing each question was to determine an "average favorableness rating". This rating was calculated by multiplying the favorableness rating by the frequency tabulation divided by the total number of respondents.

A rank-difference of relationship devised by Noll (19-65) was used to analyze each question within the impact areas in Phase II, with the exception of questions number 13 and 16. The technique consists of obtaining scores from an entire population then ranking the population into groups. The scores of the individual groups are averaged. The size of the difference between the two groups provides a measure of the extent of agreement.⁸³

⁸³Noll, Introduction to Educational Measurement, p. 485.

As in Phase I, an "average favorableness rating score" was obtained for each questionnaire category. The "difference of agreement score" was then computed by subtracting the lowest favorableness rating score from the highest.

Interviews and Examination of Documents

The primary data for analysis in this study is the information collected through the questionnaire. The structured interviews and examination of documents served to provide a higher level of validity to the questionnaire. The investigator found no discrepancies between the responses to the questionnaire and the information provided through the interview.

In analyzing the interview data, the responses to each of the questions pertaining to the eight areas of impact are summarized. A general qualitative comparison is then made between the two quadrants.

In major research question number 2, there are two specific parts of the question which pertain to the interviews: (a) Are teachers more involved in making school district related decisions? and (b) Do teachers have difficulty coping with the closing of a school? All other parts of the major research questions are analyzed specifically through the questionnaire's data presentation.

No quantitative analysis of the examination of public documents is made. The information provided by the documents

was supportive of the data from the questionnaire and interviews.

Summary

A two-part survey instrument was mailed to sixty-one (61) superintendents of school districts that had closed at least one school prior to 1977, due to a decline in enrollment. Fifty-two (52) or eighty-five (85) percent, of the questionnaires were returned to the researcher. Fifty (50) of the questionnaires were fully completed and analyzed for this study. The school districts were categorized into four quadrants of effectiveness per Robert (1978). Eight superintendents representing the most effective school closings and the least effective school closings were interviewed.

The plan for analysis focused primarily on the data collected from the survey instrument. The interpretation of data from the survey instrument was divided into two phases. The data are graphically displayed and quantitatively analyzed. The information obtained from the interviews and public documents received a qualitative analysis.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The information obtained from the questionnaires and interviews is presented and analyzed in this chapter. The material is organized into three parts:

Long-Term Impact of School Closings, Due to a Decline in Enrollment, on School Districts

An analysis of the major research questions is presented, followed by an analysis and discussion of each question. A summary of the data pertaining to the school district overview is graphically displayed and discussed.

Long-Term Impact of Effective-Smooth School Closings Versus Ineffective-Problem School Closings

A direct comparison is made of school districts identified as having the least effective and the most effective school closings.

Interviews

A qualitative analysis of the structured interviews with the eight superintendents representing the least effective and the most effective school closings is made.

Long-Term Impact of School Closings, Due to a
Decline in Enrollment, on School Districts

Overview of School Districts

Each of the fifty (50) school districts participating in this study had closed at least one school, due to a decline in enrollment, prior to the 1977-1978 school year. When the districts were surveyed for this study in November of 1982, the student enrollment per district ranged from 285 in the smallest district to 15,316 in the largest. The average enrollment per district was 3,005, with an average enrollment per school of 414, and an average of 7.3 schools per district (see Table 3).

The fifty school districts have closed a total of one hundred thirty-six (136) schools during the past ten years due to declining enrollments. The average number of schools closed per district is 2.72 (see Table 4).

The superintendents have massed a combined total of 414 years of service in the fifty (50) districts. The superintendent with the longest tenure has 28 years, and two superintendents hold the shortest tenure of six months. The average tenure held by the superintendents, in the fifty (50) districts, is 8.28 years (see Table 5).

The average number of schools closed by the superintendents, during their tenure in the district, is 1.98. Twelve

TABLE 3
 CURRENT SIZE OF DISTRICT
 N=50

Number of School Districts	Number of Schools Per District
7	2
9	3
8	4
7	5
1	6
4	7
1	8
1	9
2	10
2	11
1	14
2	16
2	18
1	22
1	27
1	31
Total 50	363

Average Number of Schools Per District: 7.26

Total Enrollment of 50 School Districts: 150,226

Enrollment Ranged from 285 to 15,316 Per District

Average Enrollment Per District: 3,004.52

Average Enrollment Per School: 413.85

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF SCHOOL DISTRICT CLOSING OVERVIEW 1972 to 1982

N=50

Number of School Districts	Number of Schools Closed Due to Declining Enrollment per District
18	1
13	2
8	3
5	4
1	5
1	7
2	8
1	9
1	11
Total 50	136

Total Number of Schools Closed Per District: 136

Average Number of Schools Closed Per District: 2.72

TABLE 5

SUMMARY OF THE SUPERINTENDENTS' TENURE
IN THE DISTRICT

N=50

Superintendents	Years of Tenure
	6 months
2	
1	1
4	2
1	3
5	4
3	5
6	6
4	7
5	8
4	9
4	10
1	12
3	13
3	15
1	17
1	20
1	25
1	28
<hr/>	
Total 50	414

Average Number of Years of Tenure as Superintendent:

8.28

(12) of the superintendents have not closed any schools during their tenure, and twenty (20) of the superintendents have closed only one school. Seven (7) of the superintendents have closed a total of fifty-three (53) schools (see Table 6). These seven (7) superintendents, who have facilitated the closing of 54 percent of the total number of schools closed, have a combined tenure within their respective districts of 60 years, or an average of 8.6 years each. Superintendents who closed only one school averaged 9.7 years of tenure; superintendents who closed two schools averaged 11 years of tenure; and superintendents who closed three schools averaged 10.3 years of tenure. The twelve (12) superintendents, who were hired after the last school in the district was closed, have an average of 3.5 years of tenure. Generally, this data seem to indicate that superintendents do not lose their positions when having to close schools due to declining enrollment. In fact, the majority of superintendents participating in this study who have closed schools, have more years tenure in their respective districts, than the national average for superintendents.

Research Questions

The following pages contain the presentation and analysis of the major research questions of this study. The questions are presented separately, followed by a tabulation of responses, a breakdown of responses by percentage, an average favorableness

TABLE 6

SUPERINTENDENT'S TENURE IN DISTRICT
AND NUMBER OF SCHOOLS CLOSED

N=50

Superintendents	Years of Tenure	Number of Schools Closed
2	6 months	0
1	1	0
3	2	0
2	5	0
4	4	0
1	3	1
4	6	1
1	6	1
3	7	1
2	8	1
1	9	1
2	10	1
1	12	1
1	13	1
2	15	1
1	20	1
1	28	1
1	4	2
1	6	2
1	7	2
1	8	2
1	10	2
1	17	2
1	25	2
2	9	3

Continued

TABLE 6-CONTINUED
 SUPERINTENDENT'S TENURE IN DISTRICT
 AND NUMBER OF SCHOOLS CLOSED

N=50

Superintendents	Years of Tenure	Number of Schools
1	10	3
1	13	3
1	2	4
1	5	5
1	8	7
1	9	7
1	15	8
1	13	9
1	8	11
Total 50	414	99

Combined Years of Tenure: 414

Average Number of Schools Closed Per Superintendent: 1.98

rating score, and a narrative analysis of the results.

Major Research Question Number 1

Tables 7 and 8 present the average favorableness rating score and percentage breakdown in major research question number 1: community support and involvement. As shown in Table 7, four (4) percent of the superintendents indicated that community support was less favorable today, than five years ago; 18 percent rated community support a 4; and 24 percent rated community support a 5, more favorable. The majority, 54 percent, of the superintendents rated community support a 3, about the same. The average favorableness rating score was 3.6. With 96 percent of the superintendents rating community support today, as compared to five years ago, a 3 or above, the assumption can be made that the closing of schools, due to a decline in enrollment, has not diminished community support. In fact, 42 percent of the superintendents indicated that community support has actually improved during the past five years. Four (4) of the superintendents' comments directly attributed the increased community support to the closing of schools. Their comments included: "Community support has increased because the public feels that the district is being run more efficiently"... "The closing of our schools made the community pull together for the first time they can see that our financial problems are real"... "We've been able to pass a tax referendum because we were able to convince the public

TABLE 7

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1: Community. Has community support and involvement increased or decreased since the closing of a school or schools, due to a decline in enrollment?

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Less Favorable	1	2	4%
	2	-	-
About the Same	3	27	54%
	4	9	18%
More Favorable	5	12	24%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.6

that the district is doing a better job since the closing of two of our schools." The 4 percent of the respondents, who rated community support as less favorable, gave no indication as to a possible cause.

Table 8 depicts community involvement in making school related decisions today, as compared to five years ago. Six (6) percent of the superintendents responded with a 1 or 2 rating (less involved), while 28 percent responded with a 4 or 5 rating (more involved). The average favorableness rating score was 3.3. No comments were made, on the survey instrument, by the superintendents pertaining specifically to this question. However, it appears, based on the data, that community involvement has shown only a slight increase during the past five years (28 percent), but the majority (66 percent) of the school districts that have closed schools, have not involved the community to any greater extent in the decision making process.

Major Research Question 2

Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 present the average favorableness rating and percentage breakdown in major research question 2: student achievement, dropouts, absences, and expulsions. As shown in Table 9, no superintendents indicated a drop in student achievement during the past five years. Twenty-four (24) of the superintendents indicated that student achievement had remained the same, with a 3 rating. Fifty-two (52) percent of

TABLE 8

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Less Involved	1	1	2%
	2	2	4%
About the Same	3	33	66%
	4	9	18%
More Involved	5	5	10%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.3

TABLE 9

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2: Students. Has student achievement for the district increased, decreased, or remained the same? Has there been a change in the number of student dropouts, absences, or expulsions?

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Decreased	1	-	-
	2	-	-
Remained the Same	3	24	48%
	4	17	34%
Increased	5	9	18%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.7

the superintendents indicated that student achievement had increased during the past five years. Of the 52 percent, who indicated that student achievement had increased, 17 rated the increase as a 4 or 5, and nine (9) rated the increase as a 5. The average favorableness rating was 3.7.

The superintendents were asked to respond to this question by indicating the percentage of increase or decrease in achievement. The increase in achievement, as perceived by the superintendent, ranged from 2 percent to 30 percent, with an average increase of 8.6 percent. Table 9-A presents a breakdown per school district of the number of schools closed, due to a decline in enrollment, with the corresponding student achievement rating. Twenty-four (24) of the school districts rated student achievement as a 3, remained the same, and closed a combined total of 50 schools for a 2.08 average number of schools closed per district. Seventeen (17) of the school districts rated student achievement a 4 and closed a combined total of 67 schools, for an average of 3.94 schools closed per district. Nine (9) of the school districts rated student achievement a 5, increased, and closed a combined total of 19 schools for an average of 2.1 schools closed per district. When those districts that rated student achievement either a 4 or 5, indicating an increase, are combined, the average number of schools closed per district is 3.31. The data indicate that student achievement has increased an average of 8.6 percent during the past

TABLE 9-A
 NUMBER OF SCHOOLS CLOSED PER DISTRICT
 AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RATING

N=50

Student Achievement Rating	Decreased		Remained the Same		Increased	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Number of Schools Closed Per District			1	9	1	
			1	1	4	
			1	11	2	
			8	3	4	
			1	2	1	
			1	7	1	
			3	1	3	
			1	4	1	
			1	3	2	
			1	5		
			2	2		
			1	6		
			4	4		
			3	1		
			3	4		
			2	2		
			1	2		
			2			
			4			
			2			
			1			
			2			
			2			
			2			

five years (as perceived by the superintendents). The data also indicate that in school districts with an average of 3.31 schools closed student achievement increased, while in districts closing an average of 2.08 schools student achievement tended to remain the same during the past five years. The school district that closed the most schools, eleven (11), indicated a 15 percent increase in achievement. In responding to the questionnaire, the superintendent of this district rated the 15 percent increase in achievement as a 4, rather than a 5. Since the difference of increase between a 4 and a 5 rating is imprecise, the researcher believes that it is more accurate to combine the two rating scores for comparison purposes. The same treatment is also used when analyzing ratings of 1 and 2.

Based on this study, the assumption can be made that the closing of schools, due to declining enrollment, has not impacted negatively on student achievement. Generally, the data indicate that superintendents of districts that averaged closing 3.31 schools, perceived the effects of school closings to positively influence student achievement. This finding is supported by the comments made by a number of superintendents which can be summarized as..."With the closing of a school, a great deal of pressure is put on teachers and administrators to do a better job and as a result, our students are scoring higher on achievement tests."

Table 10 presents the percentage breakdown and average

TABLE 10
STUDENT ABSENCES

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
More Student Absences	1	2	4%
	2	2	4%
About the Same	3	29	58%
	4	8	16%
Fewer Student Absences	5	9	18%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.4

favorableness rating of student absences. Eight (8) of the school districts indicated by a rating of 1 or 2 that there had been an increase in student absences during the past five years. Thirty-four (34) percent of the school districts indicated a decrease in student absences, with a 4 or 5 rating. The majority of school districts, 58 percent, indicated with a 3 rating that student absences had remained the same, during the past five years. Three (3) of the school districts, which experienced more student absences during the past five years, had closed one school each. The fourth school district, which had experienced more student absences, had closed two schools. The districts had closed an average of 1.25 schools each. The superintendents, in responding to this particular question, did not give any indication as to a possible reason for this increase in student absences. The researcher examined student achievement in each of the districts and found that student achievement had received the same rating from each district, a 3 (about the same).

The nine (9) school districts that experienced fewer student absences, a rating of 5, had closed an average of 1.9 schools each. The superintendents of these districts did not provide specific comments as explanation for the decrease in the number of absences. The researcher found, while reviewing the student achievement rating in these districts, that in eight (8) of the districts, student achievement aver-

aged an increase of 12.38 percent during the past five years. In the ninth (9th) district, student achievement had remained the same for the past five years. According to the data, the school districts with fewer student absences, a rating of 5, closed more schools and eight of the nine districts, averaged an increase of 12.38 percent in student achievement (as perceived by the superintendent). The school districts with more student absences, a rating of 1 or 2, closed fewer schools, 1.25 versus 1.9, and experienced no increase in student achievement (achievement remained the same) during the past five years.

Table 11 presents the percentage breakdown and average favorableness rating of student dropouts. Eighty (80) percent of the districts indicated that the number of student dropouts had remained the same, with a rating of 3. Twenty (20) percent of the districts indicated fewer student dropouts with a rating of 4 or 5.

The school districts which participated in this study served elementary aged children, therefore, one would not expect a great number of dropouts. Two (2) of the superintendents noted that a rating of 3, indicated that the number of dropouts remained the same for the past five years because the district had not experienced any dropouts.

Table 12 presents the percentage breakdown and average favorableness rating of student expulsions during the past five years. Thirteen (13) percent of the school districts ex-

TABLE 11
 STUDENT DROPOUTS
 N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
More Student Dropouts	1	-	-
	2	-	-
Remained the Same	3	40	80%
	4	5	10%
Fewer Student Dropouts	5	5	10%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.3

TABLE 12

STUDENT EXPULSIONS

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
More Student Expulsions	1	3	6.5%
	2	3	6.5%
About the Same	3	26	55%
	4	6	13%
Fewer Student Expulsions	5	9	19%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.3

perienced an increase in expulsions. Thirty-two (32) percent of the school districts indicated a rating of 4 or 5, a decrease in student expulsions. The majority of the school districts, 55 percent, noted with a rating of 3, that the number of student expulsions had remained the same during the past five years.

The nine (9) school districts that indicated a rating of 5, fewer student expulsions, averaged a student achievement rating of 4.25, a student absence rating of 4.25, and closed an average of two schools each, during the past five years. The six (6) school districts that indicated an increase in student expulsions, with a rating of 1 or 2, averaged a student achievement rating of 3, a student absence rating of 3.16, and averaged closing 2.66 schools each, during the past five years. Two of the superintendents who indicated a rating of 5, fewer student expulsions, stated that there had been no expulsions in the district during the past five years. However, a third superintendent, who indicated a rating of 5, commented that student suspensions had increased more than ten times during the past five years. The superintendent made no mention as to a cause for this tremendous increase in suspensions.

The data appear to indicate that those districts which experienced fewer student expulsions, experienced increased student achievement and fewer student absences. The majority

of school districts, 55 percent, had no increase or decrease in expulsions during the past five years.

In summarizing the data pertaining to major research question 2, during the past five years, the majority of school districts experienced an increase in student achievement with an average increase of 8.6 percent; the majority of school districts reported that student absences, student dropouts, and student expulsions remained about the same.

Major Research Question 3

Tables 13 and 14 present the average favorableness rating and percentage breakdown in major research question number 3. For purposes of analysis this question is divided into two sections. Section one contains collective bargaining agreements and teacher dismissal. This section is analyzed here, while section two of this question pertaining to teachers involvement in district related decisions and their ability to cope with school closings, is analyzed with the interview data. Two of the school districts participating in this study indicated that teachers did not engage in collective bargaining in their districts, therefore, Table 13 indicates forty-eight (N=48) respondents.

Table 13 shows that the majority, 65 percent, of the school districts indicated that collective bargaining agreements in regard to the administration, as compared to five years ago, has remained about the same with a 3 rating. The

TABLE 13

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3: Teachers. (a) Have the terms of the collective bargaining agreement become more favorable to teachers or to administrators? (b) Is it easier to dismiss incompetent teachers today than five years ago? (c) Are teachers more involved in making school district related decisions? (d) Do teachers have difficulty in coping with the closing of a school?

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

N=48

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Less Favorable to the Admin.	1	3	6%
	2	8	17%
About the Same	3	31	65%
	4	5	10%
More Favorable to the Admin.	5	1	2%

Average Favorableness Rating: 2.85

average favorableness rating for this question is 2.85, which indicates a "less favorable" rating in regard to the administration. Twelve (12) percent of the school districts indicated with a 4 or 5 rating, that the collective bargaining agreement in regard to the administration, is more favorable. Twenty-three (23) percent of the school districts, indicated with a 1 or 2 rating that the agreement was less favorable to the administration today, than five years ago. No specific comments were made by the superintendents as an explanation for this change in favorableness toward the administration.

A comparison was made of the average number of schools each of the two groups, those with a 1 or 2 rating and those with a 4 or 5 rating, had closed due to declining enrollment. The eleven (11) districts that rated the collective bargaining agreement as less favorable to the administration had closed an average of 2.91 schools per district, with the majority of the schools prior to 1979, while the most recent closing was in June of 1981. The six (6) districts, that rated the agreement as more favorable, had closed an average of 2.17 schools per district with the majority of the schools being closed prior to 1978, however, two districts had closed schools in June of 1982.

Table 14 shows that the majority of school districts, 68 percent, rated a 3 (about the same) in responding to the question: "Is it easier or more difficult to dismiss incom-

TABLE 14
TEACHER DISMISSAL
N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
More Difficult	1	9	18%
	2	7	14%
About the Same	3	34	68%
	4	-	-
Easier	5	-	-

Average Favorableness Rating: 2.5

petent teachers today, than five years ago?" Thirty-two (32) of the school districts indicated that it is more difficult, with a 1 or 2 rating. None of the districts indicated that it was easier to dismiss incompetent teachers today, than five years ago. While the majority of the school districts, thirty-four (34), indicated no real change, sixteen (16) of the school districts indicated that it was more difficult to dismiss incompetent teachers today, than five years ago. The 2.5 favorableness rating also indicates that it is more difficult, on the average, to dismiss incompetent teachers today, than five years ago. Generally it appears, based on the data, that closing schools has little effect on the ease of dismissing incompetent teachers. In fact, several superintendents commented that due to the closing of schools, school districts had developed stringent guidelines for teacher dismissal making it more difficult to dismiss teachers for incompetence.

Major Research Question 4

Table 15 presents major research question 4 with a summary of the percentage breakdown, and average favorableness rating pertaining to the impact the closing of schools, due to a decline in enrollment, has had on the curriculum. Twenty-four (24) percent of the superintendents indicated with a 1 or 2 rating, a less favorable, impact on the curriculum. Ten (10) percent of the superintendents indicat-

TABLE 15

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 4: Curriculum. Has there been a reduction in the programs or courses being offered? Has the pupil/teacher ratio changed? Are there more split or combination classes? Are there fewer purchases of instructional materials?

CURRICULUM

SUMMARY OF IMPACT

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Less Favorable	1	5	10%
	2	7	14%
No Change	3	5	10%
	4	13	26%
More Favorable	5	20	40%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.7

ed with a 3 rating, no change, in the curriculum and sixty-six (66) percent indicated with a 4 or 5 rating, a more favorable impact, on the curriculum. Table 15-A shows a breakdown of responses from the superintendents by categories.

When asked if fewer programs and courses are being offered as a result of declining enrollment and the closing of schools, seventy-four (74) percent of the superintendents responded with "no" and twenty-six (26) percent responded with "yes."

Five (5) of the superintendents who indicated that fewer programs or courses were being offered, explained that the drop in the number of courses was more a reflection of economics than of school closings. Three (3) superintendents noted that their districts were offering more courses and programs. These new programs or courses included: classes for the gifted and talented, computer literacy, band, and an expansion of the science curriculum. One superintendent stated: "The efficiency resulting from closing two of our schools has allowed us to continue to offer more programs and services at a reduced cost...if we had not closed the schools, the curriculum would certainly have suffered."

In responding to the question: "As a result of declining enrollment and the closing of schools, has there been a change in the pupil/teacher ratio?" twenty-two (22) percent of the superintendents indicated that the pupil/teacher ratio had decreased. Sixteen (16) percent of the superintendents

TABLE 15-A
CURRICULUM CATEGORIES

N=50

As a result of declining enrollment and the closing of schools, are there fewer programs or courses being offered:

No 74%

Yes 26%

As a result of declining enrollment and the closing of schools, has there been a change in the pupil/teacher ratio?

Decrease 22%

Increase 16%

No Change 62%

Are there more split or combination classes as a result of the closing of schools and declining enrollment?

No 72%

Yes 28%

As a result of declining enrollment and the closing of schools, are there fewer program innovations?

No 76%

Yes 24%

As a result of declining enrollment and the closing of schools, are there fewer purchases of instructional materials?

No 82%

Yes 18%

indicated that the ratio had increased. The majority of superintendents, sixty-two (62) percent, indicated that no change had occurred in the pupil/teacher ratio. The eleven (11) districts which experienced a decrease in the ratio indicated an average drop of three students per teacher, however, the range of the decrease in pupils per teacher, ranged from 1 to 8. The eight districts that experienced an increase in pupils per teacher, indicated an average of three more pupils per teacher with a range of 1 to 5 per teacher. One superintendent noted: "Services are easier and more efficiently delivered since the students are all in only two physical locations...achievement has increased with one or two additional students per teacher."

In responding to the question: "Are there fewer program innovations as a result of declining enrollment and the closing of schools?" seventy-six (76) percent of the superintendents said, "no." Twenty-four (24) percent of the superintendents indicated "yes" there were fewer program innovations.

In responding to the question: "Are there more split or combination classes as a result of declining enrollment and the closing of schools?" seventy-two (72) percent of the superintendents stated, "no." Twenty-eight (28) percent of the superintendents indicated "yes" there were more split and combination classes as a result of declining enrollment and

the closing of schools.

Eighty-two (82) percent of the school districts have not cut back on the purchasing of instructional materials. Of the eighteen (18) percent who are making fewer purchases of instructional materials, one superintendent explained: "Fewer students require fewer materials."

Major Research Question 5

Table 16 presents major research question 5: the school budget and a breakdown by percentage of the average favorableness rating. In responding to the question: "Has the closing of a school or schools resulted in a financial savings for the district?" no school district indicated a 1 or 2 rating, additional expense. Four (4) districts indicated with a 3 rating that no change had occurred, as a result of the closing of a school. Nineteen (19) or 39 percent, of the districts indicated by a rating of 4 that a savings had occurred. The majority of the districts, 53 percent, indicated by a 5 rating that a considerable financial savings had resulted from the closing of one or more schools. The average favorableness rating was 4.5. A number of superintendents noted that their districts had saved a considerable number of dollars ranging from 30,000 dollars to more than 750,000 dollars per district. One school district, for the first time, had a budget surplus of 1.5 million dollars. The closing of schools, due to decline in enrollment, result-

TABLE 16

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 5: School Budget. Has the closing of a school resulted in a financial savings for the district?

SCHOOL BUDGET

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Additional Expense	1	-	-
	2	-	-
No Change	3	4	8%
	4	19	39%
Consider- able Savings	5	26	53%

Average Favorableness Rating: 4.5

ed in a financial savings for ninety-two (92) percent of the school districts that participated in this study.

Major Research Question 6

Tables 17, 18, and 19 present the average favorableness rating and percentage breakdown in major research question 6: operating under a long-range plan; leadership effectiveness of other administrators in the district; and changes in the role of the superintendent. Table 17 shows that eighteen (18) percent of the superintendents indicated a rating of 1 or 2, not really, while fifty-two (52) percent indicated a rating of 4 or 5, definitely, a long-range plan detailing procedures for coping with changes in enrollment, is in operation. Thirty (30) percent of the superintendents indicated a rating of 3, somewhat, operating under a long-range plan. One superintendent with a rating of 1, not really, stated that the district was in the process of developing such a plan. A second superintendent, with a rating of 1, explained that it was not feasible to operate under a long-range plan for coping with enrollment decline because "The population in the district had a tendency to grow and decline unpredictably." A third superintendent indicated a rating of 2 and explained that the district had developed such a plan and found it to be "unhelpful."

The average favorableness rating was 3.6 as shown in Table 17. This rating confirms that the majority of districts

TABLE 17

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 6: Administration. Do administrators operate under a long-range plan? Has the role of the superintendent changed as enrollment declined? Are administrators more effective leaders due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools?

OPERATING UNDER LONG-RANGE PLANS

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Not Really	1	3	6%
	2	6	12%
Somewhat	3	15	30%
	4	11	22%
Definitely	5	15	30%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.6

are operating, to some degree, under long-range plans for coping with enrollment changes. The researcher compared the nine (9) districts which indicated a rating of 1 or 2, not really, and the twenty-six (26) districts which indicated a rating of 4 or 5, definitely, operating under a long-range plan for coping with enrollment decline, in relation to each district's response to the favorableness of community support (see Table 7 page 75). Table 17-A shows that those districts with a rating of 1 or 2, not really, averaged a 3.11 average favorableness rating on community support. Those districts which definitely operate under a long-range plan, rating 4 or 5, averaged a 3.77 favorableness rating on community support. Therefore, those districts which definitely operate under a long-range plan for coping with enrollment decline, when compared to those districts that do not operate under this type of plan, have a more favorable community support rating average of .66.

Table 18 shows that thirty (30) percent of the superintendents indicated by a 1 or 2 rating that their role had not changed due to a decline in enrollment and the closing of schools. Twenty-four (24) percent indicated by a rating of 4 that change had occurred and one superintendent indicated his role had changed, to a great extent, by a rating of 5. Forty-four (44) percent of the superintendents indicated by a rating of 3, that their roles had changed somewhat. The average fa-

TABLE 17-A
 SUMMARY OF COMPARISON: COMMUNITY SUPPORT
 AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING

N=50

	Community Support Rating	Tabulation of Responses from Districts with 1 or 2 Rating on Long- Range Plan	Tabulation of Responses from Districts with 4 or 5 rating on Long-Range Plan
Less Favorable	1	1	1
	2	-	-
About the Same	3	6	11
	4	1	6
More Favorable	5	1	8
	Total	9	26

Districts with 1 or 2 Rating:

Average Favorableness Rating is 3.11

Districts with 4 or 5 Rating:

Average Favorableness Rating is 3.77

TABLE 18
 CHANGES IN ROLE OF SUPERINTENDENT
 DUE TO A DECLINE IN ENROLLMENT
 AND THE CLOSING OF SCHOOLS
 N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Not at All	1	12	24%
	2	3	6%
Somewhat	3	22	44%
	4	12	24%
To a Great Extent	5	1	2%

Average Favorableness Rating: 2.7

avorableness rating was 2.7, which indicates little change in the superintendent's role, due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools.

Table 18-A shows a breakdown of the individual superintendent's years of tenure in the school district and the number of schools closed during the superintendent's years of tenure in the district. This information is then grouped under (a) rating of 1 or 2 (not at all) or (b) rating of 4 or 5 (to a great extent). The "a" group averaged 10.6 years of tenure in the school district and also averaged closing 1.73 schools each. The "b" group averaged 5.5 years of tenure in the district and closed an average of 1.08 schools each. However, there were four superintendents in the "a" group and five superintendents in the "b" group, who had not closed any schools. The data appear important in respect to the difference in the average number of years of tenure between the two groups. The difference in years of tenure between the two groups is 5.1. Those superintendents, who indicated that their role had not changed due to a decline in enrollment and the closing of schools, averaged almost twice as many years of tenure in their school districts, which appears to be a major difference. A possible explanation for this major difference, in the number of years of tenure in the district and the manner in which the superintendents perceive their role as it relates to the closing of schools, is that the superintendents who have averaged

TABLE 18-A

CHANGES IN ROLE OF SUPERINTENDENT, NUMBER
OF YEARS TENURE IN DISTRICT, AND NUMBER OF SCHOOLS CLOSED

N=50

Group A: Changes in Role
Not at All
Rating of 1 or 2

Group B: Changes in Role
To a Great Extent
Rating of 4 or 5

Years Tenure	Number of Schools Closed	Years Tenure	Number of Schools Closed
9	3	6	2
6	0	2	0
5	0	4	1
6	0	4	2
20	1	8	1
7	2	15	1
10	1	9	3
1	1	2	0
1	4	6	0
25	2	4	1
5	0	10	3
28	1	6mos.	0
15	1	1	0
8	7		
13	3		

Group A: Average Number of
Years of Tenure - 10.6

Average Number of
Schools Closed - 1.73

Group B: Average Number of
Years of Tenure - 5.5

Average Number of
Schools Closed - 1.08

10.6 years of tenure have also acquired strong leadership skills over the years, which allow them to deal effectively with numerous complex problems and personalities. It would logically follow that such a superintendent would perceive the closing of a school "as just another problem to be solved."

Table 19 shows that thirty-six (36) percent of the superintendents responded with a 1 or 2 (not at all) rating to the question: "Do you feel that other administrators in your district have become more effective leaders due to declining enrollments and the closing of schools?" Twenty (20) percent indicated with a 4 or 5 rating (to a great extent) that other administrators had become more effective leaders. Forty-four (44) percent of the superintendents indicated a rating of 3 (somewhat) in responding to the question. The average favorableness rating was 2.7, indicating that superintendents generally view other administrators in their district as not having become more effective leaders, due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools.

Table 19-A shows a breakdown of the number of years of tenure the superintendent has in the district, the number of schools closed during the superintendent's tenure, and the rating the superintendent indicated when responding to the question on leadership effectiveness of other administrators in the district. Group A is composed of those superintendents who indicated a 1 or 2 rating (not at all). Group B is composed of

TABLE 19

EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Not at All	1	9	18%
	2	9	18%
Somewhat	3	22	44%
	4	9	18%
To a Great Extent	5	1	2%

Average Favorableness Rating: 2.7

TABLE 19-A

EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP,
TENURE IN DISTRICT, AND NUMBER
OF SCHOOLS CLOSED

N=50

Group A: Other Administrators
have (not at all) become more
Effective Leaders/Rating 1 or 2

Group B: Other Administrators
have (to a great extent) become
more Effective Leaders/Rating
4 or 5

Years of Tenure	Number of Schools Closed	Years of Tenure	Number of Schools Closed
6	0	4	2
6	1	9	1
7	2	7	1
20	1	10	1
10	1	10	2
25	2	10	3
4	1	6mos.	0
6	0	7	1
5	0	8	7
28	1	2	0
8	11		
13	9		
6	0		
2	0		
5	0		
6	0		
15	1		
8	1		

Group A: Average Number of Years Tenure - 10
Average Number of Schools Closed - 1.72

Group B: Average Number of Years Tenure - 6.75
Average Number of Schools Closed - 1.8

those superintendents who indicated a 4 or 5 rating (to a great extent). The average number of years of tenure in the school district, for those superintendents in group A, was 10 years and the average number of schools closed by the superintendents was 1.72. In group B, the average tenure for the superintendents in the district was 6.75 years and the average number of schools closed by the superintendents was 1.8. Those superintendents who indicated that other administrators in their district had not become more effective leaders, due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools, averaged 3.25 more years of tenure than those superintendents in group B, who indicated that other administrators in their district had become more effective leaders. There is no readily available explanation for the difference in how the two groups view other administrators in the district. As suggested earlier when discussing Table 18-A, the superintendents with a greater number of years of tenure who appear to see little change in their own role as superintendent due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools, may not perceive any change in the role of other administrators in the district, therefore, other administrators would not be viewed as having become more effective leaders.

Major Research Question 7

Table 20 presents major research question 7: the use of closed school buildings. Superintendents responded to this

TABLE 20

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 7: Closed Buildings. Are closed buildings being sold, leased, demolished, used to produce income, used for community activities, or standing vacant?

USE OF BUILDINGS

Current Use of Building:	Percentage*
Sold	37%
Leased or Rented	31%
Demolished	5%
Community Activities	11%
Vacant	5%
Other Conversions	11%

*Based on information pertaining to 106 of the closed buildings.

question by reporting the current status of 106 of the 136 closed buildings. Thirty-seven (37) percent of the buildings were sold; thirty-one (31) percent were leased or rented; eleven (11) percent were used for community activities; five (5) percent were vacant; and five (5) percent were demolished. Eleven (11) percent were converted into either school offices, materials centers, alternative schools, or storage facilities for the school district. Ninety (90) percent of the 106 buildings were being utilized productively. Several of the buildings that were sold, were sold to parks and recreation departments and were continuing to be used by the students daily. The buildings which were leased or rented were generating income for the school district. Generally, the superintendents, who commented on the use of the closed buildings, stated that the community had supported the manner in which the building was disposed and its current use.

Major Research Question Number 8

Tables 21, 22, and 23 present the average favorableness rating and percentage breakdown in major research question number 8. Table 21 shows that two (2) percent of the superintendents indicated a rating of 2 (a less effective education) in response to whether students are receiving a less effective, about the same, or a more effective education today, than five years ago. Thirty (30) percent of the super-

TABLE 21

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 8: General. Are students in the school district receiving an education equal to or better than they received prior to the closing of a school or schools? Are there any long-range advantages to the closing of a school? Can the closing of a school or schools have a salutary effect?

STUDENTS' EDUCATION

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
A Less Effective Education	1	-	-
	2	1	2%
About the Same	3	15	30%
	4	18	36%
A Better Education	5	16	32%

Average Favorableness Rating: 3.9

intendents indicated that students were receiving about the same education, with a 3 rating; while sixty-eight (68) percent of the superintendents indicated that students were receiving a better education today, than five years ago or prior to the closing of schools due to declining enrollment, by responding with a 4 or 5 rating. The average favorableness rating of 3.9 corresponds with the majority percentage rating.

Table 22 shows that ninety-eight (98) percent of the school districts indicated in responding to the open-ended question: "Do you feel there are any long-range advantages to closing a school due to enrollment decline?" with "yes". One superintendent responded with a "no". The superintendent stated that he could see no particular advantage in closing a school due to declining enrollment even though the closing of a school in the district had a positive impact on the quality of education. The following is a summary of the explanations from the forty-nine superintendents who gave a positive response to this question:

"Makes the community pull together. They realize for the first time our financial problems are real."

"Centralizing and consolidating programs is more cost effective and allows for more flexibility. We have more and better programs today than ten years ago. Students are getting a much better education."

"Community support is greater. The community can see that our schools are being run more efficiently. We have passed a tax referendum that we could not pass

TABLE 22

ARE THERE ANY LONG-RANGE ADVANTAGES TO THE CLOSING
OF A SCHOOL DUE TO A DECLINE IN ENROLLMENT?

N=50

Superintendents' Response	Percentage
Yes - 49	98%
No - 1	2%

before closing two of our schools."

"There are very positive advantages once you're past the initial trauma. Closing a school can end the diversion of resources away from instruction to financial costs."

"Services are more efficiently delivered and the staff is better utilized but most importantly it puts the money into instruction and not into bricks and mortar."

Table 23 shows that no superintendent indicated a rating of 1 or 2, that the closing of a school had a detrimental effect on the quality of education within his school district. Forty (40) percent of the superintendents indicated that the closing of a school had no effect, a 3 rating, on the quality of education. Sixty (60) percent of the superintendents indicated with a 4 or 5 rating that the closing of a school had a salutary effect on the quality of education within the district. The average favorableness rating for this question of 3.94 positively corresponds with the majority rating of a salutary effect.

Table 23-A shows a breakdown of those school districts that responded with a 3 rating (no effect) on the quality of education in the district. The average student population of the school district is 3,322; the average number of schools closed per district is 2.75; the average tenure of the superintendent in the district is 7.48 years; and the last school

TABLE 23

HAS THE CLOSING OF A SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS HAD A
SALUTARY OR DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE QUALITY
OF EDUCATION?

N=50

	Favorableness Rating	Tabulation of Responses	Percentage
Detrimental Effect	1	-	-
	2	-	-
No Effect	3	20	40%
	4	13	26%
Salutray Effect	5	17	34%
Average Favorableness Rating:			3.94

TABLE 23-A

BREAKDOWN OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS
 THAT EXPERIENCED A "3" RATING,
 NO EFFECT, ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

N=20

Assigned Code for District	Student Enrollment	No. of Schools Closed	Tenure of Superintendent	Year Last School was Closed
8	550 or below	1	8	77
47	"	3	4	80
36	"	2	17	77
19	"	1	10	74
22	"	1	6	74
18	"	1	28	75
42	1200 or below	1	7	75
40	"	2	2	75
28	"	1	6	77
45	2000 or below	3	3	81
43	"	4	2	76
14	"	3	4	80
48	5000 or below	1	6	74
23	"	3	4	81
10	"	4	6mo.	82
38	13000 or below	7	8	82
41	"	4	4	81

Continued

TABLE 23-A--CONTINUED

Assigned Code for District	Student Enrollment	No. of Schools Closed	Tenure of Superintendent	Year Last School Was Closed
29	1300 or below	1	8	75
27	"	9	9	82
24	"	3	13	79

Average Student Enrollment: 3.22

Average Number of Schools Closed: 2.75

Average Tenure of Superintendent: 7.48

Average Year Last School Closed: 77.85

was closed, on the average, during the 1977-1978 school year. Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 present the overview of all the districts, which participated in the study, the average enrollment of all the districts is 3,005 pupils; the average number of schools closed per district is 2.72; the average tenure of the superintendents is 8.28 years; and the last school was closed, on the average, in 1978. When a comparison is made between those districts which indicated a 3 rating, no effect on the quality of education, they appear to be very similar to the "average" of all the districts.

Table 23-B shows that the districts which responded with a 5 rating, the closing of schools due to a decline in enrollment had a salutary effect on the quality of education, averaged closing 3.35 schools per district; averaged closing the last school in 1978; and have superintendents with an average of 8.09 years of tenure in the district. When these districts are compared with the districts, which rated a 3, no effect on the quality of education, there appears to be little difference with one exception. The districts, which indicated that the closing of schools had definitely had a salutary effect on the quality of education, had closed an average of .60 more schools than those districts which indicated that the closing of schools had no effect on the quality of education in the district. From this data, it appears safe to assume that as districts close more schools,

TABLE 23-B

BREAKDOWN OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS
THAT EXPERIENCED A SALUTARY EFFECT,
A RATING OF 5,
ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

N=17

Assigned Code for District	Student Enrollment	No. of Schools Closed	Tenure of Superintendent	Year Last School Closed
2	1,000 or below	2	10	77
11	"	1	7	77
44	2,000 or below	3	2	80
5	"	2	1	78
4	"	2	6	82
7	"	3	9	76
31	"	3	7	76
26	"	4	2	82
25	"	2	25	76
15	"	1	13	77
13	"	1	9	75
49	"	4	5	77
20	15,000 or below	4	6mos.	80
9	"	9	13	82
1	"	1	10	76
3	"	4	10	82
12	"	11	8	81
Average:	2,710	3.35	8.09	78.47

the perceived effect on the quality of education becomes more positive.

Table 24 presents a comparison, of the responses of those districts which closed one school due to declining enrollment and those districts which closed five or more schools, on major research question number 8. The average favorableness rating for districts closing one school was 3.88 in responding to whether students were receiving a less effective education today than five years ago. The average favorableness rating for those districts closing five or more schools, in responding to this question, was 3.83. The responses from the two groups were very similar with both groups indicating a better education today than five years ago. In responding to the question: "Do you feel there are any long-range advantages to closing a school due to a decline in enrollment?" all of the districts, which had closed five or more schools, responded with a "yes." Those districts that had closed only one school responded to this question with seventeen (17) "yes" and one "no." To the question, "In your opinion, on balance, has the closing of a school or schools in your district had a salutary effect, no effect, or a detrimental effect?" the districts which had closed five or more schools responded with an average favorableness rating of 4.0. The districts that had closed only one school responded with an average favorableness rating of 3.61. The data seem to indicate that those districts which have closed five or more schools perceive the effects of

TABLE 24

COMPARISON OF RESPONSES FROM DISTRICTS WHICH
CLOSED ONE SCHOOL AND DISTRICTS WHICH CLOSED FIVE
OR MORE SCHOOLS ON MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 8

- A. Do you feel students in your district are receiving a less effective, about the same, or a better education than five years ago?

Districts Which Closed 1 School
Average Favorableness Rating: 3.88

Districts Which Closed 5 or More Schools
Average Favorableness Rating: 3.83

- B. Do you feel there are any long-range advantages to closing schools due to declining enrollment?

Districts Which Closed 1 School: Yes - 17
No - 1

Districts Which Closed 5 or More Schools: Yes - 6
No - 0

- C. In your opinion, on balance, has the closing of a school in your district had a salutary effect, no effect, or detrimental effect on the quality of education?

Districts Which Closed 1 School
Average Favorableness Rating: 3.61

Districts Which Closed 5 or More Schools
Average Favorableness Rating: 4.0

closing schools to be more beneficial than those districts which have closed only one school. These results support previous findings of this study.

Long-Term Impact of Effective-Smooth Closings
Versus
Ineffective-Problem Closings on School Districts

Overview of School Districts

Table 25 presents a summary of the overview of the school districts. The school districts are divided into two quadrants, those having the most-effective-smooth closings with a total point score of 37-45 and those districts having the least-effective-problem closings with a total point score of 0-29 per Robert (1978). Each quadrant is composed of fourteen (14) school districts. The most effective quadrant has an average enrollment of 3,350 students. The smallest districts, in the quadrant, have an enrollment of around 500 students and the largest district has an enrollment of more than 15,000 students. The most-effective districts have closed a combined total of forty-nine (49) schools due to a decline in enrollment, with an average of 3.5 schools closed per district. The superintendents in the most-effective districts have an average of 9.9 years of tenure in their respective districts, and have closed an average of 3.07 schools during their tenure.

TABLE 25

SUMMARY OF DISTRICT OVERVIEW OF
LEAST-EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CLOSINGS
AND MOST-EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Most-Effective Districts

Number of District Identified as Having Most Effective School
Closings Scoring from 37-45 Points: 14

Average Enrollment of Districts: 3,350

Number of Schools Closed Due to a Decline in Enrollment: 49

Average Number of Schools Closed Per District: 3.5

Average Number of Years Superintendent Has Served in District:
9.9

Average Number of Schools Closed by Superintendent During Tenure
in District: 3.07

Average Year Last School Was Closed: 78.8

Least-Effective Districts

Number of Districts Identified as Having Least Effective
School Closings Scoring from 0-29 Points: 14

Average Enrollment of Districts: 1,814

Number of Schools Closed Due to a Decline in Enrollment: 34

Average Number of Schools Closed Per District: 2.43

Average Number of Years Superintendent Has Served in District:
4.9

Average Number of Schools Closed by Superintendent During Tenure
in District: .79

Average Year Last School Was Closed: 77.9

The last school averaged being closed, in the most-effective districts, in August of 1978.

The least-effective quadrant has an average enrollment of 1,814 students per district. The smallest district, in the quadrant, has an enrollment of fewer than 500 students and the largest district has an enrollment of more than 8,000 students. The least-effective districts have closed a combined total of thirty-four (34) schools with an average of 2.43 schools closed per district. The superintendents, of the least-effective districts, have an average tenure of 4.9 years in their respective districts and presided over an average of less than one (.79) school closing each. Seven (7) of the superintendents have been employed since the last school was closed in their district. The last school was closed, on the average for the quadrant, in September of 1979.

In comparing the two extreme quadrants, the most apparent difference is the number of years tenure of the superintendents. The superintendents of those districts identified as have the most-effective school closings have an average of five (5) years more of tenure, than those superintendents of districts identified as having the least-effective school closings. A second difference, between the two clusters, is the number of school closings the superintendents have presided over during their tenure in the district. Those superintendents of districts having the most-effective school closings

have presided over the closing of an average of 3.07 schools, while those superintendents of districts identified as having the least-effective school closings have closed an average of less than one school each. The data appear to indicate that the experience of the superintendent has an effect on the effectiveness of the school closing. Superintendents of districts identified as having smooth school closings had twice as many years of tenure and had closed more than three times as many schools as superintendents of districts identified as having problem school closings.

Rank Difference of Relationship

Seven of the major research questions are presented in summary followed by a breakdown of responses from those districts identified as having the most-effective school closings and those districts identified as having the least-effective school closings. An average favorableness rating is obtained from each quadrant followed by the computation of the mathematical difference of agreement between the two scores. To more efficiently illustrate the difference of agreement score, the researcher has established the following interpretative scale: a score of .25 indicates some difference of agreement; a score of .50 indicates a definite difference of agreement; and a score of .75 indicates a great difference of agreement. Once the difference of agreement score is obtained, a narrative comparative analysis is then made of each of the seven

major research questions. The major research question pertaining to the use of closed school buildings has been omitted since the question does not lend itself to this particular form of analysis.

Major Research Question 1

Tables 26 and 27 present a summary of major research question 1: community support and involvement. The fourteen (14) school districts represented in quadrant I, the most-effective school closings, responded to the question: "As compared to five years ago, do you feel community support for your district is less favorable, about the same, or more favorable?" with an average favorableness rating of 3.21. Quadrant IV, composed of the fourteen (14) school districts identified as having the least effective school closings received an average favorableness rating of 3.93. The difference of agreement between the two quadrants is .72. There are a number of possible explanations for this definite difference of agreement between the two quadrants. The superintendents in quadrant IV have an average of 4.9 years of tenure in their districts as compared to the superintendents in quadrant I who have 9.9 years of tenure. The fewer years of tenure of the superintendents in quadrant IV could influence their perception of community support. Quadrant I superintendents have closed more than twice as many schools as superintendents in quadrant IV (least-effective districts) therefore, they have been more directly involved in the trauma communities

TABLE 26

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1: Community Support and Involvement.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Less Favorable	1	2	-
	2	-	-
About the Same	3	8	6
	4	1	3
More Favorable	5	3	5
	Total:	14	14

Most-Effective Quadrant I Average Favorableness
Rating: 3.21

Least-Effective Quadrant IV Average Favorableness
Rating: 3.93

Difference of Agreement: .72

experience when going through the process of closing a school. A third possible explanation is the districts in quadrant IV may have concentrated on improving community support because of the problems they had experienced in the past.

Table 27 shows the average favorableness rating and difference of agreement between the two quadrants when responding to the question: "As compared to five years ago, how involved is the community in making school related decisions?" Quadrant I (most-effective) responded with an average favorableness rating of 3.5 and quadrant IV (least-effective) with an average favorableness rating of 3.14. The difference of agreement is .36. This difference between the two quadrants is interesting because those districts in quadrant IV, who experienced the least-effective closings, and perceived community support to be more favorable today than five years ago, are involving the community about the same, as indicated by the 3.14 rating, in school related decisions. The opposite appears to be the case in quadrant I (most-effective) community support is perceived to be about the same, but there is more involvement in school related decisions. An explanation for this greater involvement in school related decisions, by the superintendents in quadrant I (most-effective), could again be contributed to the superintendents having more experience in the process of closing schools and longer tenure in the district.

TABLE 27
 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
 N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Less Favorable	1	-	1
	2	-	1
About the Same	3	9	8
	4	3	3
More Favorable	5	2	1

Most Effective Quadrant I Average Favorableness
 Rating: 3.5

Least Effective Quadrant IV Average Favorableness
 Rating: 3.14

Difference of Agreement: .36

Major Research Question 2

Tables 28, 29, 30, and 31 present a summary of major research question 2: student achievement, student absences, student dropouts, and student expulsions. In responding to the question: "Has student achievement in your district during the past five years decreased, remained the same, or increased?" (see Table 28) the average favorableness rating was 3.79 for quadrant I (most-effective) and 3.5 for quadrant IV (least-effective). The difference of agreement between the two quadrants was .29. The average increase in achievement for the two quadrants was the same, 7 percent. The .29 indicates some difference in agreement between the two quadrants that could possibly be attributed to the superintendents' interpretation of the rating scale. In at least one case, a superintendent in quadrant IV rated the increase in achievement as a 4 and designated the percent of increase as ten (10) percent, while a superintendent in quadrant I indicated a rating of 5 and designated the percent of achievement as ten (10) percent.

Table 29 presents the average favorableness rating for each of the two quadrants when responding to the question: "As compared to five years ago, are there more student absences?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I was 3.21 and the average favorableness rating for quadrant IV was 3.57. The difference of agreement between the two quadrants

TABLE 28

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2: Student achievement, dropouts, absences, and expulsions.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Decreased	1	-	-
	2	-	-
Remained the Same	3	5	9
	4	7	3
Increased	5	2	2

Most Effective Quadrant I Average Favorableness
Rating: 3.79

Least Effective Quadrant IV Average Favorableness
Rating: 3.5

Difference of Agreement: .29

TABLE 29
STUDENT ABSENCES
N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
More Student Absences	1	1	-
	2	-	2
About the Same	3	9	5
	4	2	4
Fewer Student Absences	5	2	3

Most Effective Quadrant I Average Favorableness
Rating: 3.21

Least Effective Quadrant IV average Favorableness
Rating: 3.57

Difference of Agreement: .36

is .36. Even though there is some difference of agreement between the two quadrants, with quadrant IV (least-effective) experiencing fewer student absences than quadrant I (most-effective), there is no obvious explanation for this difference.

Table 30 presents the average favorableness rating and the difference of agreement computation for each of the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "As compared to five years ago, are there fewer student dropouts, about the same, or more student dropouts?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I (most-effective) was 3.21 and for quadrant IV (least-effective) 3.43, with a difference of agreement of .22. On this particular question, the two quadrants show no real difference in the number of student dropouts occurring during the past five years.

Table 31 presents the average favorableness rating and the difference of agreement computation for each of the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "As compared to five years ago, are there more student expulsions, about the same, or fewer student expulsions?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I (most-effective) was 3.14 and for quadrant IV (least-effective) 3.86, with a difference of agreement of .72. Quadrant IV has definitely experienced fewer student expulsions than five years ago, when compared to quadrant I. A few individual school districts, in both quadrants, responded to this question by indicating that a 3, about the same,

TABLE 30
STUDENT DROPOUTS
N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
More Student Dropouts	1	-	-
	2	-	-
About the Same	3	12	10
	4	1	2
Fewer Student Dropouts	5	1	2

Most Effective Quadrant I Average Favorableness
Rating: 3.21

Least Effective Quadrant IV Average Favorableness
Rating: 3.43

Difference of Agreement: .22

TABLE 31

STUDENT EXPULSIONS

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
More Student Expulsions	1	1	1
	2	-	1
About the Same	3	10	3
	4	2	3
Fewer Student Expulsions	5	1	6

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant I: 3.14

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant IV: 3.86

Difference of Agreement: .72

should indicate that there had been no student expulsions. One superintendent indicated that while expulsions had decreased, suspensions had greatly increased. Examination of the data gave no indication as to a cause for the definite difference of agreement between the two quadrants.

To summarize the responses to major research question 2, student achievement during the past five years has increased an average of seven (7) percent in both quadrants, as perceived by the superintendents. Quadrant I (most-effective) averaged a .29 (some) increase in student achievement higher than quadrant IV (least-effective). In student absences, quadrant IV (least-effective) experienced some fewer than quadrant I, during the past five years. With student dropouts, there was no real difference between the two quadrants. With student expulsions, however, there was a definite difference between the two quadrants. Quadrant IV (least-effective) experienced .72 fewer expulsions than quadrant I.

Major Research Question 3

Tables 32 and 33 present a summary of major research question 3. Table 32 shows the average favorableness rating and the difference of agreement for each of the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "As compared to five years ago, is the collective bargaining agreement in regards to the administration more favorable, less favorable, or about the

TABLE 32

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3: Teachers and collective bargaining agreements and teacher dismissal.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS

N=27

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least* Effective Quadrant IV
More Favorable to the Administration	5	1	-
	4	1	3
About the Same	3	8	7
	2	3	1
Less Favorable to the Administration	1	1	2
		14	13*

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant I: 2.86

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant IV: 2.85

Difference of Agreement: .01

*One district does not have collective bargaining.

the same?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I (most-effective) is 2.86, and for quadrant IV (least-effective) the average favorableness rating is 2.85. The difference of agreement between the two quadrants is .01. Both quadrants indicate that during the past five years the collective bargaining agreement has become less favorable to the administration, but there is no actual difference between the two quadrants in this respect.

Table 33 presents the average favorableness rating and the difference of agreement for each of the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "Is it easier or more difficult to dismiss incompetent teachers today, than five years ago?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I is 2.21 and 2.71 for quadrant IV, with the difference of agreement being .5. Both quadrant I (most-effective) and quadrant IV (least-effective) are finding it more difficult to dismiss incompetent teachers today, however quadrant I is definitely experiencing more difficulty than quadrant IV. No explanation for this difference was found either in the comments made by the superintendents or from the questionnaires.

In summarizing major research question 3, there is no real difference between the two quadrants regarding the collective bargaining agreements favorableness toward the administration. The agreement is equally unfavorable toward both quadrants. Both quadrants are also finding it more difficult

TABLE 33

TEACHER DISMISSAL

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Easier to Dismiss Incompetent Teachers	1	-	-
	2	-	-
About the Same	3	8	11
	4	1	2
More Difficult to Dismiss Incompetent Teachers	5	5	1

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant I: 2.21

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant IV: 2.71

Difference of Agreement: .5

to dismiss incompetent teachers. However, it is important to note that there is a definite (.5) difference between the two quadrants, with quadrant I (most-effective) finding it more difficult to dismiss incompetent teachers than quadrant IV.

Major Research Question 4

Table 34 presents a summary of major research question 4. Quadrant I, in responding to the overall impact the closing of a school or schools, due to declining enrollment, has had on the curriculum, has an average favorableness rating of 3.43 and quadrant IV has an average favorableness rating of 3.29. The difference of agreement between the two quadrants is .14. The responses from both quadrants indicate that the closing of schools, due to declining enrollment, has had little impact on the curriculum.

Table 34-A presents a breakdown of the five areas of impact on the curriculum. In responding to the question: "As a result of the closing of a school or schools, are there fewer programs being offered?" seventy-one (71) percent of quadrant I indicated "no" and sixty-four (64) percent of quadrant IV. There was only a difference of seven (7) percent in the two quadrants' response to this question.

There was also a difference of seven (7) percent in the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "Has the pupil/teacher ratio decreased, increased, or remained the same?" Quadrant I (most-effective) indicated a decrease of

TABLE 34

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 4: Curriculum and reduction in programs, change in pupil/teacher ratio, more split or combination classes, fewer program innovations, and fewer purchases of instructional materials.

SUMMARY OF CURRICULUM FAVORABLENESS

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Unfavorable	1	2	2
	2	3	3
No Change	3	2	1
	4	1	5
Favorable	5	6	3

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant I: 3.43

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant IV: 3.29

Difference of Agreement: .14

TABLE 34-A
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

A. As a result of the closing of a school or schools, are there fewer programs or courses being offered:

Most-Effective Quadrant I: Yes - 29% No - 71%

Least-Effective Quadrant IV: Yes - 36% No - 64%

B. Has the pupil/teacher ratio decreased, increased, or remained the same?

Most-Effective Quadrant I: Decreased 29%, Increased 29%,
Remained the Same 42%

Least-Effective Quadrant IV: Decreased 21%, Increased 21%,
Remained the Same 58%

C. Are there more split or combination classes?

Most-Effective Quadrant I: Yes - 29% No - 71%

Least-Effective Quadrant IV: Yes - 29% No - 71%

D. Are there fewer program innovations:

Most-Effective Quadrant I: Yes - 29% No - 71%

Least-Effective Quadrant IV: Yes - 43% No - 57%

E. Are there fewer purchases of instructional materials:

Most-Effective Quadrant I: Yes - 29% No - 71%

Least-Effective Quadrant IV: Yes - 21% No - 79%

twenty-nine (29) percent, an increase of twenty-nine (29) percent, and a no change in the pupil/teacher ratio of forty-two (42) percent. Quadrant IV indicated a decrease in the pupil/teacher ratio of twenty-one (21) percent, an increase of twenty-one (21) percent, and a no change in the ratio of fifty-eight (58) percent.

In responding to the question: "Are there more split or combination classes?" both quadrants were in total agreement with a twenty-nine (29) percent response of "yes" and a seventy-one (71) percent response of "no." However, in response to the question: "Are there fewer program innovations?" there was a difference of fourteen (14) percent between the two quadrants. Quadrant I (most-effective) had a seventy-one (71) percent "no" response, which indicated that there were no fewer program innovations due to the closing of schools and declining enrollment. Quadrant IV (least-effective) had a fifty-seven (57) percent response of "no" indicating that there were no fewer program innovations.

In response to the question: "Are there fewer purchases of instructional materials?" both quadrants indicated a majority response of "no." The response from quadrant I (most-effective) was seventy-one (71) percent "no" and from quadrant IV (least-effective) a response of seventy-nine (79) percent "no." There was a difference between the two quadrants of eight (8) percent.

In summarizing major research question 4, the impact the closing of schools due to declining enrollment has had on the curriculum, there was no real difference between the two quadrants. Both quadrants indicated that the closing of schools has had basically no effect on the curriculum.

Major Research Question 5

Table 35 presents a summary of major research question 5: the school budget. The average favorableness rating for quadrant I is 4.5 and the average favorableness rating for quadrant IV is 4.36, which indicates that each quadrant experienced a considerable savings from the closing of a school or schools. The difference of agreement between the two quadrants is .14, an indication of no real difference between the least-effective districts and the most-effective districts.

Major Research Question 6

Tables 36, 37, and 38 present a summary of major research question 6. Table 36 shows the average favorableness rating and the difference of agreement for each of the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "Does your district operate under a long-range plan which details procedures for coping with changes in enrollment?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I (most-effective) is 3.86 and the average favorableness rating for quadrant IV is 3.21, with a dif-

TABLE 35

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 5: School Budget.

SCHOOL BUDGET

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Additional Expense	1	-	-
	2	-	-
No Change	3	1	2
	4	5	5
Considerable Savings	5	8	7

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant I: 4.50

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant IV: 4.36

Difference of Agreement: 14

TABLE 36

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 6: Administration operating under long-range plan; changes in role of superintendent; and effectiveness of other administrators.

OPERATING UNDER LONG-RANGE PLAN
N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Not Really	1	-	3
	2	2	1
Somewhat	3	3	4
	4	4	2
Definitely	5	5	4

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant I: 3.86

Average Favorableness Rating for Quadrant IV: 3.21

Difference of Agreement: .65

ference of agreement of .65. These findings indicate that those districts in quadrant I, identified as having the most effective school closings, are operating under a long-range plan, while those districts in quadrant IV are operating "somewhat" under a long-range plan. The .65 difference of agreement between the two quadrants supports this finding.

Table 37 shows the average favorableness rating and the difference of agreement for each of the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "Has your role as superintendent changed due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I was 3.07, indicating that the superintendents' role had changed "somewhat." The average favorableness rating for quadrant IV was 2.93, indicating that the role of the superintendent has changed only very slightly, if at all. A possible explanation for this difference of agreement between the two quadrants, even though the difference is miniscule (.14) could be attributed to the tenure of the superintendents in quadrant IV (least-effective) and their lack of involvement in actually closing schools. The superintendents in quadrant IV, on the average, have less than five years of tenure and have presided over the closing of less than one school, so it seems logical that a considerable change in role would not be expected.

Table 38 shows the average favorableness rating and the difference of agreement for each of the two quadrants, when re-

TABLE 37

CHANGE IN SUPERINTENDENT'S ROLE

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Not At All	1	1	4
	2	-	-
Somewhat	3	10	4
	4	3	5
To A Great Extent	5	-	-

Average Favorableness Rating Quadrant I: 3.07

Average Favorableness Rating Quadrant IV: 2.93

Difference of Agreement: .14

TABLE 38

EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP OF OTHER ADMINISTRATORS

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
Not at All	1	2	2
	2	1	3
Somewhat	3	4	7
	4	7	1
To a Great Extent	5	-	1

Average Favorableness Rating Quadrant I: 3.14

Average Favorableness Rating Quadrant IV: 2.5

Difference of Agreement: .64

sponding to the question: "Do you feel that other administrators in your district have become more effective leaders due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I was 3.14, indicating that the superintendents felt other administrators had become "somewhat" more effective leaders. The average favorableness rating for quadrant IV was 2.5 indicating that the superintendents felt that other administrators in the district had not become more effective leaders. The difference in agreement between the two quadrants was .64 (a definite difference). This finding is interesting when viewed in terms of the results of the long-term impact of school closings on all the school districts which participated in this study. As shown in Table 17-A, page 102, those superintendents with the most years of tenure in the district indicated that other administrators had not become more effective leaders, due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools. The opposite appears to be the case with quadrant I, the superintendents with the most years of tenure indicated that other administrators in their district had to some degree become more effective leaders, due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools. A feasible explanation is that those superintendents in quadrant I (most-effective) have demonstrated, by over-seeing smooth-effective school closings, the perceptiveness and sensitivity to solve difficult problems. It would follow that these superintendents would per-

ceive subtle strengths in other administrators in their districts and build upon them.

In summarizing major research question 6, there were definite differences between quadrant I and quadrant IV in responding to long-range planning and the perception of the effectiveness of the other administrators. There was a .65 difference of agreement in long-range planning and .64 difference of agreement in the perception of the effectiveness of other administrators, with quadrant I having a higher favorableness rating in both. There was no real difference in the two quadrants (.14) in viewing changes in the role of the superintendent.

Major Research Question 7

Major research question 7, which pertains to closed school buildings, has been omitted since it does not lend itself to this particular form of analysis.

Major Research Question 8

Tables 39, 40 and 41 present a summary of major research question 8. Table 39 shows the average favorableness rating and difference of agreement for each of the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "Do you feel that students in your district are receiving a less effective education, about the same education, or a better education than they received prior to the closing of a school or schools, five years ago?" The

TABLE 39

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION 8: General--students' education, advantages or disadvantages to closing schools, and effect of closing schools on the quality of education.

STUDENTS' EDUCATION

N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant IV
A Less Effective Education	1	-	-
	2	-	-
About the Same	3	6	2
	4	4	6
A Better Education	5	4	5

Average Favorableness Rating Quadrant I: 3.86

Average Favorableness Rating Quadrant IV: 4.07

Difference of Agreement: .21

the average favorableness rating for quadrant I was 3.86 and the average favorableness rating for quadrant IV was 4.07. Both quadrants indicated that students were receiving a better education today, than five years ago. The difference of agreement between the two quadrants was .21.

Table 40 presents the percentage breakdown and the responses to the question: "Do you feel there are any long-range advantages to closing a school due to a decline in enrollment?" Each of the quadrants responded with "yes" there are advantages to closing schools due to a decline in enrollment. There were no negative responses.

Table 41 presents the average favorableness rating and the difference of agreement for each of the two quadrants, when responding to the question: "In your opinion, on balance, has the closing of a school or schools in your district had a salutary effect, no effect, or a detrimental effect on the quality of education?" The average favorableness rating for quadrant I was 4.29 and the average favorableness rating for quadrant II was 3.79, indicating that both quadrants perceived the effect of closing a school as beneficial to the quality of education. The difference of agreement between the two quadrants was .5 (definite). The superintendents of the most-effective school districts perceived the effects of closing a school to be more positive than superintendents of the least-effective school districts.

TABLE 40

LONG-RANGE ADVANTAGES TO CLOSING SCHOOLS

Do you feel there are any long-range advantages to closing a school due to a decline in enrollment?

Most-Effective Quadrant I

Yes 100%

No -

Least-Effective Quadrant IV

Yes 100%

No -

TABLE 41
EFFECT OF CLOSING ON QUALITY OF EDUCATION
N=28

	Favorableness Rating	Most Effective Quadrant I	Least Effective Quadrant II
Detrimental Effect	1	-	-
	2	-	-
No Effect	3	4	8
	4	2	1
Salutary Effect	5	8	5

Average Favorableness Rating Quadrant I: 4.29

Average Favorableness Rating Quadrant II: 3.79

Difference of Agreement: .5

In summarizing major research question 8, both quadrants were in complete agreement on the long-range advantages of school closings. There was also agreement that students were receiving a better education today than five years ago and that the closing of schools has had a salutary effect on the district. However, quadrant I, composed of those school districts identified as having the most-effective closings, indicated that the closings of schools had had a more positive impact on the quality of education in the district, with a .5 higher rating, than quadrant IV. This finding appears to be important because those superintendents who compose quadrant I, have considerable experience in managing decline and closing schools and from all indications view the process as an opportunity for streamlining and consolidating programs and services for a more productive organization.

Interviews

Eight (8) of the superintendents participated in an in-depth interview (see Appendix C). The superintendents represented four school districts with the most-effective school closings and four districts with the least-effective school closings. For the purpose of analysis, the superintendents are divided into two quadrants. Quadrant I is composed of those superintendents who administer school districts iden-

tified as having smooth-effective school closings and quadrant IV is composed of those superintendents who administer school districts identified as having problem-ineffective school closings.

A summary of demographic and other information is presented in the following overview:

Overview

Quadrant I school districts range in student enrollment from 700 to just over 5,000. The average enrollment per district is 2,750, with an average of six schools per district. The superintendents have an average of 7½ years of tenure in the district and have averaged closing 1.5 schools each during their tenure.

Quadrant IV school districts range in student enrollment from around 500 to 2,000. The average enrollment per district is approximately 1,250, with an average of four schools per district. The superintendents have an average of six years of tenure in the district and have averaged closing 1.5 schools during their tenure.

Summary of Interviews

The responses to each of the interview questions were analyzed, compared, and summarized. The following are responses from the superintendents and/or actual quotes. The ideas ex-

pressed are limited to the superintendents who participated in this study.

Question 1

Community. A. Have any groups formed within the past five years to oppose administrative or board decisions? B. Have you surveyed the community for input during the past five years?

Quadrant I: A. Two of the superintendents indicated that groups had formed to oppose administrative or board decisions. One group opposed the closing of a school and the other group opposed proposed desegregation boundaries. Two of the superintendents indicated that no groups had formed to oppose administrative or board actions. B. Three of the superintendents indicated that citizens' advisory councils were in operation and input was continually solicited. One superintendent indicated that no formal survey had been conducted and no citizens' advisory councils were in operation.

Quadrant IV: A. All four of the superintendents indicated that no formal groups had formed to oppose administrative or board actions during the past five years. B. Two superintendents indicated that formal committees for soliciting community input had been formed and two superintendents indicated that no surveys had been conducted and no formal committees

had been formed.

Question 2

Students. A. Have you observed a noticeable change in student behavior since the closing of a school or schools? B. Please rate how you feel students have coped with the closing of their school.

Quadrant I: A. All four superintendents reported observing no noticeable change in student behavior. B. All four superintendents noted that students had coped extremely well with the closing. One superintendent stated that the district had spent a good deal of time on orientation to ensure a smooth transition from the closed school to other schools in the district.

Quadrant IV: A. Three of the superintendents stated that no change in behavior was observed. One superintendent noted that student behavior had greatly improved since the closing of a school: "Students were much better socially intergrated as a result of the closing." B. All four of the superintendents reported that students had coped excellently. Three of the superintendents noted that parents had initially been very negative about the closing, but their attitudes did not appear to impact on the students.

Question 3

Teachers. A. Has there been a noticeable change in teachers' attitudes toward the district since the closing of a school or schools? B. Have you surveyed the teachers for input?

Quadrant I: A. Three of the superintendents stated that the teachers were very understanding and supportive of the district throughout the closing process. The superintendents indicated that an effort had been made to keep the teachers informed about the closing. The fourth superintendent stated, "We had to deal with a number of complex issues including riffing and negotiating a new contract. When these issues were resolved, the teachers became more positive." B. All four of the superintendents stated that teachers were not formally surveyed for input.

Quadrant IV: A. Three of the superintendents noted that the teachers attitude today is more positive than in the past. They each agreed that at the time of the actual school closing, the teachers were negative but they changed rather quickly. One superintendent indicated that there had been no change in the teachers' attitude when closing schools. B. One superintendent said that there was no formal advisory board made up of teachers, but teachers were encouraged informally to provide input. Two of the superintendents stated that teachers were only surveyed for instructional purposes. The fourth superintendent stated, "Teachers' input is totally voluntary. We do not feel there is a need

for formality."

Question 4

Administration. A. Are there skills that you need today to be an effective superintendent that you did not need prior to the closing of a school or schools? B. Have other administrators in your district found creative ways for coping with the closing of schools?

Quadrant I: A. Three of the superintendents stated "yes" there were skills they needed today to deal with the closing of schools. One superintendent commented: "I had to learn how to run a completely open system...there can be no secrets from the public when you are trying to close a school. The most important thing I had to learn was how to separate fact from emotion." Another superintendent stated: "I was hired for this position because I am considered to be an expert in managing decline." One superintendent stated that the skills needed today were the ones always needed: "Strong leadership." B. Three of the superintendents stated that other administrators in their district had become "somewhat" more creative in coping with decline. One superintendent stated that administrators were definitely more creative, "They have to be because decline exposes other problems and the only way to survive is to be creative."

Quadrant IV: A. Two of the superintendents stated "yes"

there were skills they needed today to be effective that they had not needed in the past. "I have to have a greater knowledge of finance, be better at public relations, and be able to work more directly with principals," stated one superintendent. Another superintendent explained, "I had to learn to manage stress and to be more political." Two superintendents stated "no" to the question. B. Two of the superintendents stated that other administrators in their district had not really become more creative in coping with decline. Two expressed that other administrators, out of necessity, had become more involved with teachers and students and this involvement had helped to improve their human relations skills.

Question 5

Curriculum. Did the closing of a school or schools have an impact on the curriculum?

Quadrant I: Two superintendents indicated that there had been an impact on the curriculum. One indicated that there had been a slightly positive impact, and one superintendent indicated that there had been a very positive impact.

Quadrant IV: Three of the superintendents expressed that the closing of a school or schools had a positive impact on the curriculum. One superintendent explained, "It has strengthened our overall program, we have added physical education

classes, vocal music, special education classes, expanded our art program and our achievement has increased more than twenty percent." One superintendent stated that the closing of schools had not had an impact on the curriculum.

Question 6

School Budget. Has the closing of a school or schools proved to be financially successful?

Quadrant I and IV responded exactly the same..."Yes, the district has saved a considerable amount of money from the closing of a school." Other comments included: "Prior to closing _____ School in 1976, we were in the red more than one half a million dollars a year." "We are saving an average of \$250,000 per year, now."

Question 7

General. A. Have you observed any long-term effect on the district directly related to the closing of a school? B. If each of the citizens in your district were interviewed today, do you feel the majority would agree that the closing of the school or schools has proved to be an advantage or disadvantage to the district? C. Would the majority of the citizens agree that students are receiving an education equal to the

one they received prior to the closing of the school or schools, or better.

Quadrant I and IV responded to questions A, B, and C equally positive. The following is a summary of their quotes:

The closing has definitely had a positive long-term effect on the district.

There are long-term advantages, we can pick and choose who is hired; we're more critical with staff evaluations; and our principals are engaged in clinical supervision for the first time.

Our academic standards are up, we feel better about the job we are doing.

Yes, the majority of citizens would agree that the closing of the neighborhood school has proved to be an educational advantage. The students and the teachers are much happier now that we really are socially integrated, but the community continues to have an emotional attachment to the school.

Yes, the majority of the community would agree that educationally we are doing the best job ever, but those parents who hated my guts for closing the school...still hate my guts as much as ever!

Yes, there are definite long-range advantages, the organization has grown and improved as a result of the closings even though some jobs were lost.

Yes, the majority would agree that students are getting a better education and part of the reason the students are getting a better education is because parents are more involved in their childrens' education. When you close a building and move students to a different school, parents put pressure on the teachers to do a better job...we are all more scrutinized and better because of it.

Yes, the majority of the community would agree that we are more accountable today and students are getting a better education...we have proven that with achievement test scores. But the community where we closed _____ School is still negative. We are getting ready to close another school and they are all up in arms fighting the closing.

We don't seem to be able to convince the community ahead of time that it is a good move to close a school. Closing a school is an emotional issue regardless of the job you are doing.

In summary, there were no major differences between the responses of those superintendents who represented the most effective school closings and those superintendents who represented the least effective closings. All eight (8) of the superintendents agreed that there were definite educational and financial advantages to the closing of schools. The remarks made by the superintendents during the interviews were consistent with the responses to the questionnaires. The interview responses did not lend themselves to tabulation or quantification and were not comparatively measureable.

Documentary Research

The examination of documents was not a major aspect of the study. Only those reports and articles available to the general public were examined. In each case, the documents supported the remarks made during the interviews and the responses to the questionnaires.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the long-term impact of a variety of policies effecting school closings in elementary school districts in Illinois. There were two specific objectives. The first objective was to determine the long-term impact of school closings, due to declining enrollment on eight factors:

1. the community,
2. the students,
3. the teachers,
4. the curriculum,
5. the school budget,
6. the administration,
7. the use of closed school buildings, and
8. general.

The second objective was to compare the long-term impact of effective-smooth school closings and ineffective-problem school closings on school districts. Sixty-one (61) elementary suburban and rural school districts in Illinois that had closed at least one school, due to a decline in enrollment,

prior to 1977 were targeted for this study. Fifty (50), or eighty-two (82) percent, of the districts returned completed questionnaires signifying their willingness to participate. During the past ten years, these fifty school districts closed a combined total of 136 schools due to a decline in enrollment.

To fulfill objective two of this study, the school districts were ranked into four effectiveness quadrants based on a study by Robert (1978). The fourteen districts identified as having the most effective school closings (quadrant I) were compared with the fourteen districts identified as having the least effective school closings (quadrant IV).

Eight major research questions were addressed in this study. The analysis of each of the questions was primarily based on the responses to the questionnaire.

Eight superintendents participated in interviews. Four of the superintendents represented districts identified as having the most effective school closings and four represented districts identified as having the least effective school closings.

Conclusions

1. The long-term impact of closing schools, due to a decline in enrollment, will increase community support. On the other hand, the results indicated that the closing of schools will have little impact on community involvement.

2. The long-term effect of closing schools, due to a decline in enrollment, has a positive impact on student achievement. The average increase in student achievement, as perceived by the superintendents of the school districts which participated in this study, was 8.6 percent during the past five years. There was also evidence which indicated the greater the number of schools closed within the district, the more the achievement level of the students tended to increase.
3. On the average student absences, student dropouts, and student expulsions have not been affected by school closings. However, there was a positive relationship between student achievement and student absences. Eight of the nine school districts that experienced a decrease in student absences, during the past five years, had an average increase in student achievement of 12.38 percent, as perceived by the superintendents.
4. The majority of the school districts are operating under long-range plans which detail procedures for coping with changes in enrollment. There also appears to be a positive relationship between community support and long-range planning. The twenty-six school districts most involved in planning had a considerably higher rating of community support.
5. There has been only a slight, if any change at all, in the

superintendent's role due to the closing of schools and declining enrollments. Further, the results of this study indicated that those superintendents with the greatest number of years of tenure in the district, experienced the least change in their role as superintendent.

6. Administrators, other than the superintendent, had only slightly, if at all, become more effective due to a decline in enrollment and the closing of schools. The findings of this study also indicated that those superintendents with the greatest number of years of tenure viewed other administrators in their district as having become less effective leaders than those superintendents with fewer years of tenure.
7. The majority of the superintendents who participated in this study indicated that the closing of schools, due to a decline in enrollment, has had a favorable impact on the curriculum. The great majority of superintendents indicated that there were no cuts in programs or courses, no fewer purchases of instructional materials, no fewer program innovations, or no higher pupil/teacher ratios due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools.
8. Ninety-two (92) percent of the superintendents who participated in this study indicated that the closing of schools had resulted in a financial savings for their district. The savings per district per year ranged from thirty thousand to more than seven hundred fifty thousand

dollars.

9. The majority of school districts either sell or lease closed school buildings.
10. The majority of superintendents indicated that students were receiving a more effective education today, after the closing of schools due to declining enrollment and further, there were definitely long-range advantages to the closing of schools. The majority of superintendents also indicated that the closing of schools due to a decline in enrollment had a salutary effect on the quality of education in the district.
11. Both those districts identified as having the most-effective school closings and those districts identified as having the least effective school closings, agreed on balance, that the closing of schools due to a decline in enrollment had a beneficial impact on the quality of education in the district. However, those districts identified as having the most-effective closings indicated a more positive impact by a .5 higher rating.
12. Those districts identified as having the least effective school closings viewed community support to be more favorable today than five years ago.
13. Superintendents of districts identified as having the most effective school closings had an average of five more years of tenure in their districts than those superintendents of

districts identified as having the least effective closings.

In summary, this investigation indicates that closing schools, due to a decline in enrollment, generally has a positive long-term impact on the overall quality of education in the district. Specifically, when schools are closed, student achievement tends to increase; community support tends to increase; there is a substantial financial savings; and the curriculum does not suffer and in most instances, it is actually strengthened because of better coordination and consolidation of services and programs.

School districts are finding it slightly more difficult to dismiss incompetent teachers today, as compared to five years ago. Collective bargaining agreements are also slightly less favorable, on the average, than they were five years ago. Superintendents for the most part, appear to discount the need to acquire special skills to manage declining enrollments and the closing of schools, and furthermore, they view other administrators in their district as being "not very effective" in finding creative ways of coping with the problems associated with decline.

There were no drastic differences in the quality of education between those districts identified as having the least effective school closings and those districts identified as having the most effective school closings. However, the super-

intendents of the districts identified as having the most effective closings, on the average, managed to maintain their positions in the district twice as long as superintendents of districts identified as having the least effective school closings.

This investigation found that generally the community remained supportive of education in the district regardless of the intensity of anger and frustration expressed at the actual time of a school's closing. Those districts identified as having ineffective-problem school closings continue to operate "somewhat" under a long-range plan, while those districts identified as having effective-smooth closings continue to "definitely" operate under a long-range plan. Both those districts identified as having effective and ineffective school closings, perceive the effect of school closings on the quality of education to be salutary, however, those districts identified as having effective closings perceive the effect to be more so.

Recommendations

In 1973, the first public elementary school was closed in Illinois due to a decline in enrollment. To some readers the period of years covered in this study may not appear to be "long-term," but it should be recognized that school districts are going through a period of rapid and dynamic change. The

past decade in the public schools has mirrored changes in society i.e., decreasing family size, population mobility, high inflation, significantly increased demand for fiscal accountability, and increasing pressure for quality. It is natural and expected that individuals view rapid and dynamic change with an uneasy and suspicious eye, so it is not surprising that the vast majority of professional literature pertaining to declining enrollments and the closing of schools has been at the very most, pessimistic in its outlook. The results of this study should add a more scholarly understanding to the impact declining enrollments and the closing of schools has had on school districts during the past ten years. The results indicated, in the words of a superintendent, "We are simply doing a better job with less."

Recent demographic data indicate a sharp increase in the school population is expected during the 1990's. This study suggests that this development would not necessarily support the re-opening of closed schools or the building of new schools, on the contrary, the responses to the questionnaire and the research completed subsequent to it, indicate that a leaner school system, with economically well organized facilities and programs, is the best guarantee for quality education.

School administrators should recognize that in making the decision to close a school, however the decision is made,

whether with long-term planning or on the spur of the moment with little or no planning, the long-term effect on the quality of education in the district will most likely be positive. However, to maintain one's position as superintendent, it is important to have a smooth-effective closing which includes community support and involvement and a long-range plan.

College and university training programs for educational administrators should be cognizant of the fact that experienced superintendents may not perceive the need to acquire special or new skills to effectively manage decline. However, those individuals aspiring to be superintendents or in some other administrative position would profit from such training and also benefit by elevating themselves in the eyes of their superintendent. Since the results of this study indicated that on the average, superintendents view other administrators in their district as "somewhat less than effective" in creatively coping with the problems associated with declining enrollments and the closing of schools.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. A sophisticated investigation involving a control group could prove to be beneficial. A comparative study of this nature could verify the impact the closing of schools due to a decline in enrollment has had on student achievement.

2. A study focusing on the long-term impact of school closings on junior and senior high schools could provide useful data to secondary school administrators.
3. A further study involving an in-depth analysis of the role of school administrators during periods of rapid and dynamic change is needed. Such a study would determine if indeed special or new skills are needed to be an effective leader during these times. If such skills are identified, their inclusion in college and university training programs would be an obvious benefit.
4. Further study of the teachers who have been dislocated due to declining enrollment and the closing of schools is needed. Such a study would be helpful for purposes of re-training teachers for other positions and for staff development. A result of this study indicated that school districts were finding it difficult to dismiss incompetent teachers. A study, such as the one suggested above, could possibly be a solution to this problem.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL CLOSINGS IN ILLINOIS

1. Name of School District _____
2. Address _____ County _____
3. District Type (circle) Elementary Secondary Unit
4. District Location (circle) Urban Suburban Rural
5. Number of schools currently in district _____
6. Pupil Enrollment - Fall 1975 _____ Fall 1976 _____ Fall 1977 _____
7. Approximate Assessed Valuation per child - 1976 \$ _____
8. Tax rate; 1977 Education fund \$ _____
9. Number of schools closed within past four years: _____
10. Effective date of most recent school closing: Month _____ Year _____
11. Date of Board action to close this school: Month _____ Year _____
12. How will this closed building be utilized? _____

13. Reason for closing this building: Enrollment decline, district consolidation, building age, etc., _____

PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR DISTRICT IN REFERENCE TO YOUR MOST RECENT SCHOOL CLOSINGS.

- | | RESPONSE | |
|--|----------|----|
| | YES | NO |
| 14. General district data on enrollment projections, finances and educational alternatives were prepared for the school board at least one year before the above listed school was closed. | YES | NO |
| 15. The school board re-examined district values such as neighborhood schools, optimal size, educational program and school organization. | YES | NO |
| 16. A master plan for decision making was formally adopted. | YES | NO |
| 17. Community input was sought through such activities as questionnaires, polls or small group coffees. | YES | NO |
| 18. A task force of community members and district staff studied the problems and made recommendations. | YES | NO |
| 19. Outside consultants were employed to provide additional resources. | YES | NO |
| 20. A specific criteria for identifying the school to close was prepared in written form. | YES | NO |
| 21. Public hearings were held to gain input from the community before the closing plan was finalized. | YES | NO |

PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR DISTRICT IN REFERENCE TO YOUR MOST RECENT SCHOOL CLOSING.

SA - Strongly Agree A - Agree D - Disagree SD - Strongly Disagree

RESPONSE

- 22. The school board emphasized the human problems in school closings, such as community impact, educational program and safety rather than the fiscal issues. SA A D SD
- 23. The community had difficulty in accepting the accuracy of the enrollment and fiscal prcjections. SA A D SD
- 24. The district teachers actively opposed the specific plan of school closing. SA A D SD
- 25. The school closing was viewed by the school board as a positive stimulation for change. SA A D SD
- 26. Disagreements between the school board and the administration slowed the decision to close a school. SA A D SD
- 27. Implementation of the school closing was repeatedly delayed due to community opposition. SA A D SD
- 28. The educational program was not maintained at the same level after the closing. SA A D SD
- 29. The community perceived the school board to be responsive to community suggestions and concerns. SA A D SD
- 30. The original school board decision to close a school was delayed many months or altered due to extensive community opposition. SA A D SD
- 31. The issues regarding the school closing were constructively discussed in newspaper editorials and articles. SA A D SD
- 32. New school board members were elected on the basis of anti-school closing issues. SA A D SD
- 33. Community groups initiated legal action against the school board. SA A D SD
- 34. The local community surrounding the school to be closed accepted the proposed utilization of the building without major opposition. SA A D SD
- 35. Letters to the school board and the local newspapers tended to be constructive. SA A D SD
- 36. The school closing controversy jeopardized the superintendents' relationship to the school board. SA A D SD

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please return in enclosed envelope to: David Robert.
Windsor School
1315 Miner
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004

Please check this box if you wish a summary mailed to you.

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

1. The purpose of this study is to collect factual information on the impact of school closings on school districts over a period of years.
2. The questions have been designed so that it will take approximately ten minutes of your time to answer them. Please feel free to make additional comments on any of the questions.
3. The questionnaire data will be held in strictest confidence. Your school district has been assigned a numerical code. The specific name of your district will not be shared with anyone. Other specific data such as the enrollment, number of schools in district, and number of years that you have served as superintendent will only be shared with the research committee at Loyola University.

6. As compared to 5 years ago, are there
more student expulsions about the same fewer student expulsion
 1 2 3 4 5

TEACHERS

7. As compared to 5 years ago, is the collective bargaining agreement
 in regards to the administration
more favorable about the same less favorable
 5 4 3 2 1

8. Is it easier or more difficult to dismiss incompetent teachers
 today than 5 years ago
easier about the same more difficult
 5 4 3 2 1

ADMINISTRATION

9. Has your role as superintendent changed due to a decline in en-
 rollment and the closing of schools
not at all somewhat to a great extent
 1 2 3 4 5

10. Do you feel that other administrators in your district have become
 more effective leaders due to a decline in enrollment and the clos-
 ing of schools
not at all somewhat to a great extent
 1 2 3 4 5

CURRICULUM

11. As a result of the closing of a school(s) in your district, what
 changes have occurred in the curriculum
- a. Are there fewer programs or courses being offered ___yes ___no
 - b. Has the pupil/teacher ratio changed ___yes (to what extent____)
 ___no
 - c. Are there more split or combination classes ___yes ___no
 - d. Are there fewer program innovations ___yes ___no
 - e. Are there fewer purchases of instructional materials ___yes ___no
 - f. Comments _____

FINANCIAL STATUS

12. Has the closing of a school or schools resulted in a financial savings for the district
- | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <u>additional expense</u> | | <u>no change</u> | | <u>considerable savings</u> |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
- Comment _____
-

13. Have closed School Buildings been
 sold _____
 leased _____
 rented _____
 demolished _____
 used for community activities _____
 other (please explain) _____
-

GENERAL

14. Does your district operate under a long-range plan which details procedures for coping with changes in enrollment
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| <u>not really</u> | | <u>somewhat</u> | | <u>definitely</u> |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
15. Do you feel that students in your district are receiving
a less effective education about the same a better education
- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
- than they received prior to the closing of a school(s) five years ago
16. Do you feel there are any long-range advantages to closing a school due to enrollment decline _____
-
17. In your opinion, on balance, has the closing of a school or schools in your district had a salutary or detrimental effect on the quality of education
- | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------|---|------------------------|
| <u>detrimental effect</u> | | <u>no effect</u> | | <u>salutary effect</u> |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
18. In your opinion, is there anything that has happened since the closing of a school in your district that would have a major impact on the community? (a bitter teachers' strike, busing for integration, censorship of textbooks, etc.) _____ yes _____ no
 (If yes, please explain) _____
-

Would you like a summary of this questionnaire mailed to you?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION!

APPENDIX C

SUPERINTENDENT'S STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. When was the last school closed due to enrollment decline in your district?
2. How long have you been superintendent of this district?
3. Community Have any groups formed to oppose administrative or board actions since the closing of the last school? Have you surveyed the community for input since the closing of the school?
4. Students Have you observed a noticeable change in student behavior since the school was closed? Please rate how well you feel students have coped with the closing?
5. Teachers Has there been a noticeable change in teachers' attitudes toward the district since the closing of the school? Have you surveyed teachers for input?
6. Administration Are there skills that you need today to be an effective superintendent that you did not need prior to declining enrollment and the closing of schools? Have other administrators in your district found creative ways for coping with the closing of schools?
7. Curriculum Did the closing of the school(s) have an impact on the curriculum? Please explain.
8. General Have you observed any long-term effect on the district directly related to the closing of school(s)?

General continued.

If each of the citizens in your district were interviewed today, do you feel the majority would agree that the closing of the school(s) has proved to be an advantage or disadvantage to the district? Would the majority of the citizens agree that students are receiving an education equal to or better than the education they received prior to the closing of the school(s)?

APPENDIX D

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

*Water Tower Campus * 820 North Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60611 * (312) 670-3030*

November 9, 1982

Dear

I need your help. I am conducting a study on "The Long-Term Impact of School Closings of School Districts in Illinois" for my dissertation at Loyola University. Will you please take ten minutes of your time and complete the enclosed questionnaire?

The data that you provide will be held in strictest confidence. A copy of the results of the study will be sent to you. In order to meet Loyola's dissertation deadline, please return the questionnaire by November 25th in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to call me collect at 704-937-9273 or Dr. Philip Carlin, the Chairman of my committee, at 312-670-3053.

Thank you for sharing your knowledge and experience.

Sincerely,

Ann Ellege Shortt

enclosures

APPENDIX E



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

*Water Tower Campus * 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611 * (312) 670-3930*

November 27, 1982

Dear

I recently forwarded to your attention a questionnaire on the long-term impact of school closings in Illinois which I have not received back from you. Since your participation in this data gathering process is so critical to the completion of my dissertation, I am writing to ask for your assistance once again.

A self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience in returning the questionnaire. I deeply appreciate your taking a moment from your busy schedule to assist.

Most sincerely,

Ann Elledge Shortt

enclosures

Ann Elledge Shortt
School of Education
Administration and Supervision
Doctor of Education

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Ann Elledge Shortt has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Philip M. Carlin, Associate Professor and Chairman Department of Administration and Supervision, Loyola

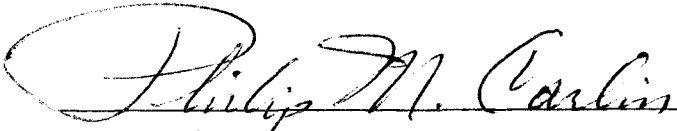
Dr. Max A. Bailey, Associate Professor Department of Administration and Supervision, Loyola

Dr. Mark M. Krug, Visiting Professor Department of Foundations, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

APRIL 7, 1983
Date


Director's Signature