A Study of the Public School System of Nelson County

Earl Huber

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A STUDY OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM OF NELSON COUNTY

BY

EARL B. RUBER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

Approved:

Major Professor and
Department of Education
Western Kentucky State Teachers College
Minor Professor, English

AUGUST, 1945
Approved:

Major Professor and
Department of Education
Minor Professor, English
Graduate Committee

[Signature]

[Signature]


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PREFACE

Only seven years more than one hundred years ago, 1838, Kentucky's public school system was established. Few Kentuckians conceived of a state-wide public school system. Many of the citizens were conservative and inclined to look upon a scheme of public education with doubt and disfavor; they were accustomed to the traditional plan of private education. In Nelson County, as in the rest of Kentucky, the early sponsors of public education were confronted with the problem of building sentiment for such a public service. Their task was one of establishing schools. Their chief goal was one of providing a school service, meager as it was, within reasonable reach of each child.

Although skepticism and conservatism retarded the early growth of public schools, it is now evident that a system of public elementary and secondary education meets the approval of the citizenry of Nelson County.

In recent years, educators have striven to check this growth in the number of schools and school districts. The present task is one of improving schools rather than establishing schools; one of broadening educational services to meet present-day demands; one of equalizing educational opportunities in order that all pupils may be equipped for more abundant living.

Whenever possible the school authorities in Nelson County have reduced the number of one-room rural schools in a consolidation program. This study gives evidence in justification of these changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer is under special obligations to Dr. Lee Francis Jones for his guidance and constructive criticism which have made this study possible; to Dr. Gordon Wilson for kindly reading the entire work and giving the writer much helpful criticism; to Mr. R. V. Sparrow, Superintendent of Nelson County Schools; Mr. M. L. Major, Attendance Officer; and Mr. W. D. Chilton, Superintendent of Bardstown Schools, for their hearty cooperation in gathering data on the schools of Nelson County for this study.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
Purpose of the Study

Although rural communities differ in many ways, there are two major patterns that may be distinguished. One type consists of a small geometrically-determined unit in which people who happen to live within the confines of the surveyor's lines are brought together. They support a small one-room school which the children are expected to attend. The other community pattern brings together many families living in a geographically and socially determined area and having closely related interests. We may call the first the one-room-school environment; the other, the consolidated-school environment.

The main consideration of this problem is to determine how Nelson County, as a unit, can best provide educational opportunity for the 3,486 boys and girls who are, or should be, enrolled in the elementary and secondary schools located within the county. The specific aims of the study are four, as follows:

1. To survey the three types of schools represented in Nelson County: the one-room-rural school, the central or consolidated schools, and the school of the independent district of Bardstown.

2. To compare teacher qualifications and teacher results in the three types of schools.

3. To form a basis for recommending the needed number of high schools and elementary schools.

4. To make general recommendations based on the result of data obtained.
Scope of Study

The scope of this study is limited entirely to the public school system of Nelson County and its effectiveness in educating the boys and girls under its jurisdiction. It is realized that in any such study there is always the criticism of superficiality; however, by studying the system as it now is and by comparing the status of each type of public school in the county with that of the other two types it is hoped that the most glaring defects, at least, may be overcome.

Sources of Data

1. Reports and records in the office of the Nelson County school superintendent.
2. Reports and records in the office of the superintendent of Bardstown City Schools.
3. Reports of State Tax Commission.
4. Reports of State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
6. Educational textbooks and professional magazines.

Method of Treatment

Expository and statistical treatment of data have been used in this study. Some of the conclusions and suggestions have been made with the aid of very little data of statistical nature; however, it will be found that most of them are endorsed by current practices and philosophies of modern educational theory.

Social and Economic Background

Nelson County was formed in 1784 by the General Assembly of Virginia, the fourth county erected in the district (now state) of Kentucky and named in honor of ex-Governor Thomas Nelson of Virginia. It then embraced
all the territory lying between Salt and Green Rivers. Out of that original territory have been formed nineteen counties. In its present limits, it is situated in the northern middle portion of the state and is bounded on the north by Bullitt and Spencer Counties; on the east by Anderson, Washington, and Marion; on the south by Washington, Marion, and LaRue; and on the west by LaRue, Hardin, and Bullitt. Chaplin and Beech Forks of Salt River form most of its east and southeast boundary line, and the Rolling Fork of Salt River its southwest line.

The surface of the county, which has an area of 411 square miles and population of 18,004,¹ is dotted with low, cone-shaped hills of rock, which give it a very irregular appearance. These hills were formed as the looser and softer portions of the surface were washed away by erosion. The soil generally is excellent, but in the southern portion, off the creek bottoms, is rather thin.

Bardstown, the county seat, was established by the legislature of Virginia in 1788, as Bairdstown, after David Baird, one of the original proprietors of the 100 acres on which it was laid off. The town is situated on an elevated plain, three-fourths of a mile north of the Beech Fork of the Salt River, and is fifty miles from Frankfort, forty from Louisville, and twenty-seven from Lebanon. Other towns are Bloomfield, Fairfield, Chaplin, New Haven, Boston, New Hope, and Samuels.

The inhabitants of Nelson County are rural, industrious, law-abiding citizens, greatly interested in the welfare of their state and nation. By far the greatest number of them are engaged in farming and dairying. Many engage themselves to a large extent in raising beef cattle, which

¹ U. S. Bureau of Census Report, 1940.
are shipped to Louisville; many sheep are raised both for wool and mutton. The wool is shipped in the spring and sold for cash. Sheep are popular because they are easy to keep and the county has much hilly land unsuited for cultivation but fairly good for grazing. Chickens and other kinds of poultry are kept on nearly every farm. The chickens are raised for both meat and eggs. Besides chickens, Nelson County farmers raise hundreds of ducks, geese, and turkeys. Corn and hogs are the largest exports, but cattle, horses, mules, hay, tobacco, flour, whiskey, and apples are also exported. Other than in farming the people find employment in distilleries, in sawmilling, burning charcoal, and in other small business enterprises.
CHAPTER II
THE PRESENT SCHOOL SYSTEM OF NELSON COUNTY

There is at the present time only one independent school district in Nelson County, Bardstown. The school census in Nelson County for 1942 was 3,486. The assessment of corporate and non-corporate property was $7,487,526. The per pupil assessment was $2,148.1

In this study data are taken from the school records of 1942-1943. Improvements and changes which have been made since that time are noted in a subsequent chapter. The changes brought about since the reports for the year under study were made are a reflection of the interest that Nelson Countians, following the pace set by progressive school officials, have taken in providing proper educational facilities for their boys and girls.

Supervision of instruction in the smaller county schools has been left almost entirely to the county superintendent. In the consolidated schools the various principals are held responsible for supervising within their own schools. Since the press of duties keeps the superintendent busy in his office much of the time and since all the principals teach at least half of the time, there has not been much of a supervisory program in operation.

Most of the small rural-school houses are painted and in fair repair. The common color is white, which is not unattractive against the usual background of green. All rural schoolhouses are ceiled. The favorite ceiling is wood, which in most cases is painted. An upright stove furnishes heat, the fire being started by the first person who reaches

school, whether pupil or teacher. Since the margin before opening is slight, time is necessarily lost in waiting for the children to warm up. The stove usually stands near the front of the room. Teachers find it is almost impossible to build a fire in these stoves so as to produce a uniform and continuous heat. Coal is the common fuel and is kept in an outbuilding provided for the purpose.

The latest type of rural structure in the county are the consolidated schools, constructed of brick and providing the usual classrooms, auditoriums, and gymnasiums. They have cloakrooms and inside lavatories and toilets. They are fairly well equipped with physical and educational apparatus and have rather ample grounds. These consolidated schools, representing the highest mark of rural interest, are an indication of what can and probably will become general in Nelson County during the next few years.

The following statistical tables are presented for the purpose of comparing the efficiency in certain respects of the one-room schools with the consolidated schools, and the consolidated schools with those of the independent district. Comparisons are made under the following headings: schools, pupils and attendance, training and experience of teachers, salary schedules, age-grade distribution, lunch programs, and library facilities.
### Table I

**SCHOOLS, PUPILS AND ATTENDANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Schools</th>
<th>No. Dist.</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Average Daily Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Cecils</em></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Clarktown</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cravens</em></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Early Times</em></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Greenwelltown</em></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Harrison Fork</em></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>High View</em></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Humphreys</em></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Icetown</em></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller's Spring</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Murray's Run</em></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price's Creek</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>River Bend</em></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stiles</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Stringtown</em></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildwood</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willetts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimsatt's</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hunters</em></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Consolidated since study was made.*

2. From records in office of county and city school superintendents.

5. The census is of all children including those who attend parochial schools.
### TABLE II
**TWO-ROOM RURAL SCHOOLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Schools</th>
<th>No. Dist.</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Average Daily Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balltown</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone's Mill</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botland</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culvertown</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howardstown</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelsonville</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Haven</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutherlands</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlawn</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE II
**CENTRAL AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Schools</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Average Daily Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplin</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox's Creek</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hope</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bardstown</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>216.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A study of Tables I, II, and III reveals that in 1942-43 there were nineteen one-room schools, ten two-room schools, four central schools, and one independent school in the county. In addition there was an independent district at Bloomfield which merged into the county system in July, 1944.

During the year studied there were 454 enrolled in the one-room schools, 463 in the two-room schools, 999 in the central schools, and 251 in the Bardstown city schools. In all there were 2,157 children enrolled in the public schools located in Nelson County.

According to the school census there were 747 children of school age living in communities served by one-room schools, 875 in communities served by two-room schools, 724 in the central school communities, and 747 within the limits of the Bardstown district. Thus there was a total of 3,093 children on the school census according to these figures.

A glance at the tables reveals that in every case except in the central schools the census was larger than the enrollment. This is explained by the fact that many of the children of Nelson County attend parochial schools both in Bardstown and in other parts of the county. It is further revealed that many of the children enrolled were irregular in attendance. The degree of absence is indicated by comparing the enrollment with the average daily attendance for each type of school. In the one-room schools the average daily attendance was 75 per cent of the enrollment, in the two-room schools the average daily attendance was 76.6 per cent of the enrollment, and for the larger schools the average daily attendance was 83.7 per cent of the enrollment. These figures indicate that the pupils in the largest schools tend to be more regular in attendance than do those who enroll in the one- and two-room
schools. An attendance of 75 per cent means that on the average a half of the children are absent more than half of the time, and therefore receive less than eighty days instruction annually. Even these eighty days are not continuous, as children are in school today, out tomorrow, in school this week, and out of school the next. When attendance runs low, the difficulty that the rural teacher faces can be readily appreciated. She must either take time, which she cannot spare, to help the child make up this lost work, or she simply lets the child drift along until he becomes a failure or drops out of school completely. The question of better attendance has been agitated by educators of Kentucky for many years. The compulsory school law, passed in 1896, required all children between the ages of seven and fourteen to attend school at least eight weeks continuously during the school term. But no provisions were made for its enforcement. Trustees were expected to enforce the law but rarely did; since that time several laws have been in operation. None of them have been perfect, but they have served to demonstrate two things: first, rural people will send their children to school if they think they have to; second, the operation of the laws reveals the weakness of county courts as enforcement agencies. County judges are so intimately connected with local affairs and under so many personal obligations, that they cannot be relied on to prosecute their neighbors for not sending their children to school. Weak as the county courts are as enforcement agencies, it will be probably necessary to use them for some time to come.

In the one- and two-room schools there were 917 pupils enrolled. The census for these schools was 1822, but, as has been pointed out, many of the children in these sub-districts attend parochial schools. There were nineteen teachers of the one-room rural schools. Based on enrol-
ment, this means that on the average each teacher had approximately twenty-four children under her care. Based on the census, which is not an accurate measure at all since many of the children on the census do not attend public schools, each teacher in the one-room school had an average of thirty-nine children in her school. Most authorities agree with Dawson that the most accurate basis for calculating teacher-need is average daily attendance. Using this measure, we find that each teacher of a one-room rural school was responsible for an average of approximately eighteen children in her school. In the long run this means that as many teachers had fewer than eighteen as there were those who had more than eighteen children under their care during the school day.

Following is the teacher-load of the two-room schools based on enrollment, census, and average daily attendance:

- Enrollment..................twenty-three pupils per teacher
- Census.....................forty-three pupils per teacher
- Average daily attendance......eighteen pupils per teacher

Again it is seen that when based on average daily attendance, each teacher has approximately eighteen pupils. A study of Table I reveals that 40 per cent of the two-room schools had an average daily attendance of fewer than thirty-six pupils, which means that the teachers in these schools had fewer than eighteen children each to teach if the enrollment was equally divided, or nearly so, as is usually the case.

There has been a widespread opinion among both educators and laymen that increasing the enrollment of a class lessens the progress of pupils.

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This opinion, however, has not stood up under the scientific investigations which have been conducted to test its validity. Among the first investigators to gather data on this subject was Stevenson, who based his conclusions upon replies of superintendents of cities of 25,000 and up to a questionnaire in which they were asked to indicate the ideal size of classes at different levels. According to the opinion of these superintendents, classes should contain not more than thirty-one to thirty-five pupils in grades one to nine, and twenty-five or twenty-six pupils is an ideal class size in the high school. In a similar study Dawson summarizes his findings in the following words:

"The statistics in our better city school systems, and in states maintaining the county unit system, such as Louisiana and Maryland, as well as such experimental studies as have been conducted, indicate that about thirty-five to forty pupils should constitute a teaching unit. The acceptable standard seems to be about forty pupils enrolled which will usually mean about thirty-five pupils in average daily attendance."

Using thirty-five as the most efficient number of pupils per teacher, we see that instead of Nelson County's requiring thirty-nine teachers for its rural schools, as of 1942-43, it needs only twenty-six based on enrollment. Accepting the conclusions that average daily attendance is the best basis for calculating teacher-need, we find that only twenty-one teachers are needed to teach the 704 pupils in average daily attendance. On this basis eighteen teachers could be saved. This is over half of all teachers in the small elementary rural schools.

The differences in the schools provided for rural children and those

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6 Dawson, op. cit., p. 529.
who attend independent schools are not as great in Nelson County as is the case in many of the counties of Kentucky. That there are some significant differences, however, is seen in the figures for the school year 1942-43 which follows: 7

1. Rural children had the privilege of attending school for an average of 168 days a year, while city children had an average of 176 days provided for them. This gave rural children eight fewer days of schooling per year than city children or a total deficiency of only sixty-four days of schooling during the eight years of the elementary school. Only fifteen of the 120 counties of Kentucky had a greater number of average days taught than did Nelson.

2. The per capita investment in capital outlay for rural school children was $16.25, while the amount invested for city children was ninety cents. The higher amount in favor of the rural child was brought about by the county's having expended $36,123.00 for new grounds and new buildings, whereas for the same period the independent district spent nothing on these items. For the period ending June 30, 1942, the per capita investment in capital outlay for rural children was $5.84 and for city children it was $8.62.

3. The amount expended annually for maintenance of schools in rural communities was $5.97 per child of school age, but for the independent district the amount so expended was $14.61 or 40.6 per cent as much per rural child as per city child.

4. The average salary of teachers employed in rural schools was $811.85, while for teachers of the independent district it was $1767.15.

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showing an expenditure of only 50.4 per cent as much for teaching ability in rural schools as for that in the independent schools. In spite of this difference, however, Nelson County teachers' salaries were higher than the median for Kentucky during the same year. The State Superintendent reports that the median annual salary for both elementary and high school teachers in county schools of Kentucky was $661.00.

5. There were nineteen rural communities served by one-teacher elementary schools, while eleven were served by schools with more than one teacher.
TABLE IV  
TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE OF TEACHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items Considered</th>
<th>One-Room School</th>
<th>Central School</th>
<th>Ind. Gr. School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Training</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Less than 16 hrs.</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-32 hrs.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-64 hrs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-96 hrs.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-127 hrs.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128 and over</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 yrs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 yr.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 yrs.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 yrs.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more yrs.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Training listed on basis of semester hours.*

Table IV reveals that all teachers of the elementary grades in the independent school had sixty-four or more semester hours of training. In the consolidated schools 96 per cent of the elementary teachers had sixty-four or more semester hours of training, while the percentage of one-room teachers having sixty-four or more was 77.

It will also be noted that the teachers of the one-room schools are behind those of the larger schools in the number of years experience, the independent school having no teacher with less than five years experience. The figures as to years experience show that the one-teacher schools receive
slightly the larger number of beginning teachers.

Salary Schedule

In the salary schedule no difference is made between the white and colored teachers. Neither is there any difference between the salary of men and women nor between the high school and grade teachers. There is no difference between the pay of married and single women. The salary schedules of Nelson County and of Bardstown Independent district are as follows:

Nelson County

A. Twenty cents per month for each semester hour of undergraduate work up to 128 hours and the same amount for each semester hour of graduate work.

B. Two dollars per month for each year's experience through the first five years.

C. Principals are paid ten dollars for each teacher under their supervision.

Bardstown

A. Twenty-five cents for each semester hour of work.

B. Two dollars per month for each year's experience through the first five years.

C. The principal is paid on a flat salary basis.

D. All teachers are paid on a ten months basis.

Length of Term

In the county system the high schools are on nine-month terms. All elementary grades except at Boston are on an eight-month basis. The people of the Boston community have voted an increase in taxes in order to keep their elementary grades running the same length of time as the high school in the same system.
In order to find out how long Nelson County children remain in school and how far they advance in the course of instruction, information with respect to ages of pupils and the grades in which they were studying has been gathered and compiled in tables. These tables compare the ages of the children with their grades. Ages are listed on the left; grades top. The pupils whose ages come within the heavy lines of the tables are classified as normal age, those above under age, those below over age. Table V gives the age-grade distribution of the elementary grades of all schools in the county system. Table VI contains the same information but deals only with the four consolidated schools, while Table VII gives the age-grade distribution of children in the Bardstown city schools. Data were gathered from enrollment cards, and information concerning children over compulsory school age was not compiled. It is generally agreed that pupils should begin the first grade when they are between the ages of six and seven, and advance a grade each year so that they will enter the eighth grade when they are between thirteen and fourteen years old.

When this standard is applied to Nelson County pupils, it is found that 33 per cent of the children in the schools of the county as a whole are too old for their grades. In the consolidated schools 24 per cent are over age, and in the independent school the percentage of the pupils who are over age is 22.
## Table V

**AGE-GRADE DISTRIBUTION OF ELEMENTARY GRADES OF COUNTY SCHOOLS**

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**No. Under Age**

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- 14
- 17
- 17
- 13
- 20
- 12
- 17
- 110

**No. Normal**

- 199
- 141
- 168
- 100
- 131
- 115
- 109
- 76
- 1039

**No. Over Age**

- 74
- 70
- 81
- 78
- 73
- 82
- 64
- 44
- 566

**Per. Under Age**

- 0
- .06
- .06
- .09
- .06
- .09
- .06
- .12
- .64

**Per. Normal**

- .72
- .63
- .63
- .51
- .60
- .53
- .59
- .56
- 60.6

**Per. Over Age**

- .28
- .38
- .51
- .40
- .54
- .58
- .35
- .32
- 53.0
**TABLE VI**

**AGE-GRADE DISTRIBUTION OF CENTRAL SCHOOLS**

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**AGE-GRADE DISTRIBUTION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

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**Notes:**
- **No. Under Age**
- **No. Normal Age**
- **No. Over Age**
- **Per. Under Age**
- **Per. Normal Age**
- **Per. Over Age**

**Total:** 38
The full effect of pupils' failure to advance regularly through the course of instruction is shown in Figure I. In this figure pupils who were between thirteen and fourteen years of age when they entered school in the fall of 1942 are distributed by the grades they entered. If these children had begun school when between six and seven years old and had advanced a grade a year, all of them in 1942 should have been in the eighth grade. As it is, only 17.5 per cent of the children in the county system as a whole were in the eighth grade. The remainder were distributed among

Per Cent

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FIGURE I.- PUPILS OF NELSON COUNTY SCHOOLS, DISTRIBUTED ON A PERCENTAGE BASIS. WHITE COLUMNS REPRESENT CITY PUPILS; SHADED COLUMNS CENTRAL SCHOOL PUPILS; AND BLACK COLUMNS, RURAL SCHOOL PUPILS.
the other seven grades, with 62.5 per cent in the fifth and sixth grades. Conditions are much better in the larger schools, with 38 per cent in the consolidated schools in the eighth grade and approximately 50 per cent of the pupils who were thirteen years old and attending the independent school in the eighth grade. A possible explanation for the advantage of the independent school over the consolidated schools in this respect might lie in the fact that many of the pupils have been enrolled in the consolidated school for a very short time, having been moved from an outlying one-room school. The pupils of the independent school, on the other hand, with few exceptions have attended that school since they were six. This seems to add another argument to the fast-growing list for larger schools and better supervision of instruction.

Because so many children fail to advance regularly, many of them discontinue school before completing even the course prescribed for the elementary grades. As a result they have had only the work connected with the simplest skills, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. And, worst of all, they do not carry away a mastery even of these simplest skills so that they can use them in later life.

Much retardation is the result of absences on the part of the pupil, different standards of grading by teachers, and failure of the pupil to begin school at the proper age. Unquestionably, however, many failures in the smaller schools are due to poor teaching conditions, shorter terms, and the many grades which rural teachers are required to teach. Such conditions represent a loss in money and citizenship and a loss in opportunity in life to children.

Many advantages of larger schools over the one-room schools have from time to time been called attention to in this study. Many more might be added, but they are not needed to make a strong case for consolidation.
wherever it is feasible. Among the benefits accruing to the child directly in the larger schools is the lunch program.

The lunch of the average rural child consists of several cold sandwiches, a sweet, and perhaps a piece of fruit. In view of the fact that he eats an early breakfast and that he misses the principal meal of the farm day eaten at noon, nutrition specialists insist that the rural child is likely to lack a balanced diet. They suggest the need of warm food at noon and a diet rich in vegetables and fruit. On this point, Miss Mary G. McCormick, State Supervisor of Health Teaching, State Education Department, New York, says,

"Experiments have shown that the nutritive requirements of children are high. For each pound of weight the child's requirements are greater than the adult's; the total food requirement of an adolescent girl may exceed that of her mother and the total food requirement of the adolescent boy often surpasses that of his father.

"Since the energy expenditure is a large factor in determining the total food requirement, those children whose energy expenditure is greater, other things being equal, will require a greater amount of food. The child who has manual tasks to perform at home, who walks a long distance to and from school, and after school again helps with the farm or home work obviously needs more food than does the child who has no duties at home and who either lives near his schoolhouse or has easy access to it by cars. Rural children, therefore, with their long and active day must necessarily have a relatively high food requirement. Three substantial meals a day should be supplied to satisfy their needs. Three substantial meals a day are an ideal difficult of accomplishment if the child is dependent on a box lunch for his noon meal." 8

The rural teacher in the one-room school finds it practically impossible to see that her pupils get a warm meal at lunch time. It is difficult to get volunteers to come to the schoolhouse and prepare the

---

8 The Rural Hot Lunch as a Health and Social Activity (New York State Education Department, 1951), p. 6.
meal, and the teacher rarely has time to do it herself. As a result about the best that can be done is to provide warm soup or warm milk, and even this is not done in most of the small schools. All of the consolidated schools as well as the independent school in Nelson County, on the other hand, are provided with adequate lunch room facilities. In these schools menus are carefully planned and prepared by cafeteria workers who are hired for the purpose. All children who want lunches are given an opportunity to have them daily regardless of their ability to pay. The lunch rooms are operated according to standards set up by the federal program. Periodic health inspections are conducted by the County Health Officer. Menus are planned around the seven basic elements as specified by the government, and so well-balanced meals are assured. None can deny that the children who attend these schools have the advantage of better nutrition over the child who must eat a cold box lunch at noon.

Another advantage which the child who attends the larger schools has over the one who attends the one-teacher school is the accessibility to better library facilities. Educators for many years have been aware of the importance of the child's having easy access to books. Many recent studies have been made to strengthen this trend of thought. One such study is reported by Sarah Byrd Askew, of the New Jersey Public Library Commission:

"In the township where library service had long been established the children enjoyed the books, wrote compositions, and gave talks of average originality and ability....Perhaps 3 per cent did not do the job passably well....In the other township with children just as intelligent, but more remote and without any but the most sporadic library service, the story was different. Not one single child was able to comprehend and to digest the ideas sufficiently to give even a passable original composition."9

9 Sarah Byrd Askew, County Libraries and Rural Schools in New Jersey, United States Government Pamphlet No. 11, June, 1930, p. 32.
It is to be remembered that the one-room schools came into existence under an entirely different philosophy of education from that which exists today. The time has passed when it is considered a misdemeanor to read a book other than a text during school. It is the modern trend to encourage children to read widely. It is true that a few books of recreational nature will be found in even the most remote schools of the county. But too often they have been donated by teachers or patrons who no longer have need of them. As a result the books have been poorly selected or, what is worse, have not been selected at all. There is no organized plan for circulating the books and very little encouragement given the child to read even the ones that are available.

In the central and independent schools are found not only more books but better selections. In order to meet the standards set up for accredited schools the library must be in charge of a teacher or full-time librarian who has had specific training in book selection for the various grade levels. In such libraries collections of newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets are organized and kept accessible to the pupil at all times during the school day.

Even the consolidated schools, however, have not provided as efficient library service as it is possible for them to do. This is partly due to the lack of sufficient finances. It has been the practice of the Board of Education to match the funds raised by the school for the purchase of library equipment including books and magazines. Since the funds of the individual school are never large, the result is that very few additions are made to the library yearly. During the year ending June 30, 1943, the county spent $252.45 for school libraries and supplementary books for the elementary schools. If this amount were
equally divided among elementary schools, each would receive approximately
$8.50. If the school were able to match the amount, it would then have
$16.60 to spend for books. Allowing the usual discount given to schools,
and by picking cheaper editions, each school could add ten or twelve books
to the shelves of its library.

It is the opinion of the writer that providing adequate libraries
for the schools and educating children in the use of books as tools is
one of the best investments that a board of education can make. Such
materials of instruction and techniques of study not only give pupils a
mastery of tools invaluable in their student life, but also a priceless
possession for their adult and mature years.

The general conclusions to be drawn from facts presented in this
chapter are that the interests of scores of elementary pupils in Nelson
County have been jeopardized by conditions existing in small schools, that
practically impossible situations are imposed upon the teachers in such
schools, and that the legality of the expenditure of public funds is
challenged by the continued operation of many undersized schools.

The many situations revealed whereby pupils, teachers or taxpayers,
or all, are penalized constitute undisputable reasons why the county
board of education should continue its program of consolidation, and
give more deliberate attention to the development of its educational
program.
CHAPTER III
NELSON COUNTY'S CONSOLIDATION PROGRAM

The citizenry of Nelson County at large, as well as the rural teachers, are demonstrating that they are interested in the fullest development of rural life and institutions and are giving evidence that they are becoming aware of the trends of thought and practice relative to the problems involved in rural school administration and organization. While there is not full agreement, even among authorities, concerning the final solution of these problems, there is harmony of opinion as to certain fundamental principles. Lewis¹ has stated the more important of these general principles as follows:

"1. The unit of organization should be large enough to make possible an efficient administration without imposing an unreasonably high unit cost.
2. The unit of organization should comprise a sufficient number of schools to make thoroughly efficient professional organization possible at a cost as low as is compatible with the best interest of the children being educated.
3. The business and professional organization should be such as to insure:
   a. Direct and sensitive reflection of enlightened public sentiment, made effective through the agency of a representative board of control.
   b. The direction of all professional activities by an adequately trained, capable, and fairminded professional representative of the board who shall be held responsible by the board for educational results along the lines which they, as representatives of the citizenship, have approved.
   c. The largest possible amount of freedom, on the part of the board of control and its professional representatives, from political influences and personal ambitions that might operate to the disadvantage of the children who are served by the administrative unit."

Under the leadership of school authorities interested in the betterment of rural life, and in making education contribute to this end in the largest possible degree, Nelson County has made much progress in its school system through its program of consolidation. The program got under way in 1940. During the first two years of its operation five small schools were centralized, and four injunctions were filed against the board of education to prevent the moving of the one-teacher schools. During the next two years three more schools were consolidated, and there were only a few scattered complaints. This year (1945) ten schools have been merged together to form a large centralized school, and there has not been a single complaint received at the office of the superintendent. On the other hand, he reports that many people have shown themselves to be anxious that the new school get under way as soon as possible. At the present time there are consolidated school centers located at Boston, Bloomfield, Chaplin, Cox's Creek, and New Hope. Of these schools only the one at Cox's Creek offers no high school training. There is no doubt but that Nelson County is moving toward complete consolidation. Another big step has been made in that direction in the building of a magnificent grade school building in Bardstown. The building was constructed by the board of education in cooperation with the federal government at a cost of approximately $225,000. The structure has fourteen regular classrooms, three special-purpose rooms, a well-lighted centrally located library room, a modern gymnasium, full basement which will house the cafeteria and kitchen, two full-sized playrooms for the upper and lower grades, the heating plant, and showers and locker rooms for both boys and girls. The building also contains office suites for the superintendent of county schools and the board of education. It is two stories high, and a twelve-acre playground is provided.
The school building has been completed for almost two years, but because of war-time restrictions all necessary equipment is not obtainable. Nevertheless, it is planned to open the school on a limited basis in September, 1945. According to present plans the pupils of the Botland, Woodlawn, Humphries, High View, Stringtown, Early Times, Buffalo, and Hunter's Schools as well as the two upper grades of the Cox's Creek School will be transported to the new building. The pupils of Murray's Run will probably be included also. There will be two teachers for each of the first four grades and five teachers for departmental work from the fifth grade up.

In order to show the extent of consolidation, the schools in Tables I and II, which have been consolidated since the data for this study were obtained, have been marked with an asterisk. A study of the tables reveals that of the nineteen one-room schools that were operating in 1942-1943 all but eight have been consolidated. Three of the two-room schools have also been centralized, leaving only seven such in the county at the present time. Thus many of the defects arising from the operation of small schools have already been eliminated. There will probably be a few of the small schools left for some time to come. Superintendent Sparrow expressed the problem facing many rural school administrators of Kentucky when he said that a few of the smaller schools would have to continue operating until the introduction of transportation of school children by air.

In fairness to the children who must attend these one-room schools while they persist something should be done to improve conditions within them. Professor Fannie W. Dunn, Teachers College, Columbia University, one of the pioneers in the movement to improve the small school makes the viewpoint clear in the following statement:
"Although consolidation of schools is progressing today more rapidly than ever, there is growing, also, a clear realization of the necessity for parallel improvement of educational facilities in one-teacher schools in order that genuine educational opportunities may be available to all our rural children now, not forty years hence. In a number of states today, school terms of equal length for all types of schools are required; graduation from a two-year normal school is set by law as the minimum qualification for teachers of all types of schools; and standard buildings and modern equipment are increasingly provided for one-teacher schools.

"Necessary as they are, such improvements have not brought the one-teacher school to the fullest realization of its possibilities. Ask any well-trained teacher in one of these better rural schools today what her chief problems are, and she will tell you, 'There are too many classes. Besides, I don't have time to use some of the newer methods of organizing material to meet the children's real needs and interests. If I try to combine my classes to make more time, the children cannot work together profitably because the subject-matter is not equally suitable for the different classes combined.'

"If we analyze the situation, we shall find that the underlying cause of the too-many-class condition is the absence of an adapted curriculum. An adapted curriculum is a facility almost universally lacking in rural schools at present."2

Because of the weaknesses in the present practices of curriculum organization, the belief is growing in the field of rural education that the best way to meet the curriculum needs of the small school is to make a course of study specifically for it. School officials should press the State Department of Education to issue state courses of study made for the teacher in the small school.

It is realized that there are major conditions which must prevail before consolidation of schools can be successfully attempted. These conditions are discussed in a pamphlet published by the State Department of Education3 under three headings: road conditions, financial ability, and

public sentiment. It is pointed out that school law in Kentucky provides that boards of education must provide schools "for elementary grades within a reasonable walking distance of their homes or provide transportation for such pupils that are not within reasonable walking distance to those who attend them." (Section 4399-20 Kentucky Statutes) And so, both from a legal and from a humane standpoint, satisfactory road conditions must prevail before the small schools can be eliminated. A few of the small schools in Nelson County are on roads over which it is impossible to drive a bus and cannot be consolidated until the proper authorities are prevailed upon to see that such roads are improved.

So far as the financial aspects are concerned, it is noted that the saving effected by consolidation is in the type of service that the school can render rather than in dollars and cents. Table I reveals that most of the one-room schools of Nelson County have an average daily attendance of fewer than twenty pupils. These schools have been consolidated since 1942-1943 with a saving in teaching personnel. On the other hand consolidation necessitates a building program and a system of transportation. With the new building completed in Bardstown there is adequate space in the consolidated buildings for all elementary school children in the county without having to expand the building program for some time to come. Of course the transportation problem still exists and probably will not be overcome until war-time restrictions are lifted and a program of rural road improvement is vigorously undertaken.

Under the heading of public sentiment the tendency of people to form mental pictures about the subject being discussed in accordance with their own experience is cited. Unless the people are educated to see the needs of modern education, many patrons are prone to remember their own school
experiences and think of modern trends as being simply "frills". As has been previously pointed out in this chapter, this particular problem is not a very serious one. Most Nelson Countians have come to see the needs of the schools in the modern world and as a result are offering very little opposition to the consolidation movement.

No one has ever claimed that consolidation of schools cures all the defects of the system. It is believed, however, that other things being equal, large consolidated schools can do much more for the child than can the small rural school.

Some objections are offered to consolidation of schools, such as the dangers of transportation, the breaking up of old community lines, and the loss of control of the school by local communities, but these objections are largely unfounded, and where they do exist, it is found that they are due to faults in organization or management rather than to the intrinsic features of the system.

Nelson County is progressive. In the place of the little community of the past which has been rendered obsolete by better roads, rapid transportation, and better means of communication has come the central community with its better facilities for trade, for entertainment, and for religious worship. It is natural that the school community should be enlarged and organized to correspond to this new type of social organization.

Practically every advantage of the large elementary school over the smaller one that has been cited corresponds to the advantage which a large high school has over a smaller one. These similarities are evidences of this fact:

"1. Small high schools have fewer pupils and provide opportunities for fewer contacts and associations
than do large high schools.
2. Small high schools have more unsatisfactorily equipped
buildings in regard to lighting, heating, and seating
facilities than do large high schools.
3. Small high schools have more unsatisfactory water
supply than do large schools.
4. Small high schools have fewer library books than do
large high schools.
5. Small high schools have poorer equipment in regard to
blackboards, maps, globes, laboratories, and physical
education than do large high schools. 4

At the present time there are four high schools operating in the
county. Much efficiency would doubtless be gained by consolidation.

The County Board of Education has invited the independent district
of Bardstown to merge into the county system. Should the invitation be
accepted, Bardstown would become a high school center. Two other high
schools, one located in the western and one in the southern part of the
county, would be sufficient to care for the needs of the boys and girls
of high school age. In spite of the faults of the small high schools
there is no denying the fact that they have provided opportunities for
a high school education to many boys and girls who would have otherwise
never received that advantage.

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4 "School Consolidation in Kentucky", op. cit., p. 386.
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

In this study, the writer has attempted to portray the educational status of the three types of public schools in Nelson County: the small rural school, the central or consolidated school, and the independent school. Data for the school year 1942-1943 have been used. The one-room school has been compared in certain respects with the consolidated school, and the consolidated school has been compared with the independent school. Changes that have been made in the school system since 1942 have been noted. These changes reveal a very definite educational trend in Nelson County, a trend toward large centralized schools through the elimination of small schools. Evidences to indicate that this trend is a progressive one have been presented.

Statistics used suggest the following advantages of the large school over the small school:

1. Higher percentage of average daily attendance.
2. Less teacher waste as indicated by the pupil-teacher ratio.
3. Longer school term, especially in the independent school.
4. Better trained teachers with more experience and better salaries.
5. Better grade distribution of pupils according to age.
6. Less retardation due to teaching conditions, inefficiency, and absenteeism.
8. Ability to provide each pupil with a well-balanced noon-day meal.

In using statistics to arrive at the above conclusions it is realized that they may not be presented as absolute data. They merely serve as a
basis of assumption which may be used until proof of contrary facts is rendered. There is need for more definite measures of results. It would be interesting to make a study of what success has been made by pupils from the various types of schools. The difficulty presenting itself in such a study would be in finding an adequate measure of success. By the time it was found, if ever, it would probably be out of date.

There is scarcely any objection to the consolidation of small schools. Nelson Countians have come to realize that consolidation of schools, which began in the county in 1940, is a progressive educational trend.

Large high schools are as superior to small high schools as large elementary schools are to small elementary schools. If the county and independent districts merge, consolidation of the small high schools will probably result.

Recommendations

1. This study has done very little toward indicating the financial ability of Nelson County to expand its educational program to meet present-day needs. Such a study should be made.

2. The policy of consolidating small schools wherever conditions will permit should be continued. Authorities agree that children have a better educational opportunity in the larger central schools than they do while attending the small rural schools.

3. All teachers should be urged to increase their training immediately until at least a minimum of sixty-four semester hours of college work is obtained. A majority of the teachers should hold the bachelor’s degree.

4. Recent studies of the reasons given for children’s being absent from school show that in county districts illness and working accounted for over 50 per cent of the absences. It would seem that attendance could be greatly improved if a vigorous effort were made to eliminate
these causes of non-attendance. The scarcity of farm labor has brought about a great increase in the number of children required to stay at home and work. This is a problem which should be studied and subjected to positive action by school authorities. A realization on the part of parents of the importance of regular attendance and a cooperative attitude by teachers, principals, and other school officials will greatly reduce the amount of absences because of work.

5. An efficient supervisory program should be inaugurated with a professionally trained, full-time supervisor in charge.

6. Improvements should be made within the small schools that cannot be centralized in the near future.

7. More publicity should be given to educational policy and proceedings of the board of education. The public should be made fully aware of the responsibility of its members in organizing and maintaining a school system that is compatible with modern educational needs.
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