A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON HIGH SCHOOL SIZE, 1900-1980

by

STEVEN R. MILETTO

(Under the Direction of William G. Wraga)

ABSTRACT

This study systematically examined the literature on high school size from 1900 to 1980 to determine the issues of high school size during that era, to identify the methods in which the educators addressed those issues, to reveal the findings from research related to high school size, and to ascertain the relevance of past practices for today’s educators. Prior to 1900, few children attended public high schools and in the 1980s the small schools movement began therefore the study focused on the era from 1900 to 1980. From the early 1900s to 1980, high school size was an important issue in secondary school reform efforts. Research sought to identify the effects that school size had on students and hoped to identify an optimal size for a high school. Yet, throughout this literature, no universal definition for small, large, and optimum size high schools emerged in the first 50 years of the 20th century. The numbers of high schools with fewer than 100 students dominated the United States. These high schools became the target of efficiency and cost-effectiveness experts as prevalent opinion celebrated the large high school. The view was that larger high schools had the resources to offer a varied comprehensive curriculum, whereas small high schools wasted financial resources. Small schools were associated with problems of teacher retention, teacher quality, curriculum composition, curriculum quality, number of extra-curriculum offerings, adequacy of equipment, adequacy of facilities, budgeting
constraints, impact of school size on student/teacher relationships, and the impact of school size on college achievement.

Educators addressed these problems by reorganizing and consolidating schools and districts to overcome budget shortfalls. Additional financial assistance from state and federal governments assisted schools and districts with paying the costs of operating schools. Larger schools tended to have access to more resources and better equipment and facilities. Larger schools attracted certified teachers from all areas because they paid more and offered better opportunities for teaching and promotion. Small schools shared teachers with other schools and districts, used the principal as a teacher, and hired non-certified teachers. Larger schools usually had the resources to offer a comprehensive curriculum and extra-curricular offerings while smaller schools became creative with the schedule, looked to hire teachers with multiple certifications, and primarily offered a college preparatory selection. Research found that the smaller the school, the greater the costs and that too many variables influenced achievement other than size, which meant that arriving at an optimal size high school remained elusive.

The same issues of school size that the educators of 1900 to 1980 addressed are still concerns. An examination of past problems related to high school size and how educators resolved them can hopefully add perspective and even identify promising practices for addressing such problems today.

INDEX WORDS: School Size; Optimal Size School; Small High Schools; Large High Schools; Secondary School Size; Secondary Schools; High Schools
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To my father, Robert A. Miletto who always asked, “How is school going?” and taught me the meaning of persistence. To my mother, Carol A. Duncan who made me do my homework and taught me to try.
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CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Study

In 1983 a document opened with the ominous statement, “Our nation is at risk” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). *A Nation at Risk* set a tone of urgency for the public and a direction for education reform in the United States for the next twenty years. According to the report, public education had caused the United States’ stumble “from preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 1). The race was on to find salvation for the education of American children. The stage was set for a new crop of education reformers and their focus for secondary schools would be to dismantle the American comprehensive high school (Wraga, 1999b). One of the responses to this report was the restructuring movement of the 1980’s and 1990’s. Studies such as Goodlad’s *A Place Called School* (1984) and Sizer’s *Horace’s Compromise* (1984) led the restructuring focus on the comprehensive model.

Hallinger, Murphy, and Hausman (1992) noted,

> Basically, restructuring includes endeavors to (a) decentralize the organization, management, and governance of schooling; (b) empower those closest to students in the classroom (i.e., teachers, parents, and principals); (c) create new roles and responsibilities for all of the players in the system; and (d) transform the learning-teaching process that unfolds in classrooms. (p. 330)

From site based management to teaming to block scheduling to the quality schools movement, restructuring was meant to right the wrongs of the high school (Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984; Glasser M.D, 1990; Bonstingl, 1992). The reformers made the American high school appear as if it needed serious repairing to the point that many in higher education sang of its death. Goodlad, for example said, “American schools are in trouble...It is possible that our entire public education system is nearing collapse” (Goodlad, 1984, p. 1). Hence, it has been necessary to
search for the solution to the problem. Among the most popular approaches to education reform were school choice, vouchers, charter schools, and looking at the effect of school size (school enrollment). The first three focused upon creating a choice for families where previously there was only the local, neighborhood school.

The school choice movement offered parents the ability to choose somewhere else to take their child. They took state money with them that covered the cost for their child and it went to the school that they chose (Wells, 1990; Goldhaber, 2001). They in essence could shop around for schools. It appeared in several different formats. Wells (1990) described these options,

1) Controlled Choice: There are no attendance zones or school districts. The parents choose where their child attends.
2) Magnet Schools: These schools have a specific emphasis, for example a school of science and mathematics or foreign language or engineering. These schools are common in school districts where there are schools that have a higher percentage of minorities at one school versus the other.
3) Interdistrict and Open Enrollment: These programs allow parents to move throughout the state taking the state money with them. There are no restrictions according to district or county boundaries. (p.3-6)

The ultimate push behind the school choice movement was that parents could select their schools. Schools were now competitive. Eventually, a school would address weaknesses or close.

Voucher programs were part of the “school choice movement” (Rouk, 2000, p. 1). In these programs, a student qualified for a pre-determined amount of money. The state issued a voucher for the money that the family could redeem at the school of their choice. It did not matter if the school was public or private. The theory behind vouchers was that they would make schools become more competitive as they endeavored to attract students and families and keep them (Hadderman, 2000; Rouk, 2000).

Charter schools existed as a group or organization contracted with the state or local school board to provide a unique program and learning environment. Typically, the school was
exempt from most state laws and regulations. A charter school received an amount of autonomy that other schools did not get. The school’s autonomy had strings attached. Autonomy was exchanged for meeting accountability standards (Sautter, 1993; Hadderman, 1998; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001; USCharterSchools, 2002).

The drive behind these approaches was the theory that public schools were a monopoly that needed to be broken up. The belief was that competition, as in the business world, would straighten out public education. The fourth approach was an attempt to assess whether the student population of a building negatively or positively influenced the learning environment. The present study focused on the issue of school size.

The school size approach to reform addressed “the predilection in American education toward enormity” (Fowler, 1992, p. 1). Raywid as cited in Viadero (2001) argued, however, “An awful lot of people, including some who are professional educators, think the secret of education is in curriculum and pedagogy, and those are the only two things that matter…and that is wrong” (p. 28). Recently, a focus of restructuring had become size of the school, in terms of number of students. The main reason for this had been the increase of students in the American high school classrooms. In 1950, there were 5,725,000 students in public secondary schools, grades 9-12, in the United States. In 2000, there were 13,514,000 students in public secondary schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003, p. 69).

There was much written on the subject of school size. Several of the topics that drove the small versus large school debate emphasized could the small school attract quality teachers, offer enough (different) curricular choices, provide many different extracurricular activities to involve the students in the school, and prevent the alienation of students through more intimate settings. Small schools rhetoric became commonplace. Organizations created themselves in the image of
research based small school reform programs. The Small Schools Workshop (SSW), based out of
the University of Illinois in Chicago, served as a collaborative attempt with communities to share
important information about converting traditional high schools into small schools
(www.smallschoolsworkshop.org, 2002). President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act
emphasized the use of small (No Child Left Behind, 2002, subpart 4-Smaller learning
communities, section 5411; section 5441 Smaller learning communities). Educational research
organizations such as the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (www. nwrel.org) and the
Southeast Regional Education Board (www.sreb.org) funded research initiatives to investigate
the effects of small schools and provided support to help create small schools. In addition, the
Bill and Melinda Gates foundation provided large financial grants to assist schools in creating
more personalized environments through implementation of small schools. Small schools
information sharing consumed education the last twenty-plus years.

Appearing often in the literature was the discussion of the large school versus the small
school. The crux of the argument was that the large school offered a choice of subjects and
extracurricular activities and had more qualified teachers. The large school supporters stated that
the small school could not offer enough of the instructional needs of the modern student as well
as the activities necessary to keep the students involved in school. The small school contingent
explained that it could offer the classes required and in a less costly manner. Advocates of the
small school versus large school saw a need to restructure the comprehensive high school. The
claim was that the enrollment of comprehensive high schools was too large, hence causing
student alienation and eliminating instructional effectiveness. This faction of the small schools
(1959) called for the elimination of small schools, “I should like to record at this point my
conviction that in many states the number one problem is the elimination of the small high school by district reorganization” (p. 38). Reformers blamed Conant for creating the current large American comprehensive high school. Others in this debate indicated that what Conant saw as “small” and “large” schools was different from what a small and large school looked like today. The argument also centered on what constituted a small and a large high school. Conant maintained that a high school with a graduating class of a little more than 100 was large enough to implement the comprehensive curriculum he proposed (Conant, 1959; Lee & Smith, 1997), and that a high school of at least 750 students with sufficient funding to operate the school were the keys to creating a successful school (Conant, 1967). Within this context, Conant referred to a small school as “one with fewer than 500 students” (Conant, 1967, p.7) and “less than 100 in a graduating class” (Conant, 1959, p.77). He, as well as Lee and Smith (1997) concluded that schools could be too small.

**Background of the Problem**

Bloch in *The Historian’s Craft* claimed, “Misunderstanding of the present is the inevitable consequence of ignorance of the past” (Bloch, 1953, p.43). He also pointed out that the historian could not truly believe that he understood the past solely based upon people’s “reactions to circumstance’s peculiar to a moment” (Bloch, 1953, p. 42). Limited interpretations of history from small snapshots of an era caused the elimination of conclusions “by the emergence of prior concealed information” (p.42). It was important to know society and societal organizations over time, past and present to understand humanity. Those who did not understand the past easily adulterated history. Interpretations allowed personal bias to change the historical tale to tell what they wanted it to tell. Historians separated glorification from reality, fact from
fiction, and myth from reality; described the whole picture of human society in reference to the past and present not just from one segment of time. As Frank (1949) observed,

> The historian as therapist is needed to release man from the coercions and distorted versions of the traditions, of his “past”… Man is at the mercy of these versions of his past, these selectively organized presentations of traditions and events from which he derives his cultural heritage, his image of himself, and his ideas of his future. (pp. 3-4)

Without the historian, too often the populace succumbed to history and reality as constructed by those who would have people believe that if something is repeated often enough it becomes truth (Frank, 1949; Bloch, 1953; Cremin, 1953).

> The historian “resurrects stories” (Marius, 1989, p. 1) about the past to find out what actually happened. The historian was concerned with connecting the “puzzle pieces” (p.2) and filling in the “gaps” (p.2) with what may have happened. The historian was always hoping to have come as close to reality as possible without distorting the factual image of the past (Marius, 1989).

> The study of curriculum has often been identified as being ahistorical (Kliebard, 1968; Tanner & Tanner, 1980,1995; Tanner, 1983; Garrett, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Typically, because reformers of education tended not to refer to the events of the past, they appeared as if they had no knowledge of the past. In reality, what continued to occur was the belief that past practice was inadequate. The past was outdated (Charlton, 1977; Davis, 1989; Davis, 1992; Garrett, 1994). Typically, a college student was told that a “research project must include only resources from within the past five years”(Garrett, 1994, p. 390; also see Davis, 1989 for similar comments). This was a prime example of the attitude that what was in the past was antiquated and of no current value. The education knowledge base stumbled every time an educator generated bias against the past. They adapted the same philosophy and passed it down to their
own students. “This makes old ideas seem new.” (Garrett, 1994, p. 392) and quite possibly encouraged a form of “cultural amnesia” (p. 392). The small schools debate suffered from just such a lack of a historical perspective.

In the school year 1899 to 1900, the total enrollment for public secondary schools, grades 9-12, was 519,000 children. During that same era the total number of children ages 14-17 was 6,152,000. This equates to only 10.2% of this age population enrolled in public high schools. By the school year 1939-40, the total enrollment grew to 6,601,000 children with 72.6% of the total population of this age group attending a public secondary school. By the fall of 1980, the enrollment for public secondary schools rose to 13,231,000 children with 90.3% of the population aged 14-17 attending school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003, p. 48-49, and 69.) As overall enrollment grew, individual schools’ enrollments grew in size as well. The issue of what to do with these children became more and more pressing (Ballou, 1914; Horrall, 1922; Thornberg, 1924; Ferriss, 1927; Briggs, 1933; Langfitt, 1938; Koos, Hughes, Hutson, & Reavis, 1940; Hartung, 1953; Livingston, 1956; Conant, 1959; Barker & Gump, 1964; Gores, 1966; Bagby & Schwilck, 1968; Kleinert, 1969; Sarason, 1971; Tanner, 1971; Downey, 1978; Brimm & Hanson, 1980; Firestone, 1980; Tanner & Tanner, 1980). Educators of the era 1900-1980 faced the issue of small schools becoming large and larger schools growing even larger. Educators had to address the issues that come with growth. Most significantly, they had to address the question of what was the optimal size of a secondary school that would provide the best learning environment for the students. This was precisely the issue researchers of today attempt to tackle.
Statement of the Problem

Small schools research and development was a current concern and had been growing in interest as the 1990s gave way to the 21st century. One interesting aspect of the research was that there were few references to studies other than Conant’s *The American High School Today* (1959) from forty or more years ago, that addressed the issue of school size. Interestingly most did not even mention Conant. There were only a few studies that mentioned Barker and Gump’s *Big School, Small School* (1964) study from the 1960s. In reading the popular literature it became clear that the majority, if not all, of the references in current studies only cited literature from the last 10 to 15 years, thus confirming Cremin’s (1964) observation, “Reform movements are notoriously ahistorical in outlook. They look forward rather than back; and when they do need a history, they frequently prefer the fashioning of ideal ancestors to the acknowledgement of mortals” (p.8). The current school size movement ignored the reality that, from 1900 to 1980, school size was a major topic of discussion. The research base of the turn of the 19th century highlighted the same arguments between large schools and small schools as were heard today. The findings were similar to the findings of today. The past does not have all of the answers, but historical works revealed previous discoveries and failings that needed to be addressed (Tanner & Tanner, 1980, xvi). Ahistoricism limited researchers’ current discussions of school size.

Significance of the Study

As noted, education reform was typically ahistorical (Cremin, 1964; Tanner & Tanner, 1980; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Ravitch, 2000). The discussion of school size was no different. Most contemporary school size researchers and advocates limited their historical references to Conant’s work. They ignored a vast wealth of information prior to Conant. The topic of school size was a contentious issue in the early 1900’s. This study aimed to inform discussions of the
small high school as a model for school reform by illuminating the findings on school size from the period 1900-1980, thus recovering forgotten or neglected knowledge of educational practice.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to inform current discussions about school size with insights from historic discussions of school size during the period 1900 to 1980.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. What size issues did high school educators face during the period 1900 to 1980?
2. How did high school educators address these issues during this period?
3. What were the findings from research related to high school size from 1900 to 1980?
4. What is relevant from the research and professional literature on high school size of the past for today’s discussions of high school size?

Definition of Terms

Comprehensive high schools, according to Conant (1959), are expected to “provide education for all the youth living in a town, city, or district” … “in contrast to the specialized high schools which provide vocational education or which admit on a selective basis and offer only an academic curriculum” (pp. 7-8).

Consolidation also known as reorganization and regionalization referred to the method used to reduce the larger numbers of small high schools and small school districts throughout the United States. This process instituted a physical reorganization of the schools and districts to create larger schools under the control of one district office. This process created a “shift to centralized control of public schooling” (Jenks, 1999, p. 97).

High school was a school dedicated to serving grades 9 through 12 and 10 through 12.
Internal neighborhoods appeared within the metropolitan area whose social grouping had in common or combinations of socio-economics, religion, ethnicity, industry, and retail (Havighurst & Levine, 1971, pp. 9-12; Cremin, 1988, pp. 5-7).

Metropolitan communities “came into existence, at first as a simple geographical area occupied by people who had business in common. But the metropolitan area was more complex than the city in its governmental, economic, and social structures” (Havighurst, 1968, p. 3). According to Cremin (1988), the urbanization of the United States by the early twentieth century led to the emergence of complex interrelationships between central cities and their suburban rings and rural hinterlands, which produced highly specialized mosaics of subcommunities tied together into functional wholes in which traditional distinctions between ‘urban,’ ‘suburban,’ and ‘rural’ tended to blur and even disappear. (p. 5)

School plant referred to “the physical structure of a school and all permanently affixed instructional and non-instructional equipment therein and on the school grounds” (Unger, 1996, p. 856).

School size for the purposes of this research referred to the number of students enrolled in the school as opposed to the size of the physical plant or a specific classroom. School size arguments fall into two categories. The first category “focuses on the potential for increased savings through reduced redundancy and increased resource strength as schools get bigger. The second strand of the school size argument directs attention toward how size influences other organizational properties of the school” (Lee & Smith, 1997, p. 206).

Small high schools had fewer than 600 students (Lee & Smith, 1997, pp.205 and 216).

Large high schools had more than 900 students (Lee & Smith, 1997, pp.205 and 216).

Ideal high schools had between 600 and 900 students (Lee & Smith, 1997, pp. 205 and 216).
Scope of the Study

This study consisted of:

1. A review of the literature pertaining to the historiography of secondary school size research from the era 1900 through 1980.

2. An examination of historical sources such as journal articles, United States Department of Education reports and records, NCES reports and records, demographic data from the Census, studies, manuscripts, and books.

3. Analysis of the conclusions from work on school size conducted 1900 through 1980 to find the connections with the contemporary research.

4. Assessment of the impact historical documents had on current research pertaining to secondary school size.

Methods and Procedures

This study employed a historical method of research. The focus was on literature about high school size from 1900 through 1980. Evidence generated from books, articles, oral testimony, and primary and secondary source documents related to the topic. “Historical research is unique in that it focuses strictly on the past” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990, p. 411). Unlike other research methodologies where data were generated through “the manipulation of variables” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990, p. 411), historical research attempted to reconstruct the past to explain what happened and why it happened. What was ultimately the most unique characteristic of historical research was that “there is no single, definable method of inquiry” (Kaestle, 1997, p. 119). There was so much information available that must be sifted through or in, some cases, too little information that historical methodology was hampered because its goal to uncover the what and the why could not be completely accomplished. Historians used a variety of methods to
reveal the truth behind the stories of the past. Often documents or artifacts were missing which would assist in the telling of the stories. Sometimes what was available to the researcher was not the real or complete picture of what was occurring during the period (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990, p. 417; Kaestle in Jaeger, 1997, p. 119). Therefore, the historical researcher recognized that there were limitations to the conclusions that he would make based upon his research. There was individual bias from the past that may not be readily apparent as well as it was next to impossible to “check the reliability or validity of the inferences made from the data available” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990, p. 418). The vastness of topics and the existence of questionable evidence often led the historian to focus on a small event or one phenomena (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990), to avoid becoming lost in a study or topic that became deeper and broader with no end in sight. It was for these reasons, that historical research was so open to criticisms and dispute. Without one major methodology and with so many flaws in the collection of data, it was easy to take issue with a historian’s findings.

The research for this study began by searching The Education Index, Dissertation Abstracts, ERIC and The Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature to help identify periods and possible pertinent articles and dissertations that applied to the topic of high school size. Upon finding the articles that appeared to be relevant, analysis revealed content related to the past and current arguments pertaining to the appropriate enrollment size of secondary schools. The bibliographies of the documents uncovered citations of primary source documents (such as Census Reports and bulletins from the United States Department of the Interior) and specific authors that seemed cited repeatedly. Small schools research was prevalent; therefore, several on-line research databases assisted as well. For example, the small schools research initiated by NWREL (Northwestern Regional Education Lab) and SREB (Southern Region Educational
Board) as well as the Small Schools Workshop, The Coalition of Essential Schools, The National Association of Secondary School Principals, The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and The Bill Gates Small Schools Foundation all had on-line resources which supplied valuable leads to current research pertaining to the optimal size of an American High School.

Assumptions

1. Primary source documents reviewed are authentic.

2. Primary source documents presented an accurate account of ideas and practices from the perspectives of those who created the primary document.

3. Findings could be generalized to current practice.

Limitations

A major limitation in an historical study is the potential for not having access to primary sources or that the primary sources are not available.

Organization of the Report

Chapter I is an overview of the study. It included an introduction, a look at the background of the problem, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, a statement of purpose for the paper, research questions which drove the project, the scope of the study, the methods and procedures used to research, basic assumptions about the topic and limitations to the study.

Chapter II is a summary of the current literature pertaining to high school size.

Chapters III through V break down the historical context of high school size into the pattern of years that were prevalent. Each of these chapters was a literature review of the eras.
Thus, Chapter III covers the years 1900 to 1939, Chapter IV pertains to high school size research from 1940 to 1960, and Chapter V addresses the issue during the years 1961 to 1980.

Chapter VI summarizes the findings, suggested implications for further research, and offered suggestions for current educators, politicians, and community members interested in the size of the American high school.
CHAPTER 2

Summary of Current Thought on High School Size

Two sections comprise this chapter: origins and proposals. The origins section discusses the beginnings of the small schools movement. The proposals segment briefly outlines the many design elements of small schools and identifies the inconsistencies within their claims.

Origins

During the late twentieth century, small schools initiatives began in reform efforts to eliminate the comprehensive high school. The comprehensive high school was said to be too large, too impersonal and too costly; thus, the large high school needed to be reduced and restructured (Sizer, 1984; Gregory & Smith, 1987; Meier, 1995; Raywid, 1996; Cotton, 2001; Gregory, 2001). In the 1970s, several reports, notably *The Reform of Secondary Education: A Report to the Public and the Profession* (1973), *Youth, Transition to Adulthood* (1974), and *The Education of Adolescents: The Final Report and Recommendations of the National Panel on High School and Adolescent Education* (1976), challenged the largely unquestioned commitment to the comprehensive high school. According to Wraga (1994), “these national panels recommended disbanding comprehensive high schools in favor of alternative forms of education” (p.182).

The reports from the 1970s provided the common voice that stated that the large comprehensive school was to blame for all of the ills of the high school and the country. The assumption was that comprehensive high schools were inherently too big. The comprehensive high school needed elimination so that new models could come in and right all that was wrong. Those arguments, however, stemmed from a misinterpretation, whether intentional or not, of the original design plan of the comprehensive high school model. Detractors attacked the structure of
the large high school. They claimed that the large size made the school experience impersonal. It
could not create a learning environment where students felt safe or secure. Alternative forms of
education needed pursuing.

*Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*

During the early twentieth century, many educators advocated that public education
needed to include all students. Under these auspices the comprehensive high school was born.
Cremin (1955) reflected that a report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary
Education; *The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (1918) reflected a change in
thinking about the high school: as “an institution conceived for the few, the high school became
an institution conceived for all” (p. 307).

The CRSE (1918) outlined the requirements of the new high school where any child
could attend school beyond the eighth grade. It stipulated a school environment where children
of all backgrounds would work together as well as learn subjects that they chose. Wraga (1994)
stated,

> The report established the two fundamental functions of the comprehensive
> high school model: to provide an educational program suitable to the
> needs of all youth and to unify students of diverse backgrounds, abilities,
> and aspirations. The report named these the specializing and unifying
> functions, respectively. (p. xiv)

Over time, however, educators placed greater emphasis on the specializing function rather than
on the unifying function. The small schools movement attacked size, but failed to understand the
original intentions of the comprehensive high school design.

*James B. Conant*

To bolster the argument that the high school was too large and impersonal, the small
school movement needed a scapegoat. Small school advocates chose James B. Conant (1959,
1967). They blamed him for the rapid demise of the small rural and urban schools. Conant became responsible for the super-sizing of education. His vilification grew because of his popular works that called for the elimination of small schools (see p. 38, Conant, 1959). Viadero (2001) argued,

Conant’s study, meanwhile, helped drive the growth of the large, comprehensive high school in the United States. Over the next 40 years, big high schools with their competitive football teams and strong music programs, became the norm in communities throughout the country, representing Americans’ ideal of what high school ought to be. (p. 28)

Since 1980, few articles or books about small schools failed to place the blame for the current focus on large schools at the feet of Conant. Cotton commented, “Smith and DeYoung and many others note that James Conant’s 1959 book, The American High School Today, greatly accelerated the momentum of the school consolidation movement” (see Cotton, 1996, p. 2 referring to Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Williams, 1990; Stockard & Mayberry, 1992; Walberg, 1992;).

What was interesting was that Conant called for schools to have “at least 100 in each class, thus a high school would have 400 or 500 students…what most people today would call a small school” (Gregory, 2000, p. 5). It was his contention that a school with less than 100 in a graduating class would be too expensive to operate therefore these schools were “the number one problem the districts needed to eliminate through district reorganization” (Conant, 1959, p. 38). What most reformers ignored was the statement on the same page “the district which supports a comprehensive high school must be large enough to provide a school of sufficient size” (Conant, 1959, p. 38). Conant (1959) referred to the costs associated with a high school (quality teachers, lab equipment, a diversified curriculum, etc.). He believed that a district that was too small could never provide adequate funding. Therefore, the education of the students in these districts would
lag behind their counterparts in the larger districts and schools. This part of his argument was lost on many educators.

With the practice of blaming the comprehensive model, came in the 1980s the wave of reform efforts that emphasized the reduction of school size. These efforts looked at creating new schedules for flexibility throughout the school day, the teaming of teachers, the development of advisor/advisee relationships, reduction of class offerings, and the creation of real world curriculums. Without looking into the original design of the comprehensive high school, and by taking Conant out of context, a reform movement grew. With the new focus on accountability and standards coupled with the government-supported reports of the 1970s and early 1980s, the small schools initiative was born.

Proposals

Since the 1980s, small high school literature assumed that small was good and large was bad. “Large schools are about power—who has it and who does not; who is important and who is not; what work, skills, and experiences are valued and what are not” (Lyon, 2000, p. 92). Portraying large schools as detrimental to a child’s education, small schools looked like “arenas of learning, protected spaces for an intimate encounter with minds and hearts” (Ayers, 2000, p. 5). Learning, in the small school, was “expected to occur more often as well as more equitably” (Lee & Smith, 1997, p. 205). In a memorandum from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Executive Director for Education claimed that “studies show that small schools improve attendance, safety, climate, achievement, graduation, college attendance and staff satisfaction” (Vander Ark, personal communication, December 12, 2001). Gregory, an advocate of small schools, summed up the size debate: “Since 1970, essentially all research tends to favor the creation of small high schools” (Gregory, 2000, p. 1; 2001, p. 1).
There were two main philosophies as to how to make a school small: 1) create schools within schools and 2) create a brand new high school with a small number of students (Cotton, 1996; 2001; Raywid, 1996; Gregory, 2000). The schools within schools effort tried to reform the large high school by breaking apart the original high school and creating separate smaller schools. Each of these had its own principal and a specialization. (ie. math, science, ninth grade transition, etc.). The size of each school would be 200 to 400 students (Raywid, 1996; Gregory, 2000, 2001;), or 600 students according to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1996, 2004). A foremost goal would be to make students feel as if they were more than a face in a crowd. The school within a school aimed to eliminate the alienation that a student felt when the school was too large (Noddings, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1994; Meier, 1995; Sizer, 1996).

The other approach was to build the school from the ground up. The small school housed between 200 and 400 students (Raywid, 1996; Gregory, 2000, p. 13) or 600 to 900 students according to Lee and Smith (1997) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1996, 2004). The staff would be versed in personalization of instruction and the blocks of time selected to make use of the resources available. The desire was to create a sense of community and belonging (Noddings, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1994; Meier, 1995; Sizer, 1996).

Educators sought to address issues from the lack of achievement to safety and order by reducing the size of the high school. These concerns pervaded Cotton’s (2001), Gregory’s (2000, 2001) and the National Association of Secondary School Principal’s (2004) publications, the latter of which cites Cotton (2001). Reform literature since the early 2000s cited Cotton (2001) frequently, using her work as part of the defense or support of their small schools models. She identified specific aspects of schooling that the small school was supposed to address:
Achievement, affiliation/belonging, curriculum quality, preparation for higher education, costs, equity, extracurricular participation, parent involvement and satisfaction, safety and order, teacher attitudes and satisfaction, and truancy and dropouts. A discussion of these aspects follows.

Small schools supporters advocated that the small environment positively affected achievement. Cotton (2001) contended, “Research shows that those attending these small schools achieve at higher levels than do students in large schools” (p. 13). The small schools’ supporters argued that smallness increased achievement. Lee and Smith (1997) noted, “In schools of moderate sizes (600 to 900 students) achievement gains were as great for high socioeconomic groups as they were for low socioeconomic classes. It was also determined that it was consistently high with low and high minority concentrations” (p. 217). Small schools advocates claimed that the small school created a sense of belonging and eliminated the alienation that often appeared in large schools. “Students (and teachers) in smaller environments can come to know and care about one another in a way that is difficult to achieve in large schools” (Cotton, 2001, p. 14). As a result, the students developed a desire to participate in school functions and extracurricular activities.

Educators who sought the elimination of small high schools declared that the smaller the school, the less likely that the curriculum offered was of high caliber. They also believed that the fewer the number of teachers and the fewer the number of students the more likely there was not a wide selection of courses offered. According to Roellke (1996), however, “many small high schools maintain programs…that are comparable in quality to curricula of larger schools” (p. 1). Where the small schools lacked certain resources they had created the necessary programs “through various restructuring efforts, including integration of curricula, innovative scheduling,
higher education cooperatives, inter-district sharing [with large schools], and use of instructional technologies” (Roellke, 1996, p. 1). Criticism of small schools also focused on their ability to prepare students for college. Cotton revealed that the Wasley, Fine, King, Powell, Holland, Gladden, and Mosak (2000) report from the study of Chicago small schools and the Ancess and Ort (1999) study of two large failing schools in New York City demonstrated the ability of small school students to succeed in college. What was apparent from these reports was that “there are numerous college bound students from these schools” (Cotton, 2001, p. 16).

One of the main criticisms of small high schools involved costs. The large high school efficiently used resources; therefore, it was fiscally responsible to invest in bigger schools. Small school activists accused the large high school supporters of ignoring the issue of the costs associated with increasing the size of the faculty. The greater the number of students, the more the school needed additional administrators, counselors, and teachers (Cotton, 1996, 2001). Stiefel, Berne, Iatarola, and Fruchter (1998) suggested that the more appropriate comparison was between the proportion of graduates from the small school versus the proportion of graduates from the large schools. Their focus was the differences between income potential of the dropout and the graduate. They reasoned that the costs associated with allowing large numbers to dropout meant that the small schools “will continue to pay off for the rest of the students’ lives” (Cotton, 2001, p. 20).

Small schools advocates argued that the small school made children from impoverished communities more competitive academically. They contended that the small school environment enabled adults to address student needs more personally. A large case study reported that “small schools reduced the negative effects of poverty by between 20 and 70 percent, and usually by 30 to 50 percent, depending on grade level” (Howley, Strange, & Bickel, 2000, p. 3).
Small school advocates also claimed that with smallness came willingness to participate in the school community (Noddings, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1994; Meier, 1995;). According to Cotton (2001), small schools increased the level of involvement in extra-curricular activities. She also determined that the students participating “in those activities tended to be better satisfied with their involvement and have more important roles” (p. 16) in the smaller high school. Cotton did contend that the newer small schools de-emphasized many of the traditional extracurricular programs and the “role may be very different from the comprehensive high school” (Cotton, 2001, p. 16).

Small school supporters lauded the ability of the small high school to provide a personalized atmosphere. They believed that the students experienced a better learning opportunity and that the school communicated better with the parents. They believed that the small high school had a welcoming climate for parents because the bigness of the school did not overwhelm them. These reformers noted that parents typically asked to be involved in governing councils and decision-making aspects of the school. Hence, the parents felt a greater satisfaction with the school (Noddings, 1992; Meier, 1995; Cotton, 2001, p. 17).

Small high schools advocates believed that as teachers and students developed meaningful relationships, the number of discipline cases declined. Students would feel like they were people and not a face in the crowd. “An obvious benefit of student affiliation and belonging is increased order and safety” (Cotton, 2001, 15). The lack of impersonal feelings would create fewer opportunities for students to misbehave (Sizer, 1984, 1996; Noddings, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1994; Meier, 1995). Cotton (2001) cited the results of Gladden’s (1998) research where he concluded among the many benefits of the small schools, “That students felt safer” (Gladden, 1998, p. 16).
Champions of the small high schools speculated that teachers in conventional high schools felt isolated. They asserted that teachers in the larger high schools rarely saw many of their colleagues and, depending upon the size of the school, even did not know some of their colleagues. They claimed that teachers often felt more willing to be a part of a decision-making body in the small high school. These educators insisted that smaller class sizes and the very nature of recognizing most of the students in the building helped to perpetuate a feeling of satisfaction in a small school. According to these small schools advocates, the smaller school typically had fewer discipline problems and the parent and teacher knew each other and stayed in touch with one another (Meier, 1995; Cotton, 2001;).

Finally, educators wanted students to attend school, learn, and graduate. According to small schools advocates, the size of the school directly affected the dropout rate. “School attendance and graduation rates are higher in small schools, generally, and better still in deliberately small schools” (Cotton, 2001, p. 15). These educators expected the size of the high school to encourage the student to stay in school.

It was these main areas of emphasis- achievement, affiliation, curriculum quality, preparation for higher education, costs, equity, extracurricular participation, parent involvement and satisfaction, safety and order, teacher attitudes and satisfaction, and truancy and dropouts - that educators stressed as strengths of the small schools and weaknesses of the large schools. Small schools advocates used these concepts as the foundation of their argument for the reduction in the total student population of a high school. Yet, their stance on school size lacked any historical perspective. Typically, the original design intent of the comprehensive high school received no mention. A search of the literature reviews, for example, found no acknowledgement of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (1918). Their focus was on
large schools and their detriments without understanding the intent and function of the comprehensive high school. Yet, many of the same issues emphasized by small school advocates were of a concern to the original designers of the comprehensive high school.

Researchers can find small schools advocates and their organizations easily throughout the web. Small schools organizations range from nationally publicly funded projects to local, privately funded initiatives (see www.gatesfoundation.org, www.smallschoolsworkshop.org, www.smallschools.org, www.essentialschools.org, www.edvantia.org, www.annenberginstitute.org, www.nwrel.org, www.smallschoolsproject.org, and www.glef.org, for examples). These organizations, in their own words, acquired funding to support their research and then used that research to support their own claims. Simply put, they knew what they would find out before they began their research.

Although they called for the development of small schools, they each had their own definition of small. Some small school advocates believed that the maximum should be 500 students while others stipulated that a school’s enrollment should be between 200 and 400 pupils (Raywid, 1996; Lashway, 1998; Howley, Strange, & Bickel, 2000; Cotton, 2001; Gregory, 2001). They disagreed as to the appropriate size of a secondary school but they agreed that there was a need to breakup large schools.

Small school advocates referred to information gathered during the last 24 years to give credence to their ideas. It was readily evident that their research contained very few, if any, pre 1980 reference. The two works cited the most were Conant’s (1959), *The American High School Today* and Barker and Gump’s (1964) *Big School, Small School*. Ignored or forgotten, research prior to the current era did not appear in the reference lists. Even studies that purported to be overviews of small schools research did not venture far from the current era. Kathleen Cotton in
both of her landmark studies of small schools research (1996, 2001) rarely ventured into the years prior to 1980. She mentioned the Barker and Gump’s (1964) book and in her earlier work (1996) mentioned Cohen (1975) and Huling (1980). Cotton’s (2001) title even includes the phrase “from recent literature”. She even clearly stated that, “It was based on a representative sample of research and other literature, nearly all of which was published within the past five years” (p. 4). Cotton (2001) explained, “In the popular press, articles informing readers about the impressive benefits of small schools continue to be written and read, but for many people in and outside the education profession, this is old news” (p. 1).

According to Cotton, small schools proved to be effective. The difference between today’s movement for small schools and that of fifteen years ago was that now we know that they were “superior to large ones” (Cotton, 2001, p. 1). Raywid (1999) felt that the research of the 1980s and 90s, “firmly established small schools as more productive and effective than large ones” (p. 1). Even the National Association of Secondary Schools Principals (1996, 2004) only cited current research and ignored the distant past in *Breaking Ranks I* and *Breaking Ranks II*.

Some small school advocates, however noted that there was a limitation to the effectiveness of the small school. This was a view of small schools research that appeared in works by the educators who had looked at the evidence produced over a period longer than the last twenty years. Raywid (1996, 1999) and Gregory (2000, 2001), for instance, echo the small school sentiments but also portray some of its limitations.

Often the works (such as Ayers, 2000; Nathan & Myatt, 2000; Pearlman, 2000; Howley, 2003; Miner, 2005; Gonzalez & DeJesus, 2007) by small school advocates made change in school size seem like something that created success overnight. The mere suggestion that the elimination of all high schools larger than 900 students, for example, would create better schools,
did not portray reality. When reading some small school advocate’s works it became quite clear that there were obstacles to accomplishing change. Gregory (2000) noted that Sizer (1984, 1992, 1996) changed from barely mentioning the difficulty of changing school in his first two efforts to addressing it specifically in his third book. Gregory mentioned that, in the last book, *Horace’s Hope*, Sizer referred to a “diabolically complicated system” (Sizer, 1996, p. xi). Sizer identified a major weakness in small schools: It was much more complicated to initiate change (Sarason, 1971, 1990; Fullan, 2001) and make it last.

Ultimately, making a school small was not all that there was to creating a small high school. There was a need to change the mindset of the teachers and administration. Too many times the small high school was just another large high school with fewer students. Small school advocates tried to cloak the school in the same rules and routines. Gregory (2000) observed, “A central problem is that we build characteristics into the basic design of most of these breakup efforts that make it impossible for them to cross over into the world of successful small schools (p. 13). If the culture was not changed then the initiative was doomed to failure (Sarason, 1990; Meier, 1995; Sizer, 1996; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Gregory, 2000, 2001). In the case of the small school, the failure would come when the principal left or the school board changed or the superintendent resigned.

Unlike most small school advocates, Gregory looked at the past. He was able to cite information from the 1930s through the present. It was quite possible that this was why he was able to focus on the critical issues of change not just the concept of making schools smaller. He concluded that small schools initiatives make five common errors (Gregory, 2000, 2001): the error of autonomy, where the school reform advocates recreated the comprehensive high school culture in the small school framework by continuing the traditions of band, football, and clubs;
the error of size, in which the new small school still had large numbers of faculty and administration; the error of continuity, where the ability to utilize older students to assist the younger children with transition was eliminated; the error of trying to maintain the best of both worlds by adhering to traditional bell schedules (p. 3); and finally, the error of control in which they copied the larger schools use of time for control of the student population.

Gregory did what most of the other researchers did not: He utilized the past to make his argument. He developed an argument about errors implementing small schools after looking at what had happened since 1970. In the cases of Williams (1990) and Cotton (2001), they reviewed current research and did not acknowledge that the past, beyond Conant (1959) and Barker and Gump (1964) in most cases, had any impact on the current small schools initiatives. Raywid (1996), like Gregory ventures into the past beyond Conant and Barker and Gump, but it was primarily to make a point about schools within schools. Other than these researchers, most organizations and authors who focused on small schools failed to mention any sources prior to 1980 and most of the sources were their own research teams.

Summary

The size of high schools has been at the forefront of the school reform debate for the past century, it is not something new. There have always been educators, who looked for the best or optimal enrollment size of a high school. From the early 1900s to the present, there have been advocates of small high schools and large high schools. Within the last forty years, critics of the larger high schools have grown stronger.

During the 1970s, several U. S. federally sponsored reports questioned the viability and performance of the comprehensive high school. Within the context of these reports, the small high school initiatives found their support as an alternative to the comprehensive high school.
These plans had several characteristics in common. They typically did not reference historical information from prior to 1980 unless it used Conant’s works as an example of why high schools were large. They ignored the past, hence failing to recognize the original purpose of the design of the comprehensive high school as stated in the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (1918). Small high school proponents suggested that the concept of education for all was an aspect of a small high school not that of a large high school. In addition, small high school supporters promoted the large high school as ineffective in the utilization of resources whereas the small high school was the superior model. Finally, impersonal and factory-like images repeatedly created a picture of a harmful large school environment.

This chapter looked at the proposals of the small school advocates and identified weaknesses with their claims. The next three chapters examine three distinct eras from 1900 to 1980 and reveal historical evidence of the debate concerning high school size as educators of the past in the United States sought to find the optimal size enrollment for a high school.
CHAPTER 3

Summary of Literature on High School Size: 1900-1939

This chapter will examine the issues of the size of public high schools during the period 1900-1939. Secondary accounts as well as books and periodicals from that period will help to unveil the issues surrounding secondary school size. Schools drew the attention of progressives and efficiency experts as they looked for the ideal or optimum size high school. Investigations scrutinized many variables in school operations, especially teachers, the curriculum, the extra-curriculum, college success, the school facilities, and local budgets.

Scientific management of time and production was a central concern in this era. Believing that all organizations required better schedules and money management to make them cost effective was a common mantra of business. Advocates of scientific management though did not just focus on business they turned their attention to public high schools. Wright and Allen (1929) argued,

Under present conditions the public schools enjoy a monopoly in the business of education, there being little or no competition. While this freedom from competition is desirable, in many ways it tends to result in inefficiency and, in the opinion of the authors, the time has now arrived when those responsible for the management of this big business enterprise must give increasing attention to the efficient use of the plant, equipment, teaching personnel, methods, and time of the student. (p. v)

Most experts argued that thousands of small communities with small schools struggled to provide qualified teachers, adequate curriculum offerings, and sufficient school plants. Larger schools provided the answer. As a result, the process of consolidation eliminated thousands of small schools as it combined them to create larger high schools. Krug (1972) stated, “Clusterings of small high schools in some areas did not help youth in areas with none, and the advocates of consolidation wanted fewer and larger schools better distributed to serve all the youth of their
Larger districts then took shape as reorganization combined school systems comprised of consolidated schools, creating larger districts. There was no consistent definition for large and small schools; therefore, Lee and Smith’s (1997) definitions of a small high school as having fewer than 600 students and a large high school enrolling more than 900 students will serve the purposes of this study.

**Historical Setting**

The years of 1900 through 1939 signaled the end of the agrarian age, introduced the industrial age, and produced a superpower in capitalism. Plagued by a world war, a massive economic crash, and growing pains, the country still attracted immigrants and industrialization shifted the emphasis from the small farm to mass production and urban life. New inventions, such as the airplane and the automobile, revolutionized travel. Better roadways increased the flow of people from one community to another. Grieder (1954) determined, “The improvement of roads has had the tendency to extend community lines and break down barriers between small communities” (p. 278). Radio, motion pictures, and telephone rapidly changed communications in the United States. The population boomed and the schools had to address the needs of all of the youth who now attended public school.

The industrial revolution brought urbanization. Cities grew around industry. Population shifts of people from the countryside to the city combined with the new immigration from Europe created the metropolitan region. As Cremin (1988) argued,

One outcome of urbanization was the early emergence of complex interrelationships between central cities and their suburban rings and rural hinterlands, which produced highly specialized mosaics of subcommunities tied together into functional wholes in which traditional distinctions between urban, suburban, and rural tended to blur and even to disappear. The result, recognizable demographically in its large size and area, was the metropolis. (p. 5)
The shifting of people coupled with travel innovations affected the size of the high schools in those regions.

Business created the environment for innovation. Profitable land speculation, banking, oil and steel production, and retail all helped to create the belief that business had the answers to societal problems, from poverty to corruption to education of the masses. President Calvin Coolidge even announced, “The chief business of the American people is business” (Coolidge, 1925). Industrialization had taught Americans that the way to greatness was through productivity engineered by efficient business techniques.

The rhetoric of efficiency found life in the writings of Frederick W. Taylor, who through his initial book, *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), taught that inefficiency equated to waste. His notions about waste in work and the ineptitudes of the labor force became the focus of the scientific management movement. Waste could be eliminated everywhere and efficiency introduced and maintained. Callahan (1962) maintained,

> The publicity given scientific management and the great claims made in its behalf intensified the public’s feeling that great waste existed everywhere, and at the same time offered a means of eliminating it. One result was that a new wave of criticism was directed against many institutions, especially those large enough to be suspected of gross managerial inefficiency and those supported by public taxation. The schools, particularly in the larger cities, met both of these criteria. (pp. 46-47)

Schools soon became the target of scientific management as efficiency experts looked at the size of the high schools and assumed that small communities and schools could not afford to offer an adequate education.

*Enrollments in Public High Schools 1900-1939*

From 1900 to 1938, public high school enrollment in the United States grew from 519,251 students to 6,226,934. This was an increase of 1099 %. In 1900, the equivalent of only
14.9% of all 14 to 17 year olds attended high school, whereas by 1938, high school enrollments equaled 81.9% of the 14 to 17 year old population.

Table 3.1
*The Increase of Students Enrolled in High School, 1900-1938*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Public HS</th>
<th>Private HS</th>
<th>Prep School</th>
<th>Teacher Training</th>
<th>Total HS</th>
<th># Increase</th>
<th>Total US</th>
<th>14 to 17</th>
<th>% in HS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>202,963</td>
<td>94,931</td>
<td>51,749</td>
<td>8,170</td>
<td>357,813</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,354,653</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>519,251</td>
<td>110,797</td>
<td>56,285</td>
<td>9,570</td>
<td>695,903</td>
<td>388,090</td>
<td>6,152,231</td>
<td>14.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>915,061</td>
<td>117,400</td>
<td>66,042</td>
<td>12,890</td>
<td>1,111,393</td>
<td>315,490</td>
<td>7,220,298</td>
<td>34.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>2,199,389</td>
<td>213,920</td>
<td>59,309</td>
<td>22,058</td>
<td>2,494,676</td>
<td>1,383,283</td>
<td>7,735,841</td>
<td>44.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>4,399,422</td>
<td>341,158</td>
<td>47,309</td>
<td>11,978</td>
<td>4,799,867</td>
<td>2,305,191</td>
<td>9,341,221</td>
<td>74.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>6,226,934</td>
<td>446,833</td>
<td>32,874</td>
<td>30,298</td>
<td>6,736,939</td>
<td>1,937,072</td>
<td>9,740,000</td>
<td>81.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All numbers refer to students in the type of schools. The Teacher Training column refers to specific schools for high school students to become teachers. From the U.S. Office of Education, 1940, p. 8-11.

This meant that high schools had to grow in size as well as in total number. Table 3.2 showed that the numbers of public high schools increased from 16,300 in 1918 to 25,467 in 1938. This was an increase of 9,167 high schools.

Table 3.2
*The Number of Public High Schools, 1918-1938*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of HS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>16,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>21,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>22,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>23,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>24,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>24,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>25,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>25,467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from the U.S. Office of Education, 1940, p. 5.

There were various reasons for the rapid enrollment growth. Krug (1972) cited George S. Counts (1929), who said that the enrollment surge was “the resultant of a whole series of forces and conditions which we call industrial civilization” (p. 22).

Similarly, Cremin (1955) argued,
American life in general—and urban life in particular—began to display a growing complexity which demanded ever higher levels of social and economic skill. Working in a factory, negotiating public transportation, buying and selling on credit, understanding intricate political organization—all necessitated abilities on the part of the average citizen which had simply not been called for in earlier days. (pp. 297-298)

The country required more education than ever before. If a citizen was going to be able to function, he had to learn new skills he would not have needed previously.

Immigration impacted enrollment, too. The new immigrants were from southern and Eastern Europe and they had different patterns of settlement. Cremin (1964) reported, “They tended to remain in the cities, congregating in self-contained slum neighborhoods that perpetuated the life and customs of the old world” (p. 66). Their willingness to fill many of the low paying industrial jobs tended to keep them in one place. Part of adjusting to the United States involved learning the culture. They needed to try to learn how to become American. The schools created that opportunity. Cremin (1955) observed, “How quickly the public school became the primary link between the immigrant neighborhood and the wider American culture” (p. 299). Therefore, the urban school districts overflowed with immigrants. Additionally, Angus and Mirel (1999) suggested,

increasing educational requirements for work made staying in school more attractive to working-class youngsters, and because the prospect of mandatory continuation school made that decision easier to reach. In the late 1920’s, however, a new and even more powerful factor came into play, namely, youth unemployment. (p. 36)

Angus and Mirel (1999) focused on the major role the economic problems of the era played in the rising enrollments as “the Great Depression shattered the youth labor market and forced huge numbers of young people to return to or reluctantly remain in school” (p. 57).
High School Size

Expanding enrollments led to larger high schools. Table 3.3 shows the numbers of high schools that fit into specific size categories for the years 1930, 1934, and 1938.

Table 3.3
Number and Percentages of Public High Schools by Size, 1930, 1934, and 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1934</th>
<th>1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of HS</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td># of HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24</td>
<td>2,077</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49</td>
<td>3,866</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>3,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-74</td>
<td>3,521</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>3,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-99</td>
<td>2,543</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>2,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-199</td>
<td>4,603</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>5,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-299</td>
<td>1,633</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-499</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>1,421</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000-2,499</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500 or more</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from U.S. Office of Education, 1940, pp. 2-9. This table includes all public high schools: regular and reorganized.

The enrollment categories did not exactly fit the Lee and Smith (1997) ranges; therefore, an adjustment was necessary to interpret the information. Enrollments below 500 students equated to small schools and above 999 students large high schools. The range within 500 to 999 students fit Lee and Smith’s (1997) definition of the ideal or optimal size high school. Accordingly, 85.2% of all secondary schools were small in the year 1938. The greatest percentage of these high schools, 26.1%, fell in the range of 100 to 199 students. The largest schools, those enrolling 1,000-2,499 and 2,500+, accounted for only 6.9% of all high schools that year. The smallest schools, enrolling 10 to 24 students, comprised only 5.6% of all high schools.

The data in Table 3.3 revealed there was a steady decline in the number of high schools that enrolled under 100 students. In 1930, schools with enrollments of under 100 students totaled 12,007, accounting for 54% of all secondary schools that year. In 1938, high schools with enrollments of fewer than 100 students totaled 9,727, accounting for 39.5% of all secondary
schools that year. The U.S. Office of Education (1940) reported there was “an unmistakable
trend away from the very small high school” (p. 4). The number of the smallest high schools
decreased and high schools became larger from the years 1930 to 1938.

The greatest growth area of high school size was still in a range under 500 students.
Table 3.3 noted that from 1930 to 1938 there was an 11 % growth in high schools with 100 to
499 students. In 1930, there were 7,714 high schools in this size range but by 1938, there were
11,239. High schools, although still relatively small, grew larger from 1930 to 1938.

*What School Size Issues Did High School Educators Face

*During the Period 1900 to 1939?*

From 1900 to 1939, high school size commanded attention. As just noted, the typical
high school was small. By 1938, 85.2 % of all high schools had enrollments with less than 500
students. The size of the high school affected the hiring of teachers, the curriculum offered, the
availability of extra-curricular programs, the adequacy of the school plant, and the relationships
between the students and the adults. At the core of these issues was the ability to provide the
proper funding for the school activities. Progressives and scientific management experts looked
at the size of a high school and speculated that the child graduating from the small school would
not be prepared to attend college. They proposed that high schools should be larger to provide
the variety of course work required as well as enough specialized teachers to get the student
ready for college. Ultimately, many educators felt that there was an ideal or optimum size for a
high school.

*Teachers*

Smallness appeared to hamper the ability of the school to hire qualified teaching
personnel. Wiggins and Spaulding (1933) suggested, “Much has been published concerning the
deficiencies in the training of the teaching personnel of small high schools” (p. 585). Yet, not all of the evidence agreed that the small schools had less qualified teachers while the large high schools had the more qualified.

During this time period, greater emphasis was placed on ensuring that schoolteachers were qualified. The U. S. Bureau of Education (1915b) stated, “As a rule high school teachers should be college graduates, and they should have some professional training” (p. 82). To begin ensuring that teachers had some minimum requirements to include college background, the states created certification regulations. Dawson (1934) noted that standards for hiring high school teachers should include that,

All high school teachers should have at least four years of college training, including specific training in the respective fields in which they are to teach, the fields usually being limited to a maximum of two for any teacher. (pp. 37-38)

In the early 20th century, states and districts emphasized the need for trained teachers and the states and private organizations developed the qualifications.

By 1915, a unique phenomenon had occurred. The large schools in the bigger communities had greater numbers of teachers with more experience, yet with fewer of the qualifications for certification. Studies revealed that small schools adhered more to the regulations than the large schools primarily because the small schools had greater turnover and were continuously employing new teachers. Jessup and Coffman (1914), for example, found, almost half of the cities of 2,500 and under have no teachers who are not college graduates; while only one-tenth of the cities of 50,000 or over have no teachers who are not graduates of college. The fact that the large cities have teachers with much longer experience may mean that these teachers have been in the school system since the school was first placed on the list or it may mean that long experience in a good school system has come to stand for the ‘equivalent’ of college graduation. (p. 101)
It was difficult for small high schools to find qualified teachers, especially since most teachers wanted to work their way to the larger schools for greater pay and fewer preparations. The U.S. Office of Education (1930a) observed, “Generally speaking, there can be no doubt that as the school staff and enrollment become smaller and smaller the type of education provided has a tendency to become poorer and poorer” (p. 59).

Salary capabilities of the different communities limited the small schools ability to hire and keep teachers and to offer a varied curriculum. Langfitt, Cyr, and Newsom (1936) argued, “Often, the program is narrow, meager, and ineffective largely because funds available are inadequate to pay reasonable teachers’ salaries, to provide a desirable building, and to purchase needed equipment and supplies” (p. 47). The small and large schools tended to pay similar starting salaries, but in order to make more money the teacher would have to move to a larger school or larger school district. Jessup and Coffman (1914) found,

This condition is responsible for much of the shifting of the teaching population from position to position. The greater money rewards are found in larger places. Frequently the only way for a teacher to be rewarded, i.e., to get an increase in salary, is to move. (p. 114)

Some findings concurred with this study and other studies had somewhat different conclusions. Citing a study called Rural School Survey of New York State (1922), Ferris (1927) noted, “The New York survey showed that in 1920-21, 62 percent of the high school staff in schools in centers under 4500 held college or university degrees” (p. 19). Yet, as the century progressed the more rural a community was the less likely that the teachers would have the necessary qualifications for teaching. In small communities, he found that only about 19 to 30 % of the teachers held college degrees and that the majority of these teachers in the rural schools held only high school degrees (Ferriss, 1927, pp. 19-21). In a 1929, master’s thesis that examined the salaries and tenure of administrators and teachers in small high schools in Kansas, Rambo
(1929), found that “approximately 88 percent of all teachers have the bachelor’s degree but less than 8 percent have exceeded this amount of training” (p. 24).

Teacher training and qualifications varied throughout the United States during this era, but what became readily noticeable was that the smaller the school or district, especially those considered to be rural regions, the more difficult it was to attract teachers. Part of the cause of this was the requirements for teaching multiple courses or the teachers’ workload. Sisson (1914) remarked, “The intellectual load of the course of study, tight bound by college entrance requirements, exhausts the powers of attention and effort of most teachers. In the small school the teacher has too many subjects and classes” (p. 351). Roemer (1928) recognized the relationship of multiple subjects and poor teaching, “When one or two teachers have to handle all the subjects of the curriculum, with practically no equipment, and are required to teach seven or eight classes a day, poor teaching is inevitable” (pp. 37-43). Teachers commonly taught multiple subjects, often out of her area of training. As stated in the Report of the Committee on Rural High Schools (1925), “A large number of high schools, approximately 10,000, having less than seventy pupils enrolled, frequently require teachers to be responsible for six or seven different classes daily” (p. 41). According to Cyr (1934), “the teacher in the smaller schools has 2.5 more subjects for which daily preparation is necessary and mastery needed than the teachers in the larger schools” (p. 3). In these conditions, the quality of the lessons suffered and teachers often resigned.

Having multiple preparations at the small high school was one of the reasons for the short tenure of teachers. Rambo (1929) reported,

Tenure of both men and women teachers is short. There is a large annual turnover in the personnel of both men and women teachers in these high schools and only 50 percent of all teachers have remained in their present positions for a term of two years or longer. (p. 24)
The large high school tended to have fewer turnovers as the teachers stayed longer with better pay increases and a lighter teaching load. Something that probably led to greater teacher turnover in small schools was the greater load of the new teachers. Quanbeck and Douglass (1935) revealed, “Beginning teachers are assigned heavier loads of both an instructional and an extra-instructional nature, owing no doubt in part to the fact that the beginning teacher is found in larger proportions in the smaller systems of the country” (p. 39). The teacher workload was considerably different between the size of schools, which was an aspect of school life that encouraged teachers to seek employment in the larger schools in larger districts.

Small and large high schools worked against one another in finding teachers. Many teachers would begin in the small schools and districts and then move to the larger schools and districts for better pay. Small schools in the early twentieth century tended to have more college graduates as teachers. Yet, these teachers had less experience because of the number of teachers migrating from the small communities to the large. Small schools tended to require the teaching of a greater workload or preparations. The larger schools with more teachers had a better chance of addressing the many course requests and requirements. The availability of qualified teachers influenced, whether positively or negatively, the development of the curriculum.

**Curriculum**

For small and large high schools, often costs determined priorities and purposes. The smaller communities typically lacked the fiscal resources to support a comprehensive curriculum at their high school, whereas the larger high schools offered varied courses and a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Small high schools could not offer all classes and many aspects of an extensive curricular program. Snedden (1912) reflected on the curricular limitations of the small high school,
But mastery of a foreign language, systematic study of literary selections, drill in the arts of vernacular expression, laboratory exercise in science work, and productive effort in some field of the practical arts all require specialization of teaching power such as the small high school can only to a limited degree afford. In power-producing studies, as contrasted with appreciation favoring opportunities, the small high school must restrict its field to what it can do well. (p. 104)

Financial resources played a role in the capability of the small high school to offer a curriculum comparable to larger urban schools. Brooks (1902) stated, “Finance is the primary cause of the limitations imposed upon the small high schools” (p. 441). With the major shifts of population to metropolitan regions, larger urban schools became wealthier and therefore were able not only to hire more teachers, but also to offer more classes and supply the needed materials for the classes. Despite their differences, the small schools often followed the curricular design of the larger high schools. Langfitt, Cyr, and Newsom (1936) noted, “The small secondary school in America has developed its program largely through imitating the philosophy, methods, and techniques developed in larger schools. This is responsible for many of its present limitations” (p. 51). By imitating the larger secondary school, the small high school created a situation where community members and educators expected the small high school to offer whatever the larger high schools offered. According to Seyfert (1937b),

The idea that the small secondary school is nothing more than a large school in miniature and that the conduct of the small school should be in keeping with this concept appears to be generally accepted by both practicing administrators and educational theorists. (p. 28)

Although this practice was quite common, not all small schools followed suit. Many smaller secondary schools became quite predictable with course offerings. The small high schools often offered traditional programs of study whereas the high schools in the urban and larger areas tended to reflect modern shifts and changes. Lull (1932) pointed out that small high
schools “had to content themselves with one course of study for all pupils. The best they could do was to offer the so-called solid subjects” (p. 86). Table 3.4 shows the subjects required for graduation by 313 small high schools across the United States in 1923 and 385 small high schools of New York in 1921. What is notable about Table 3.4 is that the courses that appeared more than 20% of the time were all college preparatory courses. Ferris (1927) recognized that, 

All available data indicate that the requirements for graduation from rural and village high schools are, in the main, in terms of subjects required for entrance to higher institutions of learning rather than in terms of educational materials offering the training making for intelligent participation on the part of the majority of high-school pupils in the significant activities of the general social, civic, and occupational life of to-day. (p. 41)

Small secondary schools created a college preparatory curriculum. Even though larger schools became more general in nature, small schools could not follow that trend. Because of their size, the small high schools kept with traditional course designs so that they were offering programs of study that could help them find teachers and enable better use of facilities. During this period, progressives saw the large high school as the better environment for teaching the high school student. The large secondary school could offer a greater variety of courses that assisted in addressing the needs of more of the students. Manheimer (1937) observed, “…The small general high school, with a heterogeneous school population, is doomed to ineffectiveness; that the large cosmopolitan high school, ordinarily condemned, holds the promise of the creation of an educational environment where the most effective teaching and learning can be accomplished…”(p. 649). In short, larger high schools had better fiscal resources to support the development of a greater offering in courses, whereas small secondary schools typically offered a traditional curriculum centered only on a college preparatory design that was more affordable.
Table 3.4
Subjects Required for Graduation in the US in 1923 for 313 Small High Schools and in New York in 1921 for 385 Small High Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English (4yrs)</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (3 yrs)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Algebra</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Mathematics</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plane Geometry</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Algebra</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American History</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient History</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval and Modern History</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Civics</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin 1</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin 2</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Science</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics (girls)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From Ferriss, 1927, p. 40. With the exception of English 3 yrs and general mathematics, subjects reported by less than 20 per cent of the schools are not included in the table.
~ In New York state this course includes only modern history.

Extracurricular Activities

In the late 19th century and into the early 20th century, extracurricular activities progressed from being secret societies and fraternities that the adults tolerated to becoming formal elements of the school program. According to Koos (1927), “More recently there has been emerging a policy which admits their constructive possibilities, one which aims at supervision and control that will achieve their inherent values” (pp. 583-584). From 1900 to 1939, extracurricular activities grew in their importance to the high school, as school officials were able to put them under the watchful eye of school faculty. There were many activities, such
as debate, band, orchestra, chorus (glee club), newspaper, student government, and athletic teams. The larger the high school the

Table 3.5

Extracurricular activities found in 464 small high schools found in over forty-seven states

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th># of HS</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Association</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Paper or Space in Local Paper</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Club</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glee Club</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestra</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate Club</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Fire Girls or Girl Scouts</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Club</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama Club</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Annual</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Council</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From Ferris, 1927, p. 284.

More numerous the extracurricular activities available for all of the students to choose.

Manheimer (1937) contended,

Extra-curricular activities in small high schools are generally very limited and impoverished. Since the number of faculty advisers is small, naturally diversity of activities is seriously reduced. In a large school not only is there a sufficient number of pupils to fill diverse extracurricular organizations, but the large size of the staff insures the presence of faculty advisers, whose interests range from ornithology to brass bands and from athletics to chess and ‘math teams.’ (p. 647)

School size impacted extracurricular offerings.

Table 3.5 lists the typical extracurricular activities in small high schools across the United States from 1921-1922. In large high schools, the numbers of athletic teams and other organizations increased to meet the numbers enrolled. Large high schools had the staff to
supervise numerous activities, and therefore, could offer more choices. Students in small high schools expected many of the same clubs and athletics that large high schools offered, but fewer staff numbers limited the small schools capabilities.

Facilities

Small and large high schools had issues with the school plant. In the case of small schools, many had problems of outdated construction and equipment, and large high schools needed more space in reconfigured buildings. The tremendous growth in school enrollment across the country caused severe overcrowding. Koos (1927) remarked, “The rapid influx of pupils into our secondary schools in recent years made new demands for space to accommodate them” (p. 708). Larger school advocates supposed that the bigger the school, the better finances, facilities, supplies, and teachers, whereas, the smaller the high school, the more inadequate the space, fiscal resources, teachers, and equipment. Roemer (1928) acknowledged,

The small high school means:

1. Practically no working library;
2. Very poor science equipment, if any;
3. Almost always no gymnasium or auditorium (p.41).

These comments represent many of the typical statements of the era. The reality was that small schools lacked adequate and appropriate facilities. Some of the most visible evidence of the lack of adequate facilities appeared with the school grounds. The U.S. Office of Education (1933a) reflected,

One of the interesting characteristics of the smaller schools is the relatively small acreage contained in the school ground. This is especially true of the smallest schools. In a comparatively large proportion of schools the acreage is so small as to preclude provision for many of the athletic sports commonly carried on by secondary-school pupils (p. 85).
Table 3.6

*Space Provided in the Floor Plans of High School Buildings Appearing in More Than 50 Percent of 156 Plans*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Group; Kind of Space</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% - 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Classrooms and Recitation rooms</td>
<td>99.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89% - 90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Principal’s office</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Boy’s toilets</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Girl’s toilets</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Assembly room or Auditorium</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Library room</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Stage (in assembly Room or auditorium)</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Chemistry laboratory</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Gymnasium</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Physics laboratory</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Lecture or demonstration Room (for science)</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Storage room</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: From Koos, 1927, p. 695. This table represents the use of space reported in more than 50 percent of 156 facility plans.*

Athletics and physical education required specific spaces as well. Athletics needed adequate space, gymnasiums, and fields. Physical education needed similar areas. Without providing the appropriate facilities, the small high school would be unable to offer the classes.

Table 3.6 shows typical room space allocated in school buildings for the era. Buildings lacked proper spaces, for example, science laboratories and offices. Table 3.6 revealed that 99.4 % of school buildings had classrooms, yet only 65.4 % had a library. 57.7 % had a chemistry laboratory while only 55.1 % had a gymnasium.
The larger schools had the reputation that they had all of the resources required to make a good school. Even though they had more resources than most of the small high schools, they had troubles with size. Moehlman (1929) found,

Under the old organization there was no definite school plant policy. Schools were developed in piecemeal fashion and considered solely as school plants. There was no general policy of development and placement. Educational designing was conspicuous by its absence. Architectural service was chosen upon the basis of locale rather than in terms of previous achievement in this field. Specifications were drawn and inspection of construction almost negligible. Specialized rooms were included in some plants but purely from an architectural rather than an educational standpoint. (p. 37)

Quite often, the larger high school plant came from a community building or a smaller school that did not meet the requirements for a current educational program and larger numbers of students. This meant that rooms added may have created difficult spaces to work with or just manufactured new problems, like small doorways and hallways. The library fell into the same category. Cost cutting often eliminated a room with books and periodicals and space to work plus a staff member who did not teach regular classes. The U.S. Office of Education (1930a) appraised,

They are frequently limited to a single room and seldom do they occupy rooms which are adequate or especially fitted for high school work. If State departments show sufficient interest in the small high school to prescribe minimum library and science space or equipment, the standards are usually very general and nearly always proportionately lower for the rural high schools than for the larger schools. (p. 67)

Manheimer (1937) commented, “Unfortunately, the large high school has also become crowded. A large high school building that is congested presents a more pernicious situation than obtains when a small high school building is proportionally overloaded” (p. 641). Even though it
appeared that the larger high school had everything, in many cases, they had their share of school plant problems.

**Budgeting Constraints**

The increase in enrollment in the early twentieth century created unique challenges for the communities, administration, and local boards of both small and large high schools. The challenges appeared in many forms, but typically, cost was the most significant of the problems. Small high schools appeared to strain the resources of small communities. Efficiency experts speculated that the small school was not cost effective. Dawson (1934) noted,

> Expert opinion is almost unanimous in condemning the small high school because of its numerous shortcomings. Some of these limitations, it is true, can be overcome by proper administration and capable teachers, but many cannot be overcome at all within reasonable limits of cost. The shortcomings and limitations that seem to be inherent are those pertaining to the curriculum offering and the cost per pupil. (p. 27)

The United States Bureau of Education (1915a) suggested, “There is some relationship between the size of the school and the size of the city in which it is located” (p. 39). With these large cities came more resources. Greater personal incomes, property valuation, and sheer numbers of people created a better source for school funds. The Educational Finance Inquiry Commission (1924a), “The support of public education comes primarily from local sources” (p. 49). Therefore, the more property taxes, the better funded the local high schools and the school the district.

The size of districts and schools helped to create a financial gap between schools and districts. The Educational Finance Inquiry Commission (1924d) acknowledged, “The inequality among districts with respect to valuation has resulted in great inequality in the effort necessary to support schools, as well as in the provisions made for education. Poor districts, regardless of the effort made, appear to have been unable to enjoy adequate school provisions” (p. 147). Large
communities could afford better equipment, buildings, and teachers. The Educational Finance Inquiry Commission (1924b) reported, “The larger communities carry a much lighter burden for high schools than do the smaller communities” (p. 85).

Salaries also varied from small city to large community. Typically, the larger the community and its resources the greater the prospects for better pay for teachers. Jessup and Coffman (1914) found,

Despite the fact that the minimum salary of the large city is only slightly higher than in the small city, the teacher who goes to the large town has a very much better chance for promotion to higher salaries, either as teacher or as an executive. These facts no doubt contribute to the difference in experience and tenure which exists in the large cities and the small cities. Increase in salary seems to be gained by a shift from small city to large city in each type of educational activity… as there is a positive correlation with salary and size of town. (p. 96)

The smaller the community the less likely was there the financial capability to provide competitive salaries. In short, the inability to provide attractive salaries and future increases in income in the smaller communities limited the hiring of teachers to those of lesser quality or those with substandard certificates. Access to fewer numbers of teachers made it difficult to offer a broad curriculum. The lack of fiscal resources caused a myriad of malfunctions within the running of a small district or small high school.

Relationships

The era of 1900 to 1939 revealed discussions about large high schools as impersonal, factory-like environments. At the same time, small high schools supposedly focused on personal relationships, yet lacked the ability to provide a varied curriculum. Foster (1928) argued,

Much of the machinery of the large high school organization is the complex instrument for doing a very simple thing. The complexity is the cost of bigness, and the small school can usually secure much the same educational product in a far simpler way. (p. 538)
References to high school size and relationship building between staff and students appeared as subtle inferences, as noted with Foster’s (1928) comments, and as direct attacks against the large high school. Manheimer (1937) criticized, “It (The large high school) has been held inferior to the small high school, where a more intimate association of teacher and pupil is supposed to exist” (p. 642).

Some of the comments about relationships centered on the small high school’s ability to personalize instruction. Draper and Roberts (1932) noted, “In many schools especially where numbers are small, programs of minimum requirements for slow children and enriched opportunities for bright children are set up within the same class organization” (p. 243). In this case, the inference is that the ability to adapt instruction to the individual needs of students could not take place in too big of a high school because adjusting the curriculum required that the teacher know the students.

Scientific management led the fight to make larger, more efficient high schools. Yet, many educators still lauded characteristics of small high schools. It was thought that within this environment the teachers could address personal student needs like character building. Brooks (1902) suggested, “A second reason for the better character developing opportunity of the smaller school is that the teacher there is more intimately associated with the pupils” (p. 440). Even though the emphasis of the era firmly focused on making high schools bigger, from time to time writers attempted to protect the small school by talking about its penchant for personalization of assignments and better relationships between the teachers and the students.

Impact on College

Educators often speculated about the size of a high school influencing a student’s ability to succeed in college. Dwyer (1938) determined, “The conclusions of previous writers
concerning the relationship between size of high school and success in college are not in perfect agreement” (p. 271). He reported that some researchers found students from the largest high schools made better grades in college, stayed throughout college, and never needed probation. He also stated that some of the experts found that students from small high schools did just as well as students from large high schools (Dwyer, 1938, p. 273). Thornberg (1924) concluded, “Students from large high schools are superior in scholarship in college to those coming from small high schools” (p. 192). These two writers are representative of the large number of authors who disagreed with each other. Typically, these writers found that there were too many variables to make a generalized statement. There was not one agreed upon answer.

How Did High School Educators Address Issues of Size from 1900 to 1939?

The size of a high school affected its ability to hire teachers, offer a varied curriculum, offer extra-curricular activities, and provide adequate facilities. Local schools, districts, and state education departments developed strategies to address the issues of size.

Teachers and Curriculum

With the small high school having to contend with fewer numbers of qualified teachers, yet needing to offer a curriculum which was typically college preparatory, the usual small high school had unqualified teachers teaching out of field. One solution was for the principal to teach classes. Horrall (1922) contended, “In most small high schools, those with an enrollment of 400 or less, it is necessary for the principal to teach one, two, or possibly three classes a day” (p. 599).

Another solution involved creating a schedule centered on teachers with multiple certifications. The reorganized curriculum encouraged teachers to earn combination certificates, for example, history, language arts, and Latin. Therefore, the small schools could hire a teacher
who filled many roles. A study by Roberts (1928), *The Administrative Effects of Reorganization in Small High Schools of West Virginia* (Referenced in Langfitt, 1938, p. 81), reported that the state of West Virginia adopted this model for supporting its many small high schools. The study created a complete model for a daily schedule using combination certificates. Ultimately, Roberts’ study recommended the development of three teacher schools. West Virginia adopted this plan and then required that the small high schools with three teachers have between forty-five and sixty-nine pupils. An example of the teaching combinations looked like the following list:

Teacher A-English and Latin, or French, or Fine Arts  
Teacher B-Social Studies  
Teacher C-Science and Mathematics  
(Langfitt, 1938, pp. 81-82.)

In this manner, the three teacher school needed teachers trained in one or more fields, which cut down the number of subjects taught and reduced the number of teachers needed. The reorganization also encouraged states to create multiple fields for licensing allowing teachers to teach additional subjects. Now a four-year high school that had a teaching staff of three was able to offer more classes.

Creative scheduling made it easier to offer a varied curriculum. The schedule would make use of the available staff and address the curricular offerings in a daily program. It might look something like Table 3.7. The schedule maker could also address the number of poorly qualified teachers. To overcome this obstacle a school could share teachers with another school, thereby offering classes on alternating days, and extending the school’s offerings. As Odell (1939) suggested,
A cooperative arrangement by which a teacher spends a day or two, or better two or more half-days not in the same day, per week in each of several schools is often helpful in providing for music, art, and other courses which do not meet daily. A teacher who divides his time between two schools, spending the mornings at one and the afternoons at another, can handle subjects that meet daily. (p. 226)

By working with the schedule, hiring teachers with multiple certifications, and sharing teachers, the small high school could offer many of the courses required for a college preparatory curriculum. Creativeness allowed the small schools to offer a greater variety of classes.

Table 3.7
Suggested Schedule of Classes for Four-Year High Schools Employing Three Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Teacher A</th>
<th>Teacher B</th>
<th>Teacher C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:50-9:50</td>
<td>English 9</td>
<td>Geography 10</td>
<td>Algebra 11 or Geometry 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:55-10:55</td>
<td>English 11 or 12</td>
<td>Modern World Hy 10</td>
<td>Elementary Science 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>French 11 or Latin 11</td>
<td>Elementary Sociology</td>
<td>Mathematics 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>And Economics 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-1:00</td>
<td>Noon Recess</td>
<td>Noon Recess</td>
<td>Noon Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-1:40</td>
<td>Assembly Programs, Music,</td>
<td>Assembly Programs, Music,</td>
<td>Assembly Programs, Music,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Activities, Health</td>
<td>Student Activities, Health</td>
<td>Student Activities, Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And Physical Ed.</td>
<td>And Physical Ed.</td>
<td>And Physical Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-2:45</td>
<td>English 10</td>
<td>Citizenship and Occupations</td>
<td>Chemistry 11 or Physics 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50-3:50</td>
<td>French 12 or American Hy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Biology 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: From Langfitt, 1938, p. 84.

As noted, larger schools offered better pay and the possibility of future salary increases. Larger schools with access to quality teachers and greater numbers of teachers also offered a wider variety of content. Yet, larger schools had to contend with issues of largeness. Cattell (1932) commented,
Large schools have very much the same advantages and disadvantages as the large university or college. Where there are greater numbers, facilities can be introduced and made available which often are impossible where enrollments are smaller. On the other hand, students tend to become regimented, lose their identity, and suffer serious handicaps in their contacts with each other and with their instructors. Students, as individuals, tend to become more remote from the teacher in the large schools. (p. 364)

To address issues of controlling students and the loss of identity some larger schools created homerooms.

Designed to have the student meet with one teacher over the total amount of time that the student attended the school, the homeroom presented a possible solution to help the student feel a part of the school. Maxwell and Kilzer (1936) reflected, “The home room is a miniature community in which even the most timid pupil is encouraged and guided in his participation in group affairs, and where he is given an opportunity to know at least one teacher and one group of pupils intimately” (p. 194). The homeroom teacher became someone who the student knew well and helped the large high school to overcome its impersonal nature.

Another attempt at making the large school friendlier to the students and parents was an extension of homeroom. Garinger (1940) stated,

The ‘house’ is another important unit of organization in our school. The immediate excuse for initiating this unit was that the school was too large for the assembly hall and that two or more groups were necessary. Therefore, the large group was broken into three groups at first and now into four of about 450 pupils each. The house is composed of twelve homerooms, with a proportionate share of first-, second-, and third-year home groups in each. The organization is really a school in miniature. (p. 512)

The house attempted to break down the large group and create multiple smaller schools within the school so that the adults and students got a chance to know one another better.
Large high schools developed protocol to contend with the issues of size that tended to impersonalize the relationships with adults and students. They centered on reducing the size of the school through measures like the homeroom and the house. Each of these addresses issues of size in relation to students and teachers. Yet, the faculty and the administration felt the effects of the large school as leading a building with a thousand or more students and a hundred or more staff members could become too cumbersome. Therefore, principals sought to get the staff involved in reducing the size of the high school through the team approach to management.

Miller (1922) argued,

The modern high school has become so complex that it is absolutely impossible for the principal of a school of one thousand or more pupils to attend personally to all matters that are extraneous to the actual classroom teaching. Even with an assistant principal and ample clerical help, he may (and in many cases does) become so absorbed with details that he is completely submerged and the poor school sails along like a ship without a rudder. (p. 20)

Principals created teacher leadership positions to assist in the running of the school. In many cases, these positions of leadership revolved around the department and ensured that instruction was taking place. Foster (1928) concluded, “the department head or chairman is presumably an expert in his special field of learning and the teaching of it, and above all must understand its part in the realization in educational objectives” (p. 109). This method served to breakdown the overwhelming size of the large school that kept staff and the administration from developing connections and relationships required to feel like belonging to the school.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activity advocates believed that schools should require student participation in these programs. Masters (1926) concluded, “It has been made clear to many that extra-curricular activities, properly organized and administered, offer an excellent means of
developing that wonderful quality in the high school, which boys and girls call ‘school spirit’ (p. 52). Whether attached to school spirit or developing the character trait of cooperativeness or any other numerous social reasons students and community members expected the schools to offer the extra-curricular activities. The number and type of programs depended upon the size of the school.

The large high school had a larger staff and the necessary buildings and fields for athletic programs and, therefore, the capability to offer more extracurricular activities. Small secondary schools, though, struggled to offer these programs as much as they did the curricular content. Ferriss (1928) stated, “In the small high school where only a limited number of extraclass activities can be fostered, these should be selected with great care in the light of the interests and needs of the pupils of the school” (p. 288). Limitations of size, as the number of staff and of students, hampered what small schools could offer. Small high schools rectified this by developing programs that students actively sought for participation. According to the U.S. Office of Education (1933b), “Approximately a third of the clubs studied were definitely related to the regular curriculum, indicating a tendency to develop programs of activities in response to pupil interests instead of faculty demands” (p. 126).

Another difficulty associated with extracurricular activities was time for groups to meet. Typically, programs met after school in larger secondary schools, but in small high schools, many potential participants had to leave when school dismissed because they needed school transportation to get home. A solution for the small high school was “keep(ing) one period of the day free for those activities” (Ferriss, 1927, p. 290). This activity period made it feasible for a small secondary school to offer extracurricular activities other than athletics.
Athletics created different challenges. The U.S. Office of Education (1934) noted, “Interscholastic competitions are confined mainly to a few sports, most of which have no recognized carry-over value” (p. 140). A common thought about athletics was that they fostered good values for all participants. These values were “for the most part classifiable under two main heads: the physical and the social” (Koos, 1927, p. 607). Yet, there was not much concrete evidence to support this belief. According to the U.S. Office of Education (1934),

There is a growing feeling that the educational value of interscholastic contests in certain sports should be established or disestablished and a subsidy by the board of education given to the sports shown to be beneficial, in case a nominal charge for admission to contests throughout the playing season has failed to meet expenses. (p. 141)

Athletic programs required spaces to play, but small high schools lacked that space. For example, Table 3.8 addresses “a study of fifty-four representative small four year high schools in eighteen states” (Ferriss, 1927, p. 294) that had typical facility inadequacies. Ferris (1927) noted, out “of the fifty-four schools, forty-two had no gymnasium” (p. 294). Still small high schools were able to respond and provide for several of the main sports by working with local clubs that provided the gyms and fields for many of the athletic activities.

Table 3.8
Provisions for Athletics in Fifty-Four Small Four-Year High Schools from Eighteen Different States, 1920s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field (Courts)</th>
<th>School Grounds</th>
<th>Off-School Grounds</th>
<th>No Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From Ferriss, 1927, p. 294.
Facilities

Facilities depended upon the financial resources of the community or city. Large high schools usually had greater access to taxable property and wealth, whereas the resources available to small high schools typically were insufficient. As a result, state support was necessary to assist with the funding of school buildings. In relation to the issue of inequities of fiscal resources, the Educational Finance Inquiry Commission (1924c) commented,

The major problem in financing such a project as the California state school system has been therefore, first, the problem of so drawing upon the wealth of the whole state that each citizen will contribute somewhat in proportion to his economic capacity, and second, of distributing the income so derived in such manner as will furnish somewhat equal educational privileges for all. (p. 264)

Even with state intervention, the issue of limited funding from the community still did not solve the demands of the school plant requirements.

As noted, specialized resources were required for most science classes (e.g. biology, physics, and chemistry) as well as for libraries, gymnasiums, and vocational type classes (such as home economics, agriculture, and wood or metal shop). In the case of small schools, many utilized facilities that had been in existence for over thirty or forty years and lacked the special spaces for science classes, offices, athletic fields, gymnasiums, and libraries. Larger schools often grew from small schools. In many cases, the large school had to remodel and add spaces for the special classes and other needs. The size of the building itself was often an issue since the large school frequently was built by manipulating the facility of a previously small school.

Manheimer (1937) noted,

The large high school in New York City has come into existence partly as a result of the sudden increase in secondary school population, and partly, because of obvious economies both in administration of the school and in operation of the plant. Big schools were frequently created in comparatively small plants by crowding the building…(p. 641)
For most communities, buildings for education required more attention to the ultimate purpose of the structure than was given. Maxwell and Kilzer (1936) determined,

All over the United States one may see, in the smaller communities and even in the larger cities, evidences of little thought either in selecting school sites or in planning school buildings to meet the needs of the local educational program. (p. 428)

Therefore, school boards had to pay close attention to the development and design of school buildings. Budgets had to be set aside for the construction and upkeep of all school buildings. Engelhardt (1934) remarked, “Many boards of education, misled by the attractiveness of low initial cost, fail to understand the mounting maintenance expense, and fail to make adequate provision for it. If any part of a budget is to be cut, the maintenance items are among the first to be pared” (p. 18).

Unfortunately, many architects did not design new schools according to educational needs and school boards did not place priority on the funding for replacing outdated schools and classrooms. Small high schools felt the impact the most. They tended to not have the money to create adequate facilities. Large high schools needed assistance in adjusting many of the buildings to fit the numbers of students that the schools housed.

Finances and Consolidation

The most common variable in the discussion about small and large high schools was cost. For example, The Educational Finance Inquiry Commission (1924b) concluded,

The increase, and the great variations between communities, in the cost of secondary education naturally raise the questions of the relation of this cost to the ability of communities to support secondary schools and to the number of children to be educated in such schools. (p. 75)

This statement was quite common as educators sought ways to make schools more efficient and looked for methods to cut costs. Large high schools benefited from the monetary strength of their
communities, while small high schools lost revenues and needed additional sources of income to support their community education endeavors. The major growth of high school enrollment brought attention to the preponderance of extremely small high schools throughout the United States. Scientific management advocates saw tremendous waste of funds in the small high schools and small districts. Therefore, they sought to combine or consolidate the small secondary schools with other high schools and districts to conserve resources. Koos (1927) commented, “Consolidation, or centralization, has been brought about by various methods of combining territory and school population. In states or areas where district control is dominant, this has sometimes been done by consolidating two or more common-school districts” (p. 278).

The consolidation movement sought to eliminate extremely small high schools and districts, yet progress was slow. Cyr (1937) suggested, “Although educational leaders have vigorously championed the consolidation of schools serving rural children for more than one hundred years, relatively little progress has been made compared with the size of the task” (p. 1). Even so, efficiency experts pushed forward with their plans to combine resources, fiscal and physical. According to Douglass (1938), “A remedy for the weakness of the small schools apparently lies in consolidation, which would decrease the number of school units and increase the enrollments of the reorganized” (p. 7). As a result of consolidation, the smallest schools saw the greatest reduction first. The U.S. Office of Education (1930b) reflected on this progress,

Data collected biennially since 1918 show the decreasing number of 1-teacher schools. Figures … indicate an annual average decrease of more than 4,000. Since their resources are invariably united with the resources of other schools, the ultimate purpose is educational betterment (p. 5).

The ultimate result was that smaller schools became larger.

The consolidation of schools and districts created a need for student transportation. In many cases, students needed rides to school, no longer could most of the pupils from these
consolidated areas walk down the street to the school building. According to the U.S. Office of Education (1933a), “One of the most important developments in making the opportunities of secondary education available to rural children has been the provision of public transportation facilities” (p. 47). The most common form of transportation was the “motor bus” (U.S. Office of Education, 1933a, p. 49). Transportation enabled the consolidation of small high schools.

Educators consolidated schools to make the schools more cost efficient. The Educational Finance Inquiry Commission (1924d) maintained, “In Illinois the unit of public school finance is the school district. By far the greater portion of public school funds expended in the state is obtained by means of local district taxation” (p. 5). Typically, though, the local funds did not meet the demands of the numbers of students. The secondary schools and their communities, whether small or large, often needed financial assistance. The states, although this had not always been the case, provided the additional funds to assist the local districts. Neulen (1928) concluded, “That state aid for the improvement of educational conditions is a necessary function of the state is in conformity with the current trend of legal opinion and the best judgment of many educators” (p. 1). Formulas for distributing funds did always not meet the expectations of the school districts, but the state provided some necessary support.

*What Were the Findings from Research Related to High School Size from 1900 to 1939?*

Research on high school size of the era 1900 to 1939 typically focused on identifying the optimal or ideal size of the high school. By the conclusion of the 1930s, numerous research studies appeared in both journals and periodicals or as doctoral dissertations. The studies related high school size to many areas, like college achievement, relationships between personnel and
students, and cost factors to name a few. The constant theme in these studies was the search for a one best size of a high school.

Throughout the era, studies looked to find information that attempted to discover the optimal or ideal size of a high school. Appearing in different formats, from government supported studies to dissertations to university published reports, researchers sought to find the evidence of what constituted a good size. Researchers studied numerous variables, such as cost, relations between staff and students, school plant inadequacies, curricular offerings, extracurricular offerings, and success in college, in relation to the size of the high school to try to find the optimal size of a high school.

Ryan’s (1936) study, *A comparative study of educational opportunities in middle-sized and small high schools of Oklahoma*, focused on eight small and two middle-sized high schools in Oklahoma. He defined a small high school as a school with one hundred or fewer pupils and a middle-sized high school as a school with an enrollment of 150 to 200 pupils (Ryan, 1936, p. 7). His study compared the programs of these ten secondary schools. He designed a survey where he was the interviewer and he asked questions pertaining to seven areas related to school. The seven areas were buildings, libraries, instructional equipment, finance, administration and supervision, curricula and extra-curricular activities, and instruction.

As a result of the survey he determined that most of the buildings that housed all ten schools appeared deficient in one manner or another. He also found that the larger schools had better facilities. Ryan (1936) observed, “The middle-sized schools are conducting their programs in buildings that are much superior to those of the eight small high schools” (p. 195). In similar fashion, he concluded that the libraries in the larger schools had more to offer and the smaller schools lacked proper equipment. Ryan (1936) remarked, “Findings reveal that equipment in the
smaller schools is inferior in quality and limited in quantity to that provided for the middle-sized schools” (pp. 195-196).

Responses to the survey revealed that all of the teachers except one in all of the schools had bachelor’s degrees. The average tenure throughout the ten schools was 2.3 years and the average experience was seven years. Ryan (1936) argued, “There is little difference in the ages of teachers in the small and middle-sized high schools, both groups being very close to the state average of 29.4 years” (p. 196).

The curriculum appeared similar in the offerings of English, history, and natural sciences, yet the larger high schools offered more math. Ryan (1936) suggested, “Courses which are regarded as strictly college preparatory receive the major portion of attention in the eight small schools; in the two middle-sized schools the offerings have been enriched by courses in commercial work, home economics, and industrial arts” (p. 197). Comparing the small high schools to the larger high schools of Oklahoma City, Ryan (1936) concluded, “These larger city schools offer two to three times as many courses as do the small high schools” (p. 198).

In regards to revenues and finance, the smaller schools required other funds to support their programs. Ryan (1936) determined, “Without outside sources of revenue, such as transfer fees and state aid, the smaller schools could not carry on a high school program” (p. 198). The survey also revealed that the middle-sized high schools and the smaller high schools lacked good budgeting practices such as diverting instructional funds to other needs. Ryan (1936) found, “In seven of the schools the percentage of the current expenditures allotted to instructional service has been greatly reduced because of large transportation costs” (p. 199).

Ultimately, Ryan recognized that the smaller schools did not compare favorably with the middle-sized high schools. He noted that the smaller schools cost more to run and that they
offered a curriculum that lacked depth. Ryan (1936) concluded, “All of the foregoing chapters have pointed out weaknesses of the small high schools” (p. 199).

Jessup and Coffman’s (1914) study looked at the annual reports from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools submitted by 667 schools during the year 1911-1912. At that time, eleven states belonged to the agency: Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The numbers of schools varied between states from as few as fifteen in North Dakota to as many as one hundred and four in Illinois. Unfortunately, the numbers of schools do not account for all of the high schools. Jessup and Coffman (1914) recognized, “There are hundreds of small high schools throughout this territory that are accredited only within a single state by the state’s own accrediting agency” (p. 74). Other high schools could have been unaccounted for simply because there were not enough inspectors (Jessup & Coffman, 1914, p. 74).

Enrollments throughout these states varied but the greatest median size was in Indiana with 244 students enrolled and the smallest was 112 students enrolled in North Dakota. Enrollments in the other states all fell between these two figures (Jessup & Coffman, 1914, p. 74). The numbers enrolled affected the size of classes and the ability to vary the courses offered. Jessup and Coffman (1914) stated, “The large high school might have no difficulty in maintaining courses and conditions meeting the requirements for students going to college and at the same time be able to maintain many other courses for students with other interests” (p. 75). The small high schools chose between what needed elimination and what basic requirements kept.

The size of the community and school affected the instructional staff. Jessup and Coffman (1914) reported, “The total experience of the high school teachers in the best high
schools in this territory is of significance on account of the fact that it is assumed that a teacher becomes proficient largely by experience” (p. 96). The study revealed that the larger the community and school, the greater the teachers’ experience level. Jessup and Coffman (1914) noted, “The median experience ranges from three to eight years, the more experienced teachers being in the larger cities” (p. 98).

Teachers in the larger cities and schools consistently had greater experience in due part to the higher salaries and greater opportunities for promotion. Jessup and Coffman (1914) discovered, “The small city offers fewer chances for a high salary reward in going from a minimum salary to a maximum salary” (p. 96). Typically, the smallest communities, of 2,500 or less, paid teachers as low as $500 a year while the greatest amount paid occurred in the cities of over 50,000 people where the largest salaries ranged from $1,000 to $2,500 a year (Jessup & Coffman, 1914, pp. 93-95).

Ultimately, the study did not determine or suggest an optimal size. Instead, the researchers concluded that the differences between sizes of communities and cities directly affected the ability to meet a set of standards set by an accrediting agency. Jessup and Coffman (1914) commented, “All high schools cannot be made to conform to a list of a priori standards for the reason that there are other determining forces, both within and without the given school” (p. 112). They recognized that the activities, curriculum, teachers, and physical equipment for a school spoke to the support and desires of the community. Jessup and Coffman (1914) observed, “Because of the insistence of the democratic demand that there must be equal educational opportunities for all, small communities are taxing themselves heavily to provide as good schools as are supported by larger communities”(p. 113). Even though the researchers noted, “good schools could be found in good communities” (pp. 112-113), they also realized that not all
Dawson’s (1934) study, *Satisfactory Local School Units: Functions and Principles of Formation, Organization, and Administration*, sought to identify key characteristics of good schools to give advice and support to consolidated schools and reorganized school districts of the era. The study took over seven years. The research looked at twelve characteristics of a satisfactory school, satisfactory administrative and supervisory organizations, the size of the local unit of school administration, local school attendance, the reorganization of the local school unit, and the finances of the local school. Each section had a different set of procedures. The segment on characteristics of a satisfactory school pertained more to this study on high school size.

Dawson (1934) studied the records of numerous states and communities as well as other studies to be able to create a set of recommendations pertaining to the high schools. He found many variables involved in the make up of a good school. Some of these variables centered on too few teachers, a restricted curriculum, high costs to educate, and inadequate facilities and poor equipment. His research revealed that the larger the community or school became, the more likely that these issues solved themselves. Dawson (1934) contended, “The small local unit of school administration is one of the chief obstacles to equality of educational opportunity and of tax burdens and to economy and efficiency in school management” (p. 4). Dawson (1934) stated, “Any state that sets up and perpetuates school units that can not provide adequate educational advantages for its children is permitting taxpayers’ money to be wasted and is robbing children of their inalienable rights as American citizens” (p. 10). Identifying key characteristics that needed supplanting or rectifying appeared the route to creating resourceful, good schools.
In looking at characteristics of high schools, the size of the secondary school naturally became a focus of his research. Dawson (1934) remarked,

There is much evidence that size of the student body is a determining factor in the efficiency of a school. The evidence however, as to the minimum size of a satisfactory school is much more conclusive than the evidence as to the optimum size. (p. 22)

Therefore, his main concern was to identify the smallest that a high school could be before it became too inefficient rather than try to find an optimum or ideal size.

Dawson reported that the literature of the era overflowed with negative comments directed toward the smallest of high schools. He recognized that the most common limitations of the small high schools pertained to a lack of curricular offerings and the high cost of providing an education for students. His research revealed that the small high schools had a difficult time addressing the needs of all students (Dawson, 1934, p. 28). Therefore, Dawson (1934) concluded, “In order to determine a desirable size of high school, an acceptable curriculum offering must be defined” (p. 29).

Dawson determined that the way to develop an adequate curricular program was through analyzing the number of teaching positions required. He also recognized that the appropriate answers relied upon the desirable number of sections or classes a teacher should have to prepare and teach. Dawson (1934) determined, “It will be seen from this analysis that ten is the minimum number of teachers required for an acceptable high school…” (p. 29). He remarked that numerous studies had revealed that it costs more for a small high school to address the needs of its students. Dawson (1934) argued,

It is possible to find some small high schools in which the cost is less than in some large schools, but in all states where studies of high schools over large areas have been made it has been found that the smaller the school the higher the cost. (p. 30)
Dawson’s research revealed that there was a point at which the costs stop increasing. Dawson (1934) stated, “In general, the cost per pupil tends to increase rapidly in schools under 200 in enrollment and the change in cost after the 200 enrollment is reached is not material” (p. 30).

Ultimately, Dawson (1934) concluded, “There is considerable evidence that high schools having enrollments of 500 to 600 pupils offer more courses, provide more activities, and cost less per pupil than smaller schools” (p. 30). Lee and Smith’s (1997) optimal size was between 600 and 900 enrolled students. Dawson (1934) was not too far from this range. He commented that a good high school could get by with seven teachers but the best environment had at least ten teachers. Dawson also recognized that the minimum number of students that a high school should enroll was two hundred and ten students, but that the more desirable was 300 students. Finally, Dawson (1934) reflected, “There is no conclusive evidence as to the optimum size of high school, but there is evidence … there is little if anything gained by having a high school of more than 600 pupils and twenty teachers” (pp. 30-31).

Seyfert’s (1937a) study, School Size and School Efficiency: a Study of the Effects of Enrollment upon the Organization of Reorganized Secondary Schools, focused on finding “the extent to which size of school affects the organization of reorganized secondary schools” (p. 16). Seyfert defined the reorganized secondary schools as falling under one of five different categories: three-year senior high schools; six-year schools, divided internally into three-year units; six-year schools undivided; four-year senior high schools; and a six-year high school divided internally into a two-year junior high school (Seyfert, 1937a, p. 17). He used a checklist that the principal completed. Seyfert (1937a) noted, “In preparing the sample care was taken to make it as representative as possible with respect to geographic location, size of community, and type of organization” (p. 19). He also reported that the accuracy of the research depended upon
the principal’s willingness to answer questions pertaining to the nature of his school. Seyfert (1937a) suggested,

> It is likely that the schools in the sample are on the whole somewhat better than the general run of the schools they represent, since the head of an excellent school tends to be more willing to submit the facts concerning his school than the head of a less satisfactory school. (p. 19)

Even with the possibility of the data having more good schools represented, Seyfert felt that this possibility did not confuse his results.

Seyfert looked at the impact of the size of the high school on four areas: the curriculum, supervisory personnel, guidance, and the extra-curriculum. His research revealed that size affected the curriculum. Seyfert (1937a) concluded, “Under usual circumstances the student in the small senior high school must look forward to constructing his course of study under more restrictive circumstances than those confronting the student in the relatively large school” (p. 232). He observed that the students in the smaller schools had to take more required courses, whereas the students in the larger high schools had more choices of electives. Seyfert (1937a) also reported, “Students are likely to be obliged to make their selections from an offering which lacks general comprehensiveness” (p. 232). Finally, in regards to the curriculum, he noted that the students in the smaller secondary school typically took traditional college preparatory courses.

In relation to the supervision of the school, Seyfert recognized the need for trained supervisory personnel. As he noted, the push to improve instruction demanded the presence of these educators. Seyfert (1937a) maintained,
It is impossible to escape the conviction that, within limits, the presence in a school of a number of individuals trained in supervisory procedures and with time to make use of their training increases the likelihood that instruction in the school will be skillfully organized and carefully directed. (p. 241)

Typically, supervision of instruction fell on the principal depending upon the size of the school. Invariably, the smaller the school the more the principal had to supervise instruction. Seyfert (1937a) concluded, “It goes without saying that the small senior high school is in a most disadvantageous position when compared with larger schools” (p.241).

Guidance personnel in a high school assisted with directing a student’s path through school, but, as Seyfert’s study showed, a guidance program did not require large numbers of counselors, if even one. Seyfert (1937a) noted, “The average small senior high school is in a far less favorable position than is the large school when the construction of a guidance program is to be undertaken” (p. 250). Therefore, the smaller schools developed guidance around methods that did not require specialized personnel. Seyfert stated that some of these methods for guidance looked like: “visits to homes by special counselors, exploratory and try-out courses, the issuance of a school manual, library exhibits, and the presentation of material to the student through various school publications (Seyfert, 1937a, p. 254). Out of these different methods, only the home visits required trained counselors.

Since the larger high schools could afford specialized personnel, it seemed plausible that their guidance program developed more methods than the small. Seyfert (1937a) discovered, “As a result of a specialized personnel it would be expected that the large senior high school would employ a substantially greater number of methods of guidance than does the small school. Oddly enough, this is not the case” (p. 254). Seyfert (1937a) advocated, “It seems that large senior high
schools are more marked by the ways in which they do not capitalize on their size in developing their guidance plans than by the ways in which they do” (p. 255).

In the last area of concern studied, the extra-curriculum, Seyfert recognized that size had a direct affect on the extra-curricular offerings. He noted that the smaller the school the least comprehensive the activities. Seyfert (1937a) observed, “This restrictive action is most noticeable in schools with sixty or fewer pupils per grade” (p. 267). His research pointed out that the small high schools often created a better extra-curricular set of activities, since a lack of resources prevented the offering of too many courses. In short, the small schools had to do with less and hence, made do. Seyfert (1937a) argued, “An elaborate but poorly coordinated program may be far less satisfactory than one more limited in scope but pointed in nature” (p. 267).

Seyfert concluded that size affected the curriculum, the supervision of instruction, the offering of a guidance program, and the extra-curricular offerings. Yet, he also found that a school lead by a creative principal could overcome the challenges of size. Seyfert (1937a) stated, “Intelligent administration may more easily overcome apparent handicaps placed by size upon the use of specific procedures than handicaps placed upon the number of things of a kind that may be undertaken concurrently” (p. 281).

Summary

From 1900 to 1939, public high school enrollment grew from 519,251 students in 1900 to 6,226,934 students in 1938. In thirty-eight years, the enrollment for high schools increased 1099 percent (See Table 3.1). The growth in numbers of students affected the number of high schools and their size, as well. Table 3.2 revealed that the number of high schools grew from 16,300 in 1918 to 25,467 in 1938. In 1930, high schools with enrollments under 100 students equated to 12,007 or fifty-four percent of all schools. By 1938, high schools with less than 100 students
toted 9,727 or 39.5 % of all high schools. This added up to a 14.5 % decrease in the smallest high schools.

This chapter examined the issues of the size of public high schools during the period 1900-1939. The historical record established that the size of secondary schools was a major point of interest. Efficiency experts stressed the need to end fiscal waste in schools (Educational Finance Inquiry Commission, 1924c; Wright & Allen, 1929) by eliminating the smallest secondary schools, typically schools with less than 100 students enrolled, through consolidation. The literature and research studies looked at size of the high school in relation to teachers, curriculum, the extra-curriculum, college success, the school facilities, and local budgets to find evidence of the ideal size for a high school.

Solutions to many of the problems of size centered on making use of the current resources. For example, to broaden the curriculum offerings the schools sought teachers with multiple certifications (Langfitt, 1938). In addition, the sharing of teachers with nearby schools or other districts helped to expand the offerings (Odell, 1939). Particularly with the small schools, the principal would teach a class to assist (Horrall, 1922).

The large high school tried to reduce the impact of size through the creation of homeroom and houses or schools within schools. Homeroom kept the students in contact with the same teacher throughout all four years of high school. The assumption was that this would enable the student to feel connected to the school (Maxwell & Kilzer, 1936). Houses worked in similar fashion in that the school became smaller as the teacher and student were now part of a smaller school that was once large (Garinger, 1940).

Researchers of the era of 1900 to 1939 agreed that there had never been enough research completed to determine what too small and too large meant in terms of a high school. Most of
them appeared to lean toward larger high schools as the best choice (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Ryan, 1936; Seyfert, 1937). Many of the studies reflected that the everyday writers about education speculated as to the answers addressing the size of a high school, but failed to accumulate real data on an optimal or ideal size of the public high school.
CHAPTER 4

Summary of Literature on High School Size: 1940-1960

This chapter will examine the issues of the size of public high schools during the period 1940-1960. During this period, the size of the secondary schools was a major point of interest. Educators looked at secondary enrollment numbers and the size of the public high school in relationship to teachers, curriculum, the extra-curriculum, college success, the school facilities, and local budgets to find evidence of the ideal size for a high school. As a result, the secondary school received widespread attention through research aimed at discovering its optimal size.

A substantial revelation of this era however was that there was not one optimal size. Most researchers concluded that high schools could be too small and too large, but did not agree on the best size. The optimum or ideal size of a high school became such a significant topic that research dissertations appeared in great numbers along side the federal driven investigations of the small and large schools. By 1960, the general finding was that small high schools lacked the resources to provide a varied curriculum, proper housing for classes, and suitable salaries to draw qualified teachers. The large high schools had the financial resources to address the needs of the students, teachers, and community but lacked the personal attention between teachers and students. For the purposes of continuity, Lee and Smith’s (1997) definitions of small, fewer than 600 students, and large, more than 900 students, will be used when referring to small and large high schools.

Historical Setting

The United States in the early 1940s was a nation of many rural and small communities and a few major large urban centers. Many of these small communities were agricultural based, but not all. Some of their financial resources came from mining, forestry, and other regional
attractions (Gaumnitz, 1959a, pp. 2-3). In the 1920s, metropolitan communities developed as people shifted closer to the urban areas or left the city to live on its outskirts. The cities by the 1950s became quite typically extremes of wealth. The low-income immigrants and the poor of the city dominated the internal neighborhoods, whereas the wealthy inhabited the upscale high rises and popular localities with higher property values. Havighurst (1968) commented,

> During the period from 1925 to 1960, the metropolitan areas of the eastern and northern sections of the country became polarized, with people of high income and high educational level moving to the suburbs, while their places in the central city were taken by poorly educated, low-income families. (p. 7)

Many of the middle class left for the new suburban communities located just outside of the city. Havighurst and Levine (1971) noted, “The principal reason given by people for moving out from the central city to a suburb was and still is that it is better for their children. The schools are better, there is more play space for children, and the children can find congenial playmates” (pp. 34-35).

The shifting of populations came about with the changes in transportation, road construction and the ability to introduce and maintain electricity in all areas close to the large city. Roads between small communities and the cities made it easier to move. This coupled with the affordability of cars and the availability of public transportation such as railroads and buses made it easier for the people of the United States to seek new places to live (Fitzwater, 1957, p. 5). These changes took place at the same time as many young left the failing farms in the late 1930s seeking jobs. At the beginning of the 1940s, the movement of young males increased as 17 year olds sought work in the factories and mills in and around the large urban centers that needed laborers for the war effort (Angus & Mirel, 1999, pp. 88-89).
The population of adolescents had steadily increased since the conclusion of the nineteenth century. Small, isolated communities no longer remained as self-sufficient as they had been in the past. Mass production replaced cottage industry. Families no longer needed to know how to produce what they used and ate. Stores and catalogue companies ensured that families had access to more than ever before (Krug, 1972, pp. 225-226). With child labor laws limiting the ability to have children work in sweat shops and factories and mines children needed something to do. There was time for school. Education had become something that all could do. It no longer was only available to those who could afford it. It also became something that was important for a more prosperous financial future (Krug, 1972, pp. 42-45). Therefore, the numbers of children requiring education beyond the eighth grade significantly increased.

*Enrollments in Public High Schools 1940-1960*

From the turn of the century until 1942, the United States experienced record-setting public school enrollments. From 1942 to 1945, the country faced a drastic decline in these enrollments. Table 4.1 highlights the total number of students enrolled in the public secondary school. A close look at Table 4.1 revealed the extent of the drop in enrollment. The public secondary schools fell from 6,713,913 students in 1940-41 to a low of 5,560,190 students in 1944-45. Expanding enrollments leading up to the war years, declined by 1,153,723 in only four years. According to the U.S. Office of Education (1951), “Enrollments in full-time day educational institutions were more than 30.5 million pupils for the three bienniums which ended June 30, 1932, 1934, and 1936, but by 1943-44 had decreased to 27.2 million…”(p. 4). These decreases primarily developed from the large numbers of teenaged males who looked for work or served in the war effort rather than attend school.
Table 4.1

Students Enrolled in Public High School 1936-1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Public HS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>6,100,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>6,226,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>6,414,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>6,635,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>6,713,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>6,420,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>6,122,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>5,584,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>5,560,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>5,664,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>5,837,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>5,675,937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Low birth rates affected the elementary grades, but secondary schools had to contend with the growing requirement for youth labor as the war effort progressed. Adolescent boys flocked to urban areas to seek employment as the urban, industrial centers contained the most jobs. Numerous young men traveled to the cities to support the country and to earn an income. School enrollment numbers and the demand for the youth labor pool had previously shown a connection. Angus and Mirel (1999) commented, “…high school enrollments were strongly linked to the youth labor market. When that market weakened in the late 1920’s, young people poured into high schools” (p. 88). World War II offered another opportunity to demonstrate the impact of the youth labor pool on secondary enrollments.

Immediately, after the war, enrollment in secondary school rapidly increased as record numbers of youths attended public high school. The numbers were such that in the late 1940’s writers predicted the need for additional school buildings and additional teachers. Forecasters saw the baby boom that would hit by 1950 along with the number of youth returning to school as the youth labor pool dried up. By 1957, the United States experienced the largest school
enrollment, to date. Table 4.2 illustrated the growth in public school enrollments from 1889 to 1958. Of note was the sharp decline during the

Table 4.2
Enrollment in Grades 9-12 in Public and Non-public Schools, and Population 14-17 Years of Age: United States (48 states and DC), 1889-1958

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment 9-12 and postgraduate</th>
<th>Pop. 14-17</th>
<th>Enrolled or % of 14-17 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Non-Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>359,949</td>
<td>202,963</td>
<td>94,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-00</td>
<td>699,404</td>
<td>519,251</td>
<td>110,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-10</td>
<td>1,115,398</td>
<td>915,061</td>
<td>117,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>2,500,176</td>
<td>2,200,389</td>
<td>213,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>4,804,255</td>
<td>4,399,422</td>
<td>341,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>7,123,009</td>
<td>6,635,337</td>
<td>487,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>6,933,265</td>
<td>6,420,544</td>
<td>512,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>6,030,617</td>
<td>5,584,656</td>
<td>445,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>6,237,133</td>
<td>5,664,528</td>
<td>572,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>6,305,168</td>
<td>5,675,937</td>
<td>629,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>6,453,009</td>
<td>5,757,810</td>
<td>695,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>6,596,351</td>
<td>5,917,384</td>
<td>678,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>7,108,973</td>
<td>6,330,565</td>
<td>778,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>7,774,975</td>
<td>6,917,790</td>
<td>857,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>8,868,586</td>
<td>7,905,569</td>
<td>963,017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


years of World War II, followed by the large increase in students immediately following the war.

The United States Office of Education (1951) reported,

During the school year 1957-1958, the total enrollment at all educational levels (elementary, secondary, and higher education) in the United States numbered approximately 42.4 million, or about one-fourth of the total population. This was the largest number of persons who had ever attended school in this country in a single year. (p.4)

The United States secondary school population, with the exception of the years of World War II, grew tremendously. The increase in numbers of students meant that the secondary schools had to ensure the suitability of school plants and ensure the hiring of qualified teachers.
High School Size

A focused effort to reduce the number of small high schools and one-room schools started in the early twentieth century. Small schools combined with other small schools in a process called consolidation. Efficiency experts typically drove the state’s attempt to create larger schools. The thought behind this process was that the larger schools cost less to operate. Many one-room schoolhouses closed their doors as they joined other schools to form larger schools. Table 4.3 shows that even with the reduction of small high schools, 17.6 % of all secondary schools still had fewer than 100 students by 1959. By expanding the definition of a small school to 500 students,

Table 4.3
Percent of Public Secondary Schools by Size of Enrollment
1938, 1952, 1959

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of School</th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1959</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Cumulative</td>
<td>% Cumulative</td>
<td>% Cumulative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-74</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-99</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-199</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-299</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-499</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000-2,499</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500-4,999</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 or more</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


which falls 100 shy of Lee and Smith’s (1997) definition of a small high school at 600 or fewer, the result is that 69.6 % of all high schools fell under the small schools descriptor by 1959.
Smallness defined more than the majority of all public secondary schools. Table 4.4 revealed the drastic reduction in one teacher schools and school districts, while it showed the slight growth in secondary schools. In just twenty years, 1939-40 to 1959-60, consolidation reduced the number of school districts by 76,000. At the same time, the number of one room, one teacher schoolhouses decreased by over 93,000. Conditions made it possible to grow the secondary school. Busses transported students from the closed school districts to new locations.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>School Districts</th>
<th>Schools with Elementary Total</th>
<th>One-Teacher</th>
<th>Secondary Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>238,306</td>
<td>148,712</td>
<td>23,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>117,108</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>113,600</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>83,718</td>
<td>128,225</td>
<td>59,652</td>
<td>24,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>40,520</td>
<td>91,853</td>
<td>20,213</td>
<td>25,784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: From National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, Digest of Education: Table 83, Number of public school districts and public and private elementary and secondary schools: Selected Years, 1869-70 through 2005-06.

In looking at Table 4.2 in 1955-56, just ten years after World War II, student enrollment in public secondary schools had grown to 6,917,790; that equated to 84.2% of the 14 to 17 year old population of the United States. In one more year, 1957-58, the student population rose to 7,905,569 or the equivalent of 87.3% of the 14 to 17 year old population of the United States. The country’s population had overcome the slowdown from World War II and the post war baby boom hit.

During the period 1940 to 1960, the preponderance of high schools were small. This was due to the number of rural and isolated small communities across the country. Reformers of the early twentieth century wanted to eliminate all of the small secondary schools. In many cases,
small school districts had consolidated into larger ones. Table 4.3 reveals that even with the large number of small schools that no longer existed due to consolidation by 1959, 69.6% of all high schools in the United States still had fewer than 500 students. High schools with a 1,000 or more students, accounted for over 11.7% of the nation’s secondary schools. Small high schools still outnumbered large high schools in the United States.

What School Size Issues Did High School Educators Face During the Period 1940 to 1960?

From 1940 to 1960, high school size was a major issue in the United States. The size of the high school affected the number of teachers hired, the curricular offerings, the extra-curricular activities and classes, the school plant and equipment, and the relationships between adults and the students. Each of these issues was driven by funds or the lack thereof. As educators looked at each of these items in relationship to size, they wondered if the size of a high school attended by a student had an effect on the student in college. Ultimately, the question that needed answering was whether optimal size for a high school reflected in college achievement.

Teachers

In the 1940s through 1959, the production of teachers could not keep up with the demand. During World War II, schools everywhere struggled to keep credentialed teachers just as they had during World War I. The effect was a massive teacher shortage. Good (1943) reported,
The effect of the war on the supply of teachers for 1942-43 roughly duplicates the conditions of 1917-1918…These shortages of 1917-18 were the result of: (1) entrance of men teachers into military service; (2) entrance of women teachers into nursing and similar services; (3) entrance of many teachers into industries and occupations at higher pay, with greater public approval; (4) reduced college enrollments, especially in teacher education programs; (5) low salaries; (6) entrance of many high school pupils and graduates into military service, or into industry with much higher wages than they would have received as teachers; and (7) recruitment of inferior teachers, which deterred others from entering the profession. (p. 343)

During and immediately following the war years the teacher shortage hampered the ability of all size schools and communities to hire qualified teachers.

Colleges producing more teacher candidates than ever before assisted the shortage, yet the majors did not fit the overall needs. The National Education Association (1958) noted, “Not only is there a lack of proper relationship between the number of new elementary and new high school teachers, but also the latter group is not distributed among the high school teaching fields according to needs. Proportionately, too many concentrate in some fields and too few in others” (p. 12). This made hiring teachers difficult. The school could only use so many social studies or physical education teachers. The size and location of the school then added to the complexity of the problem.

Small communities competed with the large communities for qualified teachers. As a result, a phenomenon occurred where the large schools enticed teachers from the smaller communities to come work for them. Fine (1947) argued,

Peter is robbing Paul. Cities of more than 100,000 reach down to communities of 50,000. By paying more money they can get teachers for their systems. Then these cities, in turn, look toward the smaller ones for their staffs. This pirating continues, until many communities, especially the rural or poorer ones, have no one from whom to steal. Therefore, they must be content with what is left, which frequently is of poor quality. (p.20)
This cycle created a vacuum for the smaller districts. They lacked sources for qualified teachers.

By the 1940s, most states required teachers to meet special criteria, such as a bachelor’s degree to become a teacher. The larger communities pulled the qualified

Table 4.5
Percent of Teachers in One-Teacher Schools at Various Training Levels, 1958-59

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>By population area</th>
<th>By sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open Area</td>
<td>Town, less than 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Grad.</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 yrs college</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 yrs college but less than 4</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 yrs of college but less than 5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 yrs of college or more</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number reporting</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of teachers in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population area</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From National Education Association, 1960a, p. 7.

It is true that some of the best teachers in America are in small schools of rural districts, but it is difficult for such districts to keep them. Once their abilities are recognized, larger city schools offer them higher salaries, more secure tenure, and more favorable working and living conditions. (p. 19)

Therefore, many of the smallest schools and communities would hire substandard teachers or teachers who failed to meet the state criteria. Typically, they had limited college exposure and lacked a degree. Table 4.5 identified the number of teachers for one-teacher schools who had college training. In every category, more than 50% of the teachers in one-teacher schoolhouses had only two years of college.
The small secondary schools and the one-teacher schoolhouses toiled to attract credentialed teachers, to little avail. Table 4.6 compares the average classroom teacher’s salary with that of a one-teacher schoolhouse teacher. Gaumnitz (1960) commented, “The cost of living is no doubt lower in the country, but life is also less comfortable and to many less attractive. As a result, many of the best teachers prefer to teach in the city” (p. 33). The average salaries between the regular classroom teachers and the one-teacher schoolhouse teacher differed by just under $2000. Either those who chose to teach in the rural environment were hoping to use the experience to get a job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Level</th>
<th>All Classroom Teachers</th>
<th>One-Teacher School Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$4500 and over</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3500 to $4499</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below $3500</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below $3500 broken down into the following increments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Level</th>
<th>All Classroom Teachers</th>
<th>One-Teacher School Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$3000 to $3499</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2000 to $2999</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below $2000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Average salary     | $4797                  | $2954                       |

Note. From National Education Association, 1960a, p. 9.

elsewhere, or they were from the community and wanted to stay near family.

Teacher shortages turned the large system against the small system. The small schools and districts tended to hire what they could find and then quite frequently lost the most talented to the larger schools and districts. Ultimately, the ability to hire and retain teachers controlled class offerings.
Curriculum

Large high schools often offered different types of classes as well as more classes than the small high schools. Increased enrollment increased the school’s ability to expand its curricular offerings and hire more teachers. Brown (1956) contended, “A significant positive correlation was found between the size of a high school and the number of course offerings in all curricular areas studied. The large schools tend to have a large variety of courses” (p. 164). Administrators of small high schools often made the mistake of trying to imitate the course offerings of the large high school. The extremely small high school was at a disadvantage, but as Hutchinson (1950) pointed out,

the three or four teacher high school is inefficient, and just cannot adequately serve youth in a modern society. Specialized courses cannot be economically offered in a small high school; for when there are too few pupils in a class, per capita costs become impractically high. (p.100)

The lack of trained staff members and too few students meant that the small school typically could not offer many expected college preparatory courses.

In the 1940s, the high school curriculum had many possible sequences of classes, which required specialized teachers. Herrick, McLeary, Clapp, and Bogner (1956) stated the larger high school had a “greater variety of courses offered with more frequency and regularity and with greater adaptation of content and methods to the varying abilities of different groups of pupils” (p. 91). The larger high schools tended to experiment more with the new classes in combination with the traditional college preparatory than did the small schools. Edmonson, Roemer, and Bacon (1953) suggested, “Studies indicate that the curriculum content of rural high schools is designed primarily to prepare students for college” (p. 509). Typically, the small high schools offered traditional coursework and did little to steer from that path.
Extra-curriculum

Extra-curricular classes and activities continued to grow and take on a dominant role in the secondary school of 1940 to 1960. Gilchrist, Dutton, and Wrinkle (1957) acknowledged, “Administrators are recognizing increasingly that sponsorship of activities is an important part of the teacher’s load” (p. 250). The large high schools with a bigger staff could ensure numerous activities existed for the students. Community pressure existed to offer band, choral clubs, and student governments. Athletics gained in popularity to the point that the school’s identity often centered on the success of these organizations. The small school grappled with how to offer all of these programs. In many cases, the small high schools had to get creative to offer more than regular college preparatory classes. The small schools created special class periods. The activity period became popular from the 1930s to about 1945. The U.S. Office of Education (1950) observed, “In general, consolidated and rural high schools used the activity period because of pupil transportation to and from school” (p. 20). The programs offered during the regular hours of the school helped the make it possible for the rural students to participate.

The extra-curriculum had found its place. Small schools offered the activities during the school day to accommodate the wants of the students and the community. The large schools typically did not have this difficulty. They had more staff, students, and resources that generated more opportunities for offering the extra-curricular classes. From athletic battles to club service, to the community, extracurricular activities became an expected part of small and large high schools.

Facilities

Small and large high schools had curricular and non-curricular requirements for space. They needed science laboratories, libraries, gymnasiums, offices, restrooms, auditoriums,
sewing, cooking rooms, athletic fields, and metal shops. The smaller the school, the fewer specialized rooms existed. Unfortunately, most schools, small and large of the era, grew in existing buildings or inhabited structures that failed to address maintenance needs and current curricular requirements.

School buildings cost money. They required maintenance and the ability to adjust to changes in enrollment and teaching strategies. Cornell (1957) remarked,

The main common denominator of cost (other than variations due to type of construction and design) is the space allocation. Hence, to the extent that the above observations are defensible, to that extent does a larger school cost less per pupil. Experience shows that this is significantly true up to a certain point. As a matter of fact, the actual space budgets per pupil in schools constructed in the United States are increasingly less as the size of school increases. (p. 40)

Many of the school buildings in operation in the 1940s and 1950s needed replacing, because they lacked adequate space or could not meet modern curricular requirements. In some cases, the buildings had deteriorated and needed replacing. Unfortunately, the communities showed no sign of doing so.

Throughout the era, the United States experienced population shifts. Some of these shifts took people from the countryside to the city to suburbia. As these shifts continued, school buildings declined. The facilities of many schools were beyond repair and totally unfit for children to be attending on a daily basis. Kandel (1948) determined,

The situation is due to the increased post war birth rate as well as to the shifts of population and district reorganization. The population has in many cases moved away from centers served by old school buildings to sections that have few, if any, school facilities. In most states modern consolidated plants are needed to replace the little dilapidated schoolhouses. (p. 181)

Many of the small schools’ facilities were completely inadequate. Iwamoto (1960) lamented, “In 1959, over half of all one-teacher schools were heated by stoves. Winter mornings are so cold
that Mrs. Othmar (teacher) frequently marches the children around the stove to the ‘Children’s Marching Song’ in order to help them get warm” (p. 25). Stories like this were rampant.

According to the National Education Association (1960b), “The typical one-teacher school building, still being used for its original purpose, was 43 years old in 1959” (p. 124). The one-teacher schools exhibited the extremes, but all high schools had problems.

Most public high schools experienced over-crowding. The larger schools typically became larger in a facility that once housed a smaller school. Willis (1958) stated,

Some of the existing schools are massive plants that at one time jammed in as many as 10,000 students, using extended-day schedules and annexes. While the buildings were big, it was never intended that they should house so many students under the program of education that was planned. (p. 236)

Hence, hallways and closets became rooms. These areas tended to be dark, therefore, lighting and windows needed upgrading. Access to modern restrooms needed improvement. The large high schools lacked many of the necessities required to house the greater numbers of students. The smaller high schools quite frequently lacked the space for specialized classes and athletics. As a result, the smaller schools had to resort to using community gymnasiums, fields, or similar properties owned by civic clubs and organizations. Unfortunately, the era of 1940 to 1960 revealed that budgetary constraints interfered with the improvement of these school plants (Fitzwater, 1957, pp. 5-8; Alexander & Saylor, 1959, p. 699).

**Budgetary Constraints**

The financial resources of a region determined its ability to provide adequate facilities. The denser the population the more likely there was enough money to address school needs. Bent and Kronenberg (1955) concluded,
In those portions of the United States where the population was dense and there was sufficient wealth, the establishment of schools was an easy matter, but in inaccessible, sparsely settled areas with little wealth, it was impossible to make secondary education available to all unless small schools were established. (pp. 96-97)

No matter what the size of the school a lack of resources undermined the ability to outfit a school with the proper space for teaching and learning.

The American Association of School Administrators (1948) found, “Public education in the United States traditionally has operated near the subsistence level, never adequately financed in proportion to the demands laid upon it. Annual expenditures for education at no time have represented more than a pittance from the nation’s available resources” (p. 265). The school districts depended upon local property taxes to fund schools. In the case of urban and suburban areas, this meant that there was a larger pool of money as the schools grew larger. Population shifts had brought significant money to these areas with homes and industry. Whereas, the small communities lost resources as people moved. In many cases, the region itself may have already had a poor distribution of wealth and income, therefore, causing property collections to be minimal and leaving the schools lacking in resources for facilities, equipment, and personnel.

Relationships

A topic of discussion centered on the impact of the size of the high school on relationships between adults and the students. The large high school developed a reputation for being big and impersonal. The large high school appeared as having all of the right resources to purchase equipment, classrooms, and teachers, but lacked the personal nature of the small school. The small high school seemed a place where the student and teachers really knew each other, yet, lacked the resources for the physical requirements of school. Gaumnitz (1959b) argued, “Defenders of small schools insist, however, that many of the recognized advantages of
largeness are lost to the mechanization of child development. They declare that the intimate
relationship of the teacher and the child in the small school is the ideal way to develop children”
(p. 8). The advocates for the large high schools retorted that the smallness of a high school
worked to the detriment of its students. Green (1959) observed,

True, it is easy for students in our large high schools with astronomical
enrollments of say, 5000, to be absolutely overwhelmed by and lost in
the sheer vastness of the school’s dimensions. On the other extreme, it
does not necessarily follow that students are assured of reaching their
maximum potentials in very small high schools of less than hundred
students. (p. 19)

The topic of relationships compared to the size of the high school continued to be a point of
contention that tended to involve speculation rather than research to determine the validity of the
arguments.

Educators looked at numerous issues in relation to the size of the high school. The
number and quality of teachers hired, the breadth of the curriculum and the extra-curriculum, the
adequacy of the facilities or school plant, the impact of budgetary constraints, and the ability to
develop positive relationships between the adults and students all hinged on the size of the high
school. The larger the school the more the school could offer in terms of curriculum, teachers,
extra-curriculum, and the school plant. Whereas, the smaller the high school the better the
interaction between adults and students appeared. The size of the high school affected the day-to-
day operation of the secondary school.

**Impact on College**

There was much speculation about whether the size of the high school a student attended
affected her performance in college. Most of the thoughts about college achievement and size
came from little research. Thinking like, the smaller schools could not possibly offer a good
enough program to help make a student successful in college, appeared frequently. Alexander
and Saylor (1959) assessed, “Most of us would readily agree that the 7,117 secondary schools, and this includes junior high schools classed as secondary, with less than 100 pupils enrolled very likely do not offer an adequate educational program for their pupils” (p. 699). The large school advocates believed that the students in small high schools would suffer and fail to produce in college. Typically, the argument focused on the alleged inability of small high schools to offer a varied curriculum, even though the small schools tended to stay with a college preparatory content. Douglass (1952) mentioned, “Studies have shown that youngsters who graduate from small high schools do approximately as well in college as those who graduate from larger ones” (p. 509). Unfortunately, he did not cite the studies that he is referring to or that support his statement.

**How Did High School Educators Address Issues of School Size from 1940 to 1960?**

The size of a high school interfered or assisted with the running of the secondary school. Typically, the size of the high school reflected the size of the community that often meant that resources from fiscal to physical property might be limited or abundant. Issues of hiring quality teachers, offering a challenging curriculum, planning for numerous extra-curriculum activities, insuring adequate facilities, and accumulating much needed finances challenged the school boards of all secondary schools, yet their ability to address these problems was influenced by school size.

**Teachers and Curriculum**

The hiring of teachers and the offering of curricular choices affected each other. Without the teachers to teach specific subjects, the curriculum waned. Large schools typically, had the resources to attract teachers. From more pay to better facilities, the larger high schools benefited from their bigger community and its wealth. The smaller secondary schools had to make choices
and decide what was more important often sacrificing something in order to broaden curricular options.

During the 19th century, the public high school had a college preparatory curriculum. Traditional subjects of history, English, Latin, and mathematics dominated the offerings. By the early 1900s as more children became students in the public high school, the emphasis of the curriculum changed. Vocational classes developed, as did a common core of classes that all high school students had to take. Thanks to a larger tax support base, the larger high schools could afford to offer more classes. Edmonson, Roemer, and Bacon (1953) acknowledged, “Instead of just the academic course, the large high school can meet the needs of its students by offering a variety of curriculums. In almost all of the large high schools, the academic, commercial, fine arts, mechanic arts, and home economics curriculums are offered” (p. 523). By the 1940s, the state approved most curricular requirements. Wright (1961) commented, “Primary responsibility for establishing rules and regulations affecting the curriculum, including requirements for graduation from high school, rests with State agencies: the legislature, the State board of education, and the State department of education” (p. 3). It was up to the local school board to find teachers for the courses.

No matter what the size of the school, finding qualified teachers was not easy. After World War II, teacher shortages loomed. Lack of adequate salaries for teachers took its toll. The National Education Association (1958) reported,

The efforts to increase the supply have been nullified largely because teachers’ salaries have not kept pace. Many of these young graduates, although they were sufficiently interested in teaching to obtain the required professional preparation, simply could not afford to enter teaching as a life career. (p. 4)
The large schools tended to be able to attract more teachers through higher pay and the attractiveness of its location. The smaller the school the more likely the district overcame the need for teachers by hiring unlicensed teachers. Schloss and Hobson (1960) mentioned that state certificate evolved into two types,

(1) standard or regular certificates, issued to teachers who meet all the requirements, and (2) substandard or emergency certificates, issued to teachers who do not fully meet all the requirements. Because of the shortage of fully qualified teachers, the States have permitted the employment of teachers who do not have all the qualifications necessary to obtain regular teaching certificates. (p. 2)

Hiring teachers challenged the limited resources of the smaller schools and districts. To deal with financial constraints, the small schools worked with neighboring schools and districts, or through consolidation and reorganization to become a larger school system with greater access to more resources.

One approach to this problem involved utilizing current technology and sharing students. Briggs, Leonard, and Justman (1950) suggested,

To meet this challenge, small schools may be required not only to utilize to the utmost such supplemental educational means as radio and motion-picture instruction and extension courses offered by outside agencies or specialists, but also, pending the reorganization of local school districts into broader administrative units, to arrange, in cooperation with schools in other districts, for the systematic exchange of students, so that a youth may be admitted to an appropriate curriculum in a school even outside his own district. (p. 424)

Yet, small schools continued to broaden their curricular offerings creatively. Langfitt (1949) commented,

Some of the most promising of these developments include alternation of classes, combination of classes, supervised correspondence study, circuit of itinerant teachers, radio, television, and longer school periods for the core curriculum. More careful guidance and better schedule-building will also yield large returns in providing a better curriculum. (p. 183)
Therefore, methods existed to expand the curricular offerings without needing to find more resources.

It appeared, though, that the small school needed additional trained staff to create a wider spectrum of high school offerings. Yet, the states had encouraged colleges to create coursework that would lead to multiple certifications. The teachers who earned these licenses could teach numerous subjects because the certification standard connected various content areas with each other. Romine (1946) stated, “…teaching combinations involving three or more fields are found most frequently in smaller high schools, where teachers generally are relatively less well prepared and less qualified in other respects and where tenure is poorest” (p.541). In many regions of the United States, the use of teaching combinations helped the smaller schools broaden their offerings.

The emphasis on creating a school with many offerings for all pupils led many schools and their administrators to try to offer more than the traditional classes of math, reading, writing and a history or a language class. Ultimately, the small schools had to develop creative solutions to assist them in overcoming what appeared to be insurmountable conditions, whereas the larger schools had access to more teachers and could offer a broader curriculum.

Extra-curriculum

The extra-curriculum for high schools took the form of music (instrumental and vocal), intra-mural and scholastic athletics, school leadership clubs and service clubs, art, vocational training and others. In the beginning, many of these activities were secret societies that the school attempted to control (Fretwell, 1931). By the era of 1940 to 1960, schools conducted extra-curricular activities under the supervision of school administrators. Hull (1940) contended, “The present practice is to encourage pupils to ask for new activities in which they are interested
and to continue organizations which seem to be functioning satisfactorily” (p. 334). Regardless of school size, communities expected the high school to have activities such as band, football, glee club, student government, basketball, and drama.

Yet, the size of the high school influenced its ability to offer extracurricular activities. Adjustments to the schedule created opportunities for the small schools to offer the programs. From the number of staff required or needed to supervise to have proper facilities, the size of the school affected the number and type of extracurricular programs offered. According to Oliver (1956),

In practice the small schools tend to emphasize interscholastic sports more than the intramural type. In spite of the fact that football requires expensive equipment and a fairly large number of boys, a majority of schools have football teams. It is true that some sections of the country are emphasizing modifications much more adapted to the school with limited finances and few students—six-man football and touch football. A more popular competitive sport is basketball, which is found in 85 per cent of the small schools. (p. 381)

Large high schools had the facilities to offer the athletic programs, such as enough field space to have a football team or a gymnasium for basketball. The large high schools also had auditoriums so that there could be a theatrical troupe as well as music performances.

For the small schools, the first difficulty had to do with when to offer the programs. Edmonson, Roemer, and Bacon (1953) noted, “So far as possible, time for student activities should be provided within the school day. The better schools have found it advisable to assign a period during the regular day for meetings of all extracurricular activities” (p. 514). The assignment of regular class periods during the day, for the extracurricular activities created an acceptance of their role in the school. For many of the clubs, transportation issues created problems for trying to have the programs anytime other than after school. This problem especially hampered the consolidated schools where it was quite possible that the students came
from an hour away by bus. Even though other options existed, many schools chose to use the activity period during the school day for the extracurricular programs. As the U.S. Office of Education (1950) reported,

The scheduling of extraclass activities in an activity period within the regular school day has been used by some high schools for more than 20 years. Reports received in 1930 from 224 high schools revealed that 32.1 percent of the schools scheduled pupil activities as part of the morning or afternoon session. (p. 20)

All high schools offered extracurricular activities. Typically, they used the class day to offer most of the programs to ensure that all students could participate. The size of the high school dictated a need to address the availability of extra-curricular classes and the use space for the activity.

Facilities

Very little new construction of schools had taken place just prior to and during World War II. To address these needs a sense of urgency developed from the 1940s to the 1960s. During this era, communities spent local, state, and federal money reconstructing old facilities and building new schools. Large high schools required space to be adapted and small high schools required more space. The U. S. Federal Security Agency (1950) noted,

School plants deteriorate with age and from a lack of proper maintenance. School plant obsolescence results primarily from a lack of adaptation to changing needs. Either deterioration or obsolescence may make a school plant less desirable as a school home for the youth of the community, and less valuable as a learning laboratory. (p. v)

Small and large high schools experienced the need for adequate facilities. Much of the construction in the past for schools lacked little understanding of school and children. Design of buildings was driven by affordability and grandeur more than practicality.
Mistakes made with school plants typically centered on not understanding the purposes of the building. Learning environments were meant to be flexible to adjust to times and community needs. Herrick, McLeary, Clapp, and Bogner (1956) reflected,

The truth of the principle that the school plant should be designed to fit the desired program has so long been recognized that it can well be taken as an axiom. It has been stated and emphasized time and again in school plant literature and has already been repeated several times in this volume, yet in practice it is still honored as much in the breach as in its observance. (p. 222)

In readdressing already existing structures and constructing new sites, the needs of the community and the learners became more of the emphasis. Hence, the new designs looked at the flexibility of the environment. There was a need for auditoriums, fields and gymnasiums, yet if the community could not afford separate facilities, combinations served the role. Buss and Herriott (1951) argued,

it should be re-emphasized that a school plant should, above all else, be functional. First, it must provide the necessary facilities for the school program presently offered, but still be adaptable to the changes that will inevitably be made in that program. Secondly, it must be usable as a center for a rapidly developing program of youth activities and other community activities without interference with the basic educational program. (p.103)

Combination auditoriums and gymnasiums created one such option as well as athletic fields that the community shared or gymnasiums that the community used for public functions as well as school. Laboratories became multipurpose classrooms as well as did shops for vocational classes. The small and the large high schools needed flexible construction to be able to address the changing populations and educational needs.

Large and small high schools and their communities reached out for local, state, and federal money to assist with the design and completion of school plants. To overcome issues of cost and flexibility the community utilized some of their own resources to assist the development
of a school plant as well as the construction of multi-purpose facilities helped to overcome the financial strain or barriers.

**Finances and Consolidation**

To create a larger pool of resources states pushed the consolidation of small secondary schools into districts under a central controlling body. The new small districts then reorganized into larger districts. Fitzwater (1957) suggested, “The establishment of effective local districts for administering the public schools has for many years, and particularly in recent decades, been a problem of major importance” (p. 3). Hence, several small communities and their small schools would become a district. Pooling resources drove the concept of consolidation and reorganization. Through reorganization, there would be adequate finances as taxable wealth and property increased by combining schools and districts. Good will did not always meet the efforts of consolidation. According to the U. S. Office of Education (1959),

Local control was another basic philosophy dear to the hearts of the American people from the beginning. Since by tradition government was achieved through the town meeting, it was natural that local school boards should govern local school districts. (p. 1)

The small school epitomized local control. People feared losing community identity and did not want their taxes going to outsiders. Therefore, local politicians and community leaders often fought against the push to consolidate.

States typically drove the consolidation efforts. Sometimes local communities pushed back when some of the small governments did not want to proceed. Needing to seek help from the state, especially when it came with strings like developing larger districts, scared the small community leaders. Yet, state assistance happened. States created supplemental funds for school districts to compensate for the lack of financial support. Each state handled this differently. In
many cases, some states failed to recognize the greater needs for funds in the smaller districts
and tried to treat all schools and districts alike. Johns and Morphet (1960) commented,

Some states have attempted to penalize all small schools, regardless of isolation, by providing the same amount of funds per pupil for small schools as for larger schools. On the other hand, other states have provided additional funds for all small schools, regardless of isolation. (p. 149)

The state funds assisted the communities in trying to create an equitable education for the children of the state. Unfortunately, those funds were insufficient to address the numerous issues, teachers, plant upkeep, curriculum offerings, and extra-curricular activities, of running a small school.

By the late 1950s, most states took a role in dictating the reorganization of schools into districts and creating funding for addressing financial shortfalls throughout their state. In his research on the public school funding in the State of Illinois, McLure (1952) observed,

The General Assembly, like other state legislatures, found it necessary to assume increasing responsibility for financial assistance to local school districts. It was becoming clear that improvements in education would have to be accompanied by further increases in financial support and that proportionately greater amounts would have to come from taxes collected by the state government. (p. 7)

Unfortunately, state money was still not enough to overcome the issues of smallness, isolation, and large school facilities. Most communities and even many states did not budget enough money for schools. Therefore, the federal role in state and local education took a more prominent position.

The Federal government provided funds for various reasons for education throughout the state. Small and large high schools sought these funds to assist them in addressing some of the routine shortfalls that they would experience that the state and local monies did not address.
Schools needed money earmarked for the replacement of buildings, the purchase of equipment and for teacher training. According to the National Education Association (1956),

It is impossible to obtain an exact figure as to the federal government’s expenditures for education. Some of the money is spent directly by the national government (e.g., at West Point and Annapolis); some is spent upon the people as a whole through federal departments; some is paid to individuals (e.g., to veterans); some is granted to the states (e.g., for vocational education); and some is given to communities (e.g., as assistance for federally affected areas). (p. 15)

Local, state, and federal assistance helped to make up for shortfalls. As the American Association of School Administrators (1948) stated, “To support education at the new and vastly higher level which the times demand will require, of course, the assumption of a fair share in the responsibility for that support by state and federal governments as well as by local school districts” (p. 269). By the year 1958 to 1959, the proportional sources of school budgets, local, state, and federal, had become commonplace in supporting public schools. The National Education Association (1960a) reported,

In the 8 years since 1950-51 there has been some fluctuation from year to year but little change in the share of school revenue receipts of the three levels of government. In 1950-51, the federal government contributed 3.1 percent of the total revenue receipts; the states contributed 39.7 percent; and the local school districts contributed 57.2 percent. In 1958-59, the federal share was 3.5 percent of the total revenue receipts; the states’ share was 39.7 percent; and the local share was 56.8 percent. (p. 6)

Secondary schools had recurring monetary needs. Access to state and federal funds created opportunities for all secondary schools, large and small, to update their facilities, equipment and to offer competitive salaries to hire new teachers.
What Were the Findings from Research Related to High School Size from 1940 to 1960?

The research findings on high school size of the era 1940 to 1960 typically focused on finding the optimal or ideal size of the high school. By the end of the 1950s, numerous research studies appeared in both journals and doctoral dissertations. The topics covered many areas, such as college achievement, size of the high schools, relationships between personnel, and cost factors to name a few. The constant theme in these studies was the search for the one best size of a high school.

Optimal Size of the Secondary School

The perfect sized high school solved many problems. Advocates of small high schools proffered that the small school allowed the personalization of contact between teacher and student. Proponents of large schools stated that the larger school had the necessary curricular requirements and equipment for college preparation. Large schools supposedly created impersonal factory-like environments. Gann (1958) claimed,

In attempting to meet the first gigantic commitment—the education of every child—we have turned to mass-production methods. We have built school plants comparable to industry factories, on the assumption that this is the most efficient way of educating all our children. (p. 237)

Small high schools allegedly lacked proper facilities and resources. Advocates of both sides of the high school size issue conceded that both the small and the large high schools had drawbacks. Alexander and Saylor (1959) questioned,
How large should a high school be to enable it to provide the best program of secondary education possible? Some high schools in this country are, undoubtedly, too large and others are too small. What constitutes an optimum size no one can say with certainty, but almost everyone who surveys the educational scene in this country is sure that the schools at each end of the distribution in size are not in a position to offer the best program possible. (p. 699)

The studies that ensued discovered that there was not an easy solution.

Discussions of optimal size focused on the budgetary constraints of small schools, primarily. Livingston (1956) noted, “The small amount of research evidence on the question of optimum size concerns largely the area of financial efficiency. Ample evidence is available to indicate the desirable minimum size school units” (p. 156). It seemed obvious that few fiscal resources limited the ability to supply the proper rooms, equipment and appropriate teacher salaries to attract the qualified teachers. Therefore, it seemed obvious that schools and districts that struggled to provide proper accoutrements for school failed to be large enough. Hartung (1953) commented, “There is plenty of evidence that small high schools cannot provide a superior educational program at reasonable cost” (p. 68). Cost was the central concern of most studies.

Much of the research had concluded that there was little argument over what was too small and what was too big. Despite these efforts, however, at this time there was no consensus as to an optimal size for high schools.

The Conant Report

In 1959, James B. Conant published the results of his most famous work about the comprehensive high school. His study, *The American High School Today: A First Report to Interested Citizens*, focused on evaluating the comprehensiveness of public high schools across the United States. According to Conant (1959),
the public high school is expected to provide education for all the youth living in a town, city, or district. Such a high school has become known as a ‘comprehensive’ high school in contrast to the ‘specialized’ high schools which provide vocational education or which admit on a selective basis and offer only an academic curriculum. (pp. 7-8)

He found that the public high school offered many subjects of all levels from the vocational classes to the college preparatory. He noted that the concept of homeroom addressed the idea of bringing students of all backgrounds and academic levels together. He speculated that the public high school could be more successful but the large number of high schools taxed available resources. Conant (1959) concluded,

If the total number of high schools on a nationwide basis was reduced from about twenty-one thousand to approximately nine thousand, secondary instruction throughout the land would thereby be generally improved. Teachers and other professional personnel would be made available, and their talents could be used more effectively. (p. 81)

Conant believed that the overwhelming numbers of small high schools created an unnecessary drain on the personnel and other fiscal resources. (See Table 4.3) Therefore, the elimination of the small high schools would make more resources available for the rest of the secondary schools. Conant concluded that the size of the high school was important.

Conant’s data revealed that too many of these small high schools could not support the curricular programs they tried to offer. The number of classes required offering to address all students’ needs, the smaller schools could only put forward at extremely high costs. The least effective small high schools, according to Conant, were the schools with less than one hundred students in a graduating class. The ratio of students to teachers did not justify the costs related to the courses. Conant (1959) remarked,
In many of the really small high schools there are only a few teachers. The scope even of the academic program is correspondingly limited. Courses are often not offered in advanced mathematics, physics or chemistry, and foreign languages, or are offered only every other year. (pp. 78-79)

Conant recognized that the academic program lacked depth and that the existence of these schools decreased the number of quality teachers available to high schools. Therefore, he proffered that only the elimination of the excessively small high schools could stop the over extension of teachers and other important resources of schools. Conant (1959) contended, “Elimination of the small high school on a nationwide basis will help reduce the teacher shortage in important subject-matter areas” (p. 79).

Conant recommended the regionalization of the small high schools. This method sought to eliminate the inefficient small schools and districts by combining them into larger high schools and larger districts. Usually, an attempt to create a centrally located high school dominated the discussions. Ultimately, states developed incentives to encourage the combination of schools. Conant (1959) reflected on New York, “The state offers reorganized districts special assistance for transportation and building costs, two items that press most heavily on a newly enlarged district” (p. 83). The regionalization process helped to reduce the number of small high schools and replace them with larger schools and school districts that could afford to run the comprehensive model.

For Conant, large high schools had other issues. Many of the large cities had numerous secondary schools that had specialized programs. Some of the schools had a vocational curriculum and some specific areas of academics such as math and foreign languages. True comprehensive high schools existed, but specialized high schools lured students from them. Conant (1959) related,
The argument in favor of the specialized high school for those with artistic or dramatic talent is similar to the argument for specialized vocational programs in one or more high schools in a large city—the presence of a large number of youth with specialized talents. There would not be enough students involved in such programs in smaller communities to warrant the establishment of this high school.” (p. 88)

For Conant, specialized high schools stopped the mingling of all levels of kids, a unique function in the basic design of the comprehensive high school, yet, Conant did not suggest that they should not exist. Instead, he felt that the community should provide support to the existing comprehensive high school. Conant (1959) noted,

The improvement of the comprehensive high school would seem to offer far more promise for the improvement of American education than the introduction of selective academic high schools into communities where, hitherto, they have not existed. (p. 91)

The large high schools had to contend with forces that wanted to break them up in the name of specialization, whereas, Conant advocated that the comprehensive high school could best address all of the needs of all of the students if the school board and community supported its function.

At the conclusion of the study, Conant noted that the community and its needs dictated what the comprehensive high school would offer and how it would best function. He recognized that there did not seem to be one best design or makeup of an exemplary comprehensive high school. Conant (1959) stated, “If I have made myself clear, it will be evident that there is no such thing as a typical American high school. Furthermore, it is impossible to draw a blueprint of an ideal high school” (p. 96). Therefore, he argued that a well supported comprehensive high school that has graduating classes larger than one hundred will look different but address all of the needs of the many types and levels of students who attend. In the end, he recommended that a high school of “sufficient size” (Conant, 1959, p. 82) must have a graduating class of no fewer than one hundred.
In the late 1950s, dissertations on the subject of high school size appeared. Many of them offered a better size for the secondary school but what they concluded was that there was not an optimal or ideal size.

Brown’s study (1956), *High School Size: Its Relationship to Selected Educational and Cost Factors*, focused on fourteen, four-year high schools in California. His study evaluated the schools on three areas: variety of course offerings, pupil participation in extra-curricular activities, and the ratio of administrators and other special staff to the number of students (Brown, 1956, p. 9). He noted that costs equated with size make it imperative to find the size high school that was most efficient. Scarce, valuable local resources wasted by a lack of understanding of the impact of size did not need to happen. Brown (1956) commented, “The determination of the optimum size of a high school is a very vital problem” (p. 5).

Brown discovered that, for the fourteen schools studied, after eliminating the costs for transportation and teacher education, costs had no significant relationship to size, except when looking at the whole state, in which case “expense costs decreased sharply as the schools increased in size until they reached an average daily attendance of three hundred” (Brown, p. 170). He noted that the lowest costs appeared in schools between the sizes of 1,000 and 2,999 and then beyond three thousand students the costs rose, again. With respect to student participation, the small high schools had a greater percentage of the whole student body involved in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. The study also revealed that the evidence did not show that the large or the small high schools showed a significant advantage of a staff per pupil ratio. Finally, the large school offered more courses in its curriculum and those schools between
the sizes of fifteen hundred and eighteen hundred students provided the greater variety of choices without repeating courses.

Brown suggested that his review of the historical and current literature did not reveal an ideal size for the high school. Brown (1956) determined,

There is general agreement on the fact that a very small high school is incapable of providing a satisfactory educational program. The writers in the field agree that, up to a point, the efficiency of a school increases as it increases in enrollment. It is also agreed that a school can become too large for efficiency and that a very large school decreases in educational value due to the lack of personal contact with students. (p. 38)

Yet, after studying fourteen high schools in California, Brown concluded that there was an optimal size for a high school. He found that a high school with a population of between fifteen hundred and seventeen hundred created the best environment for teaching and learning. Students participated in extra-curricular activities, course offerings expanded but did not duplicate current classes, staff to pupil ratios did not exceed normal expectations, and costs did not out weigh the benefits of the size.

Woods’s (1957) study, *Relationship of High School Size to Curricular Offering*, examined seventeen four-year high schools in the Bay Area of California. Each of these public high schools enrolled between 800 students and 2,000 students. He limited his study to this range of size because he believed evidence suggested as a school closed in on 1000 students enrolled a school district would start looking to build a new high school.

Woods (1957) discovered that the problem in determining an optimal size centered on a lack of agreement as to a definition of optimal. He commented, “This type of decision must be made with increasing frequency and currently it is based upon opinions and arguments” (p. 5). The search for the right size needed good data that relied upon research. What was evident was that there was a lack of hard data.
Woods recognized that looking at school size in relation to offerings meant that there would be other factors involved. In the case of his study, he looked at parent response to the curriculum of the school, participation in co-curricular programs, curricular offerings, and the personalization of the school. Woods found that “pupil and parent awareness concerning the curricular offering seems to be good in all schools with enrollments of 1200 and larger” (p. 75). Woods’ research revealed that the larger schools provided a suitable activity or co-curricular program that at least matched and often exceeded that of the smaller high school. Further, he stated, “the schools in the size range studied can do more to provide a curricular offering to meet the needs of all youth” (p.78). Finally, he looked at the accusation that a larger high school had an impersonal climate. Woods (1957) noted, “Within the limits of the data gathered in this study the arguments that larger high schools tend to lose sight of the individual needs of youth and deny to many the opportunity to participate in student activities do not appear to be valid” (p. 79)

Ultimately, Woods discovered that many variables contributed to the effectiveness of the high school. This made it difficult to single out one element such as size. He did find, however, that comments made by teachers reflected a serious lack of adequate supplies for instruction below an enrollment of 1200. In trying to find a connection between an optimum size for the high school and the curricular offerings he remarked, “What may be an optimum size for a traditionally organized school may not be the optimum for a reorganized school since the age groupings of the students are not the same” (pp. 79-80). Woods explained that according to the feedback from his study the best size for a secondary school existed in a range between 1200 and 1599 students.

Menozzi’s (1959) study, *An Attempt to Determine the Optimum Size of Public Secondary Schools*, also focused on trying to find the ideal size for a high school. He examined twelve high
schools accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Each of these high schools was comprehensive, offering either a 10-12 or 9-12 formats. Each high school fell within one of four enrollment categories: 1) 750 through 1,437, 2) 1,436 through 2,125, 3) 2,126 through 2,812, and 4) 2,813 through 3,500.

The students, teachers, and administrators responded to questionnaires that addressed eight basic premises. Menozzi (1959) listed these premises as follows,

1. That the comprehensiveness of the curriculum is related to school size.
2. That the extent of the guidance services is related to school size.
3. That the extra-curricular program is related to school size.
4. That the functional and efficient use of school plant and equipment is related to school size.
5. That the community use of school plant, equipment, and grounds is related to school size.
6. That the effective organization of student programs is related to school size.
7. That student morale is related to school size.
8. That teacher morale is related to school size. (p. 13)

He developed these premises from comments made in the literature of his era. He used current authors and their statements about the size of schools and these aspects of the school.

At the conclusion of his study, Menozzi found that although the factors he noted had a relationship to the size of the high school they did not help identify an ideal or optimal size school. Menozzi (1959) observed, “It must be concluded that an optimum size was not determined for all of the factors of the study” (p. 191). Based upon his research, he revealed that the educators, teachers and administrators, students, and parents agreed on an optimal size. They recognized the enrollment of 750 to 1,437 as “as the optimum size for all factors for both the grades 9 through 12 and 10 through 12 type of high school graduation” (p. 192). He did remark though that this determination by this group had no basis in real research only “observation and experience” (p. 192).
Smith’s (1960) research, *A Study of the Optimum Size of Secondary Schools*, recognized that one of the most often asked questions of the era was how big should a school be to do the best possible job of educating children. In order to answer this question, Smith reviewed the literature to identify common factors related to school size. As a result, Smith identified the following factors affecting high school size: cost, staff relations, community relations, educational opportunities, pupil adjustments, trends, academic success, and achievement, administration of school, and educational program. He also used a survey of the principals of 404 three- and four-year high schools in the state of Ohio to establish their perspective on the ideal size of a high school.

The survey of the 404 principals had an 89% participation return rate. Smith (1960) suggested, “Information concerning pupil discipline, teacher turnover, special services offered, population classification of the school community, family income, occupational classification, and the number of course offerings available were secured from the source” (p. 11). When looking for a connection between these indicators and school size and student achievement, Smith discovered that information gathered did not reveal any consistent message about school size’s affect on achievement. Smith (1960) reported, “The data obtained relevant to level of achievement were found to be insufficient in content and were not included in this study” (p. 11).

The principal findings of the study revealed that communities with schools of 200 to 400 students pay more for the education of the smaller number than a community whose high school enrollment numbers between 1,000 and 1,400 students. Smith also stated that as the number increased past 1,400 the cost began to increase, again. Smith found little relationship between the growth in schools and the extent of student discipline problems. Yet, Smith (1960) stated, “However, the increase in the number of pupils per teacher is less pronounced beyond the 1,000-
1,200 size interval while the number of pupil suspensions increase rapidly beyond that interval” (p. 145).

Smith found that teacher turnover increased as the number of pupils significantly increased. Smith also observed, for example, that after a school grew beyond the category of 800 to 1,000 pupils, the turnover of teachers increased. He also noted that as the size of the school increased beyond 1,400 students that the number of experienced teachers decreased. He looked for similar evidence concerning administrators and the size of the high school. Smith found that there was a relationship between size and the overall training of a principal. Smith (1960) determined,

Up to 1,000-1,200 size interval advantages increase with size for such administrator factors as the percentage of principals with a masters degree or beyond and the number of semester hours a principal has acquired in education. Beyond that interval no relationship is found in the percentage of principals with a masters degree or beyond and no definable relationship is observed in the number of semester hours by the principal. (pp. 75-77)

There also was a relationship between the experience of the high school principal and the size of the high school. For example, the experience of a principal increased in number as the school size approached the range 400 to 600 students, but as the size of the high school increased beyond 600 students the experience of the high school principal decreased.

Ultimately, Smith discovered that a range of enrollment met conditions that created a better environment for the students. He proposed that the optimal size for a high school was between 800 to 1,200 students. He suggested that it was evident that the larger a school became the greater the advantages. Yet, he also concluded that as the high school grew beyond 1,200, some of those advantages diminished.
Summary

This chapter examined the issues of the size of public high schools during the period 1940-1960. During this period, the size of the secondary schools was a major point of interest. The professional literature and research studies examined the size of the high school in relation to teachers, curriculum, the extra-curriculum, college success, the school facilities, and local budgets to find evidence of the ideal size for a high school. As a result, the secondary school received widespread attention through research aimed at discovering its optimum size.

During this period, except for the years of World War II, enrollment in public high schools in the United States continued to set new records. In 1945-1946, the enrollment in public 9-12 schools was 5,664,528 students; by 1957-1958 the enrollment had increased to 7,905,569 students (See Table 4.2). This was an increase of 2,241,041 students or a 39.6 % increase in twelve years. As enrollments increased so did high school size. A movement to consolidate extremely small high schools continued from the previous era. By 1959, 17.6 % of all secondary schools still had fewer than 100 students as well as 69.6 % of all schools had fewer than 500 students enrolled (See Table 4.3). In a twenty-year period, 1939 to 1959, the process of consolidation eliminated 76,000 school districts (See Table 4.4).

A substantial finding of this era was that there was not one optimal size (Brown, 1956; Woods, 1957; Menozzi, 1959; Smith, 1960). Most researchers concluded that high schools could be too small and too large, but did not agree on the best size. The optimal or ideal size of a high school became such a significant topic that research dissertations appeared in great numbers along side the federal driven investigations of the small and large schools. By 1960, the general assumption was that small high schools lacked the resources to provide a varied curriculum, proper housing for classes, and suitable salaries to draw qualified teachers, whereas, the large
high schools had the financial resources to address the needs of the students, teachers, and community but lacked the personal attention between teachers and students.
CHAPTER 5

Summary of Literature on High School Size: 1961-1980

This chapter will examine the issues of the size of high schools during the period 1961-1980. During this period, the size of the high school was still a major point of contention. Educators took sides over which was the more effective high school: the small or the large. Advocates of efficiency believed that the small school needed elimination as it wasted resources. The supporters of the large schools believed that more resources equated to better quality. A common theme was the search for the ideal or optimal size high school.

Yet, no consensus on an optimal size could be reached. Instead, by the mid-1970s, the focus took a turn from the elimination of the small schools to learning how to share the personal nature of the smaller schools with the larger schools. Issues and challenges of small and large high schools continued to emphasize costs. Researchers looked at teachers, the curriculum, the extra-curriculum, facilities, and the availability of resources to identify a connection between the size of the high school and academic success. As in the previous eras, an exact definition of small and large high schools did not exist. The Educational Research Service (1971b) remarked, “But what is ‘small’ and what is ‘large’ in schools and school districts? Educators certainly cannot agree on that point. In one study, a small school may enroll less than 100 pupils and a large school up to 500 pupils. In another, small is 400 students and large is 2,500 pupils” (p. 1).

Historical Setting

From 1960 to 1970, advocates of cost effectiveness criticized the public schools. Standards, waste, and accountability entered the common vocabulary lists of the political arena as the next movement to fix and improve high school education took place. Partly, a continuation of the Cold War attempts to create more scientists and engineers, the Federal government and
private foundations provided funding for addressing school needs across the country. Some programs specifically addressed the needs of the rural isolated communities, others built libraries, and still others provided funding for assisting with the development of instructional initiatives.

The innovations coincided with a theme of disenchantment with the past and the rules and norms of predecessors. Some initiatives simply addressed the delivery of instruction, whereas, many of them challenged interpretations of society and common order. As Tyack and Cuban (1995) observed, “In the 1960s a coalition of influential organizations and individuals agreed that it was time to overthrow the Carnegie Unit, the eggcrate classroom, the teacher-dominated traditional curriculum, passive styles of learning, and the isolation of teachers from each other” (p. 103). The introduction of many of these short-lived programs gave further strength to the advocates of cost effectiveness. Accusing schools of admiring fads and frills, the federal government took a more focused role in telling school districts what needed done.

By 1975, a downward trend in enrollments forced many school districts not to hire as many teachers. In many cases, layoffs occurred as the districts realized that they had overstaffed. The size of the high school garnered renewed attention as communities feared making their schools too large and now the inclination leaned toward reducing the size of the high school. Yet, no one argued for a reversal to the smallest of schools. One-teacher schools had almost been eliminated, having been reduced to 1,111 in 1976 as compared to the 149,282 one–teacher schools in 1929 (See Table 5.1). Nevertheless, there was pining for the perceived good old days of these schools. The not so distant past of the little red schoolhouse where the teacher knew all of the children and their parents and most if not all of the community knew each other. The large high school, again found itself condemned for a perceived impersonal school environment where
Table 5.1
Number of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools,
1929-30 to 1976-77

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>1-Teacher</th>
<th>Secondary Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>238,306</td>
<td>149,282</td>
<td>23,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>221,660</td>
<td>121,178</td>
<td>25,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>169,905</td>
<td>96,302</td>
<td>28,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>146,760</td>
<td>75,096</td>
<td>25,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>110,875</td>
<td>42,865</td>
<td>25,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>95,446</td>
<td>25,341</td>
<td>25,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>77,584</td>
<td>9,895</td>
<td>26,431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>70,879</td>
<td>4,146</td>
<td>27,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>65,070</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>25,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>62,644</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>25,378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From National Center for Education Statistics, 1979, p. 61.

the teachers didn’t know the children and had little contact with the families.

*Enrollments in Public High Schools 1961-1980*

The United States, except for the years of World War II, experienced massive growth in the numbers of children attending school. Within a few short years after the war, birth rates increased significantly. The baby boom brought larger numbers of students to public schools.

According to the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1978),

America experienced a record high level of births from 1946 to 1964. In each of those years, births exceeded any year previous to 1946, usually by at least 25 percent; from 1954 to 1964, the number of births exceeded 4 million each year. (p. 48)

By the 1960s, the large numbers of children born during those years reached high school.

By the mid-1970s, however, the total number of students enrolled in public schools
Table 5.2
*Total Public K-12 and Public Secondary School Enrollment, 1960-1980*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>K-12</th>
<th>9-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>37,260</td>
<td>8,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>38,253</td>
<td>9,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>39,746</td>
<td>10,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>41,025</td>
<td>11,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>42,280</td>
<td>11,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>42,068</td>
<td>11,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>43,042</td>
<td>11,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>43,890</td>
<td>12,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>44,903</td>
<td>12,723</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>45,550</td>
<td>13,037</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>45,894</td>
<td>13,336</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>46,071</td>
<td>13,753</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>45,726</td>
<td>13,848</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>45,445</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>45,073</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>44,819</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>44,311</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>43,577</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>42,551</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>41,651</td>
<td>13,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>40,877</td>
<td>13,231</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adopted from U. S. Census Bureau, 2003, p. 33. Figures are in thousands and are rounded.

decreased. Table 5.2 reveals that the increases in enrollment continued in high school through 1976, after which time a downward trend began. The era of the World War II baby boomers entering schools had ended. The National Center for Education Statistics (1980) commented, “The 15 years of growth in fertility rates following World War II, which peaked at a high total fertility rate of 3.8 births per female in 1957, produced a baby boom that has now largely passed through the education system” (p. 2). The loss in numbers meant that schools required fewer
teachers and more schools needed consolidating to help keep them functional. The decline in student enrollment continued until the early 1980s.

*High School Size*

The *Digest of Education Statistics* and the U. S. Census addressed size of schools in the 1960s through the late 1970s in terms of school district size, perhaps reflecting the emphasis on regionalization. The use of school size charts stopped with the last U. S. Office of Education Biennial Report (1961) and picked back up again in the 1980s. Table 5.3 outlines the number of school districts and the size of the districts. The table then identifies how many students enrolled in those districts. For example, in 1977 there were 43,444,000 pupils enrolled in 16,112 school districts across the United States. The smallest number of school districts fell in the category of 25,000 or more enrolled students. These 187 school districts equated to only 1.2 % of the total number of school districts, yet, these school systems enrolled 12,162,000 students. This represented 28 % of the number of the students enrolled throughout the United States. The smallest districts with less than 300 students represented over 4,000 districts and only 1.2 % of the total number of students enrolled across the country. Even when this number combined with the category of 300 to 599 student school districts, the overall percentage of students enrolled in the smallest schools and districts only equated to 3.5 % of the total number of students in the U. S. The largest number of school districts fell between the size of 1,000 and 2,499 students. This represented 21.5 % of all school districts in the country, yet only 13.1 % of all enrolled students. The largest school districts enrolled the largest number of students, yet they represented the smallest fraction of school districts.
Table 5.3

Number of Public School Systems and Number of Pupils Enrolled, By Size of District, Fall 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Size</th>
<th>School Districts</th>
<th>Pupils Enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16,112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000 or more</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 to 24,999</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 to 9,999</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500 to 4,999</td>
<td>2,067</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 to 2,499</td>
<td>3,463</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 to 999</td>
<td>1,864</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 to 599</td>
<td>2,323</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 299</td>
<td>4,296</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: From National Center for Education Statistics, 1979, p. 61. None refers to systems with no schools.

Regionalization helped to create the bigger high schools and reduced the number of students attending smaller schools in smaller districts. The National Center for Education Statistics (1979) reported,

The most rapid reduction of school systems occurred in the middle and late 1940s and the 1950’s. Between the school years 1945-46 and 1959-60, the number dropped from 101,400 to 40,500, or 60 percent. In the 1960s school systems decreased at the rate of more than 2,000 a year, so that only 19,200 remained in 1969-70. (p. 62)

Small high schools and small districts dominated the statistics in overall numbers in the early 20th century. Table 5.4 reveals that from the 1960s through 1977 consolidation and reorganization reduced the number of small districts. Even though by 1977 (see Table 5.3), school districts with less than 600 students equated to 42.8% of all school districts in the United States, these districts only enrolled 3.5% of all students. Whereas, continuing to use Lee and
Smith’s (1997) definition of large (900 students and above), over 45.7% of all school districts enrolled more than 900 students. The total number of pupils enrolled by these larger school districts equated to approximately 94% of all students enrolled in schools. (See Table 5.3) The days when small districts outnumbered and out enrolled the large school districts appeared to be over.

Table 5.4
Decline in School Districts Through 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>127,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>94,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>63,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>35,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>17,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>16,271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From National Center for Education Statistics, 1979, p. 61.

What School Size Issues Did High School Educators Face During the Period 1961 to 1980?

From 1961 to 1980, cost effectiveness advocates continued to hail the call for the elimination of small schools. Regionalization efforts created larger districts and schools. Large schools’ advocates claimed that the bigger school maintained superiority by having more resources, such as better-trained teachers, better facilities and a broader curriculum. Cost effectiveness experts pictured the small schools as the little country schoolhouses with little or no financial resources, out-dated facilities, a limited curriculum, and poorly trained teachers. Small school supporters accused the large schools of being impersonal and factory-like. They claimed that the small schools created a personalized learning environment.
Issues of high school size focused on costs, teachers, curriculum, the extra-curriculum, facilities, and the availability of resources. Most attempts at finding the ideal or optimum size of a high school assumed that a connection between the size of the high school and academic success existed. As with the past eras, there was not a common definition for small and large high schools.

**Teachers**

In the 1960s, the secondary school teacher was in great demand. As McKean (1962) criticized, “Secondary education is impressive by sheer size alone. Great crowds of students jam the many buildings. Large numbers of teachers are required for the work of educating these students” (p. 13). The country continued to experience a need for certified teachers. The U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1964a) reported, “Between 1962 and 1963 the number of teachers in secondary schools increased 7.4 percent as compared with 2.5 percent for elementary teachers” (p. 2). Teacher licensing, or certification, requirements varied from state to state. The U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1964a) stated, “For this reason the data on the number of teachers with substandard certificates have value mainly in calling attention to the situation in the individual States, but do not readily permit significant interstate comparisons” (p. 3). Many of the courses taught required teachers with knowledge of specialized subjects. As in the past, small communities often made due with teachers with substandard certificates in order to fill teaching positions. The larger schools and districts attracted most of the certified teachers. As Street, Powell, and Hamblen (1962) contended,

> It seems reasonable to suggest that larger schools tend to have more facilities than small schools, tend to attract better-prepared teachers, and tend to be located in areas where there are more incidental educational opportunities for students. (p. 261)
The larger school districts, quite often, offered better pay and better resources. This created a competitive edge that prevented many of the smaller schools from appealing to certified teachers.

The movement of teachers to the urban areas resulted from the migration of people from the rural and smaller communities to the metropolitan areas. School districts continued to have instructional needs but not necessarily the staff members to teach the subjects; hence, smaller communities often hired uncertified teachers. Hobson and Schloss (1964) acknowledged, “Because of the shortage of fully qualified teachers, states permit the employment of teachers with substandard credentials until an adequate supply of qualified teachers becomes available or until the temporary or emergency teachers obtain the necessary qualifications” (p. 18). For almost seventy years, the rural and small communities built a reputation of having unqualified or low-quality teachers. Sher and Rosenfeld (1977) determined,

Furthermore, rural schools in most states have not been able to retain the best trained, most qualified teachers. The commonly held assumptions about the glamour and attractiveness of city life and about the consequential flow of the brightest of the brightest youth to the city became a self-fulfilling prophecy. (p. 52)

Part of the negative attraction of teaching in rural areas corresponded to poor pay. Bird (1964) recognized this relationship,

In 1955-56, the average salary of teachers in rural counties was $3,123 per year. Teachers in communities with a population of 2,500 to 9,999 received $4,034 and those in cities of 25,000 or more received $5,068 annually. (p. 30)

Small communities lacked the substantial tax base to provide funding to compete with the metropolitan regions. As more people moved to these areas, they brought greater wealth with them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Elem.</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Toward the middle of the 1960s, mandated salary laws implemented across the United States required many rural school systems to raise entry-level pay. According to the National Education Association (1966),

Currently (1965-1966) classroom teachers in 31 states are employed under provisions of minimum salary laws. Under these laws, the minimum salary that may be paid to a beginning teacher with a bachelor’s degree is $4,500 or more in 10 states; in one of these, it will be $5,200 in 1966-67. To one with a master’s degree, the minimum salary in seven states is at least $5,000 and in one of these, it will be $5,500 in 1966-67. (p. 36)

The information in Table 5.5 revealed the increased average salaries for teachers from 1960 to 1980. There was a significant jump in salaries from 1965 to 1970 and then the salaries increased at a steady rate. Table 5.6 compared the percent of families below the poverty line, in states with the highest percentage of families below the poverty line, to the state average elementary and
secondary teacher salaries. Most notable about this information was that the states with the highest poverty had the lowest salaries for teachers.

Table 5.6
*Public Elementary and Secondary School Classroom Teacher Average Salary for 1980 in States with the Highest Percentage Families Below Poverty Level From 1975*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percent Below Poverty Level</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* From U. S. Census Bureau, 1980, p.158 and 467.

By the 1970s, the low birth rates at the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s affected enrollment in the public school systems. The hiring practices of elementary schools and then, in the late 1970s, the secondary schools changed as enrollment declined. The Educational Research Service (1973) commented, “Many school systems are not only swamped with applicants for teaching positions but, faced with declining student enrollments and voter rejection of tax levy increases at the local polls, they have found it necessary to reduce their teaching staffs beyond that accomplished by normal attrition” (p. 1). Some districts released teachers and others stopped hiring as many teachers. Because the 1940s and 1950s were replete with stories about teacher shortages, (Fine, 1947) colleges throughout the 1960s generated more and more teachers. By the
1970s, the number of unemployed experienced teachers grew across the country. The Educational Research Service (1971a) analyzed,

Recent supply and demand surveys have revealed that there is now an oversupply of classroom teachers. In the light of this development, attributable in some measure to the fact that the average annual salary of public school teachers has more than doubled in the past 15 years, the concern over attracting and holding teachers can be seen shifting to concern for eliminating incompetent teachers. (p. 1)

Unemployment numbers of experienced teachers listed in Table 5.7 revealed that, for the first time the U. S. had a surplus of teachers after years of teacher shortages.

Table 5.7
*Experienced Teachers Who Were Unemployed in 1970*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Background</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Teaching</td>
<td>Total Unemployed</td>
<td>Percent Unemployed</td>
<td>Total Teaching</td>
<td>Total Unemployed</td>
<td>Percent Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All types</td>
<td>1,173,914</td>
<td>8,216</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>2,108,281</td>
<td>32,357</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>354,671</td>
<td>2,242</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>141,741</td>
<td>2,463</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>235,189</td>
<td>1,919</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>1,340,627</td>
<td>20,028</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>510,768</td>
<td>2,811</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>492,822</td>
<td>7,231</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>73,286</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>133,091</td>
<td>2,635</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Curriculum**

Larger schools typically offered a varied curriculum. An expanded curriculum addressed the needs of most students. Conant (1967) suggested, “Every comprehensive high school should provide instruction in several vocational fields as well as a diversified list of academic electives. But to meet such requirements a school board must be in a position to have a larger staff than would otherwise be the case” (p. 13). The concept of a larger staff eluded many of the rural or small communities, typically as a financial constraint. Sher and Rosenfeld (1977) found,
One of the long-standing problems in rural education has been the availability of a sufficiently comprehensive curriculum. Educators have claimed that growing technology and specialization require a more diversified course offering than most small rural schools have been able to offer. (p. 54)

Multiple course offerings with teachers specialized in these classes created a burden that most of the smaller communities could not afford.

In the mid-70s, the National Center for Education Statistics (1975) published a report that focused on the offerings of most schools across the United States in 1972-73.

Table 5.8
Course Enrollments in Subject Areas and Their Percentages of Total Pupils Enrolled in Grades 7-12 of Public Secondary Schools: United States, 1960-61 and 1972-73

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>1960-61</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>1972-73</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Pupils, Grades 7-12</td>
<td>11,732,742</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>18,577,234</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
<td>12,972,236</td>
<td>110.6</td>
<td>24,079,059</td>
<td>129.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and P.E.</td>
<td>12,081,639</td>
<td>103.0</td>
<td>21,517,330</td>
<td>115.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>11,802,499</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>18,898,794</td>
<td>101.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>8,596,396</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>13,240,326</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>7,739,877</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>12,475,429</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>4,954,347</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>6,111,223</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Education</td>
<td>4,667,570</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>6,376,633</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Arts</td>
<td>3,361,699</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>5,726,138</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>2,915,997</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>4,651,535</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>2,576,354</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>4,510,947</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>2,383,703</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>5,115,981</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>507,992</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>374,622</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational trade and industrial ed.</td>
<td>344,704</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>484,484</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive education</td>
<td>38,363</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>129,549</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>106,467</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>9,126</td>
<td>less than 0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From National Center for Education Statistics, 1975, p. 17.
Table 5.8 recreates part of the information from that report. According to the report, the most common courses with the largest enrollments were English, physical education, social sciences, mathematics, and natural sciences. In many cases the smaller schools offered what they could, based upon teachers they hired. Moe and Tamblyn (1974) contended, “Many times rural migrants discover they are inadequately educated and unprepared to compete in the urban job market” (p. 33). Hence, the impact of depending on the availability of teachers may have left the rural and small high school graduates lacking in preparation for urban societal demands.

In a research project focused on the behaviors of students in large and small schools in Kansas, Barker and Gump (1964) found what smallness meant to the class offerings. They discovered that schools with fewer than 151 students did not offer the following courses: probability and statistics, economics, sociology, psychology, geography, Spanish, French, German, and retail selling. Barker and Gump (1964) also found that small schools often offered a common set of courses: Journalism, public speaking, physiology, business law, office machines, and occupations. Barker and Gump (1964) noted, “The smaller schools were deficient, in comparison with the larger schools, with respect to specialized mathematics, specialized social and behavioral sciences, foreign languages, and specialized business classes” (p. 60). The larger schools on the other hand had more staff and that equated to better opportunities to offer an assortment of classes. Wright (1964) observed,

> According to the studies considering curriculum offerings, variety is increased with increase in enrollment size, up to a point. This may be 2,000 or something less. Beyond that there is usually a multiplication of courses rather than an increase in variety. (p. 3)

The curriculum in the smaller schools provided classes, but the larger high schools tended to have the resources to offer a greater variety of courses. Once the larger school grew to 2,000 students and beyond often the duplication of courses occurred.
By the 1960s, extra-curriculum programs had engrained themselves as part of the school’s everyday course offerings or after school activities. According to Tanner (1965), “Most educators today regard student activity programs as integral to the school curriculum. They choose to identify such activities as extra-class rather than extra-curricular. While such activities may carry no academic credit, they are, nevertheless, officially sponsored and scheduled by the school” (p. 471). Both small and large schools offered extra-curriculum courses. The numerous possibilities of offerings varied by school, its size, and the region of the country, but similarities existed. Barker and Gump (1964) determined,

Extracurricular activities fell into seven groupings, or kinds: members of school clubs, officers of school clubs and classes, members of athletic teams, cheerleaders, members of casts of school plays, members of staffs of school papers and yearbooks, members of music groups. (p. 69)

Extracurricular activities became an expected offering to the point that no matter the size of the school service clubs, music programs, and athletics, existed in the school day schedule like mathematics and social studies.

The largest difference between the extracurricular offerings of the small and large schools had to do with variety and participation. Where the larger schools tended to have more programs, the small schools often had better participation rates. Wright (1964) reported,

A study devoted to learning how life differs for children enrolled in large and small schools reported the most active participants in extraclass activities to be pupils from schools of fewer than 300, adding that while a large school provides a somewhat larger number and variety of nonclass activities than a small school, the small school makes the same general kinds of activities available to its students. (p. 3)
As with other issues pertaining to size, extra-curricular activity studies revealed that size of the school affected the offerings and the availability to students, yet the programs had little impact on determining an ideal size of the high school.

Facilities

Across the nation in the late 1950s, a massive school construction overhaul took place to address the need for more classroom space. Grant (1964) contended,

From 1956-57 through 1960-61, more than 70,000 classrooms a year, on average, were constructed for public elementary and secondary schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. As a result of this building program, the classroom shortage has been reduced from approximately 160,000 to 127,000 rooms. (p. 21)

The country lacked appropriate educational spaces until a closer look at the condition of school buildings moved the nation.

A survey of school facilities commissioned by Executive Order and overseen by the Office of Civil Defense looked into the design of schools that could double as bomb shelters. Collins (1963) reported that they found eye-opening information about the facilities for schools,

It found, for example, that among the public schools now in operation, nearly 30,000 buildings-235,000 rooms-had been built before 1920; that 40,000 buildings-155,000 rooms-were rated as combustible; and that more than 10 million pupils were in rooms with 30 or more pupils. (p. 8)

The facilities in small communities tended to be old and inadequate to meet current curricular needs, and their communities typically lacked the tax support to repair the plant or build a new one. Sher (1975) suggested,

Much of the blame for the condition of these rural schools can be assigned to the existence of a vicious cycle of inadequate rural fiscal capacity, in which a very low per capita income leads to low per pupil expenditures (even with a higher tax effort), which leads in turn, to less than adequate facilities and instructional materials. (p. 4)
The more isolated the small community, the more likely the school facility was made of wood construction and lacked specific curricular space like science laboratories or an adequate library.

By the late 1960s, communities addressed these shortfalls with massive building campaigns. Knezevich (1975) mentioned,

A record 75,400 public elementary and secondary instruction rooms were completed during 1967-1968. There was an average construction of over 70,000 classrooms per year during the 1960s. Most of the new schools in the 1950s were elementary school centers. In the 1960s nearly twice as many new secondary school plants were built as new elementary school plants. (p. 562)

Studies referencing the size of the physical plant noted that eventually school enrollment would grow to a point that would justify building a new facility. This new school plant would help to keep the other school plant from becoming too large. Mayo (1962) stated,

…In cases where some control can be exercised, such as the determination when to construct another plant in an area, these data support the contention that a second high school should not be constructed until the enrollment will reach about 1000 and leave about a 1000 in the original school. (p. 33)

The growth of the high school enrollments and the size of the physical plant were at the center of the discussions pertaining to the optimal size of high schools. Quite often, the large high school required the building of additions or adding on to the present facility as the enrollment grew.

A common finding of many of the studies reported that the physical size of a high school could actually interfere with the learning process if the structure did not allow for good instructional use. For example, Baird (1969) concluded,

Theoretically, large schools can engage in sectioning, counseling, etc., and thereby provide a variety of curricula and programs which will allow a diverse student body to follow courses which are best for each student. However, the present results suggest that what is important is the use made of facilities, rather than their size or impressiveness. (p. 259)
Experts saw more relationships between the operation of the school and student achievement rather than size of the school facility being a lone factor that made the school suitable for developing a demanding learning environment.

The numbers of students living in a region or district drove the size of the physical plant. The growth of schools often reflected the movement and migration patterns of the families from the rural to the urban and from the urban to the suburban. Sizes of high schools in many cases ebbed and flowed with these population shifts. By the 1970s, construction of new facilities had lost its momentum as school enrollment showed signs of slowing with declining enrollments. By 1975, discussions of closing schools and combining others had come full circle. In the early half of the 20th century, consolidation efforts attempted to eliminate the massive numbers of small schools that cost effectiveness advocates believed to be drains on public coffers. In the 1970s, conversations centered once again on combining schools to save costs.

**Budgetary Constraints**

In the era of 1961 to 1980, states and local governments provided most of the funding for public education. Sher and Rosenfeld (1977) argued,

> It is important to note that there is no consistent national policy regarding the financing of schools. Education is an official state function guaranteed by individual states’ constitutions rather than by the federal constitution. Consequently, the methods for financing schools vary from state to state depending on both the needs and characteristics of the state and the strength of various interest groups. (p. 36)

State funding and local taxation supported most public schools. In many communities, the property taxes and revenues generated from local industry, for example farming, coal mining, textile production and retail, supplied the money to create budgets for the schools. If the community fell on tough times, the schools experienced the effects. Tanner (1972) stated, “Most
of the financial burden falls upon local districts. As a consequence not only are there wide
disparities in the level of school support from state to state, but also from district to district
within the same state” (p. 486).

The migration of people throughout the country had a major impact on these support
structures. As Campbell (1968) suggested,

Urbanization, usually defined as the movement of population from
countryside to city, has undergone a major transition over the past
half-century. The very concept of urbanism has changed, as people
have moved not only from countryside to city but from city to suburb
as well. (p. 13)

As people left the rural countryside and moved to the city, communities’ budgets dropped. The
poorer populations remaining had few networks to turn to for support. As Clawson (1967)
recognized, “The basic factor underlying this severely disadvantaged position of the rural poor is
the fact that they have had no effective political pressure group working for them, nor have they
been able to muster much political muscle on their own” (p. 1232). The new schools in these
areas became larger schools with greater wealth. This negatively influenced the ability of the
smaller communities to serve the children left behind. As populations abandoned areas of the
metropolitan regions of the United States, many of these regions became centers of poverty.
(Havighurst & Levine, 1968; 1971) Small and large schools in these communities already needed
financial assistance and that need became compounded with the migration of families.

It was quite common for a state to have pockets of wealth and pockets of poverty
throughout its districts. Without a common state policy on education expenditures, the poorer
regions depended upon the local boards and local revenues. Table 5.9 revealed the amount and
percentage of support given to the local school systems for elementary and secondary schools
across the United States during the times 1963-64, 1973-74, and 1974-75. The federal government had made in the past commitments to grants and programs. By the late 1950s, the

Table 5.9
Revenues by Source, for Public Elementary and Secondary Education:1963-64, 1973-74, and 1974-75

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Sources</th>
<th>1963-64</th>
<th>1973-74</th>
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<td>8.1</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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urging for more federal involvement garnered support. Chase (1962) argued, “because of the preponderance of revenues flowing to the federal government and the inequalities among the states in ability to support education, it has become inconceivable that effective programs of modern education can be developed throughout this country without substantial participation by the federal government” (pp. 143-144).

The financial support for all public schools, small and large, primarily came from three sources: local, state, and federal. The local government typically lacked enough funds to address the needs of the schools. The state supplied grants and supplanted a large portion of local funding. Even though the call did not come unanimously, local governments needed consistent fiscal support from the federal government to offset the still insufficient state and local funds.

Relationships

Advocates of small high schools painted the large high school as big and unfriendly. Heath (1970) determined, “The larger the school, the more impersonal and bureaucratic its
atmosphere becomes, the less students are involved in activities, and the less they identify with the academic purposes of the faculty” (p. 526). Larger enrollments supposedly kept the teachers from developing positive relationships with the students and their families. The image helped to place blame on the larger schools for the ills of society.

By the 1960s, descriptions of unsafe hallways and corridors caused by overcrowding entered depictions of large high schools. Bent and Kronenberg (1966) commented, “…the large high school came into existence because of the rapidly increased enrollments, in urban areas, which have crowded and congested many buildings originally designed for fewer pupils” (p. 12). The representation of too many students frequented writings. Crow, Ritchie, and Crow (1961) suggested, “The individual pupil may become lost in the crowd” (p. 66). One educator wrote about his concerns for the students in the parking lots. Ovard (1966) remarked that large high schools needed, “…safety problems created by excessive traffic resulting from the number of cars” (p. 122) identified as a major problem.

Many educators used the imagery to identify large high schools as unsafe because the student body was so large that there was no connection to the school or its adults. Alienation of students was blamed on the size of the high school. By the 1970s, some educators linked large high schools with societal unrest. Clements (1970) argued,

Most damaging to any society is a huge peer group of little-supervised adolescents who know little of the facts of life through experience, who listen to no one but themselves, and who do just as they please or are the victims of some unscrupulous pressure group. Any large high school is potentially this kind of phenomenon. (p. 22)

The unruly adolescent supposedly commanded the large high schools halls and by 1980 small schools advocates connected the large high school with a lack of control and discipline problems.
Beckner and O’Neal (1980) speculated that large high schools have “less time, effort, and attention being devoted to discipline” (p. 7).

During the turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s, detractors of the larger comprehensive schools sought to place the blame for the alienation that developed between the adults and the youth culture on the large high school. The Panel on Youth of the President’s Science Advisory Committee (1974) stated, “At about a thousand students, the principal becomes unable to distinguish whether a particular young person belongs to his school. Such tentative findings at least suggest the existence of critical thresholds in interaction, impersonality, and control” (p. 154). In reality, personalized relationships developed in any size school. Stemnock (1974) remarked, “While it is acknowledged that it is easier to develop close student-staff and staff-staff relationships in a small school, such relationships can be developed in a large school” (pp. 17-18). Most of the findings led to the organization and operation of the school. Many variables affected student relationships with teachers not just its size. Guthrie (1979) contended, “Questions of scale relate to a variety of outcomes, instructional, political, and economic. It will be necessary to mount a well-integrated research effort in order to achieve a useful explanation” (p. 26).

Impact on College

Speculation continued as to the impact the size of the high school had on student success in college. Stemnock (1974) stated, “Measures of percentage of students entering college and of achievement in college are based on assumptions that the purpose of high schools is to prepare students for college—a statement that has come under serious re-examination in view of the concept of career education” (p. 18). Often educators and advocates of one size high school
developed opinions about student success in college based upon the notion that the optimum size secondary school improved college achievement.

Some educators found evidence of better academic success from small school graduates while others found evidence that the larger school students fared better. Stemnock (1974) cited Dickenson’s (1958) study in Arkansas and Hoyt’s findings from his research in 1959, “Dickenson and Hoyt found no significant differences in college achievement when size of high school was considered” (p. 18). Clements (1970) concluded, “On the basis of all available evidence, the author concludes that no one really knows whether large or small high schools are better when the ultimate aims of education are used as the criteria for evaluation” (p. 17).

Educators conjectured that the larger school was superior to the smaller school. They based their conclusions upon the larger schools seemingly having greater access to equipment, facilities, and certified teachers while the smaller schools apparently lacked the financial resources to provide adequate supplies, rooms, and qualified teachers. Evidence found, though, revealed that high school size was just one of many possible variables that affected a student’s level of performance.

**How Did High School Educators Address Issues of School Size from 1961 to 1980?**

During this period, issues of high school size typically appeared as related to cost. The most common issues centered on the quality of teachers, curricular offerings, extra-curricular programs, adequacy of the school plant or facilities, and lack of adequate financial resources to support the school programs. Large and small communities experienced budgetary constraints. Hiring qualified teachers required proper funding, otherwise classes had needed cutting, extra-curricular activities lost their importance, and the school plant fell into disrepair. To assist with reducing the burden on small communities, consolidation (also known as regionalization and
reorganization by the 1970s) continued the combination of small schools to form larger schools, and small districts combined to form larger districts. The combining of resources addressed some of the financial needs.

**Teachers and Curriculum**

The design of the comprehensive high school was to provide college preparatory and vocational classes that would create opportunities for all students to find an area of interest. As in the 1950s, small schools often lacked the qualified teachers to offer the variety of courses. Large high schools commonly attracted the more experienced teachers based upon increased potential for teaching classes they wanted, increased pay, and the location near urban activities. Bagby and Schwilck (1968) theorized, “Teachers with specialized abilities and interests can be more easily attracted and more likely retained because of their opportunity to teach several sections of their favorite courses” (p. 100).

In order to offer a wider variety of classes, small high schools had to dedicate more funds for attracting qualified teachers, creating specialized classes, and purchasing the proper equipment. Flanagan, Dailey, Shaycroft, Orr, and Goldberg (1962) concluded, “This would be under conditions that cause it to be cheaper to hire extra teachers and have new programs at that size than it would be at the larger size where transportation costs might be as much as $200 per student” (p. 11-5). Therefore, as the Educational Research Service (1971b) reported, “Except in districts where taxpayers are willing to finance the cost of providing a wide range of specialized courses for few pupils, it stands to reason that the larger schools are able to provide more diversified coursework for their pupils” (p. 17).

If the school could hire more teachers, then the curriculum offerings expanded. According to the Educational Research Service (1971b), “The problem of hiring teachers in
special areas which require special equipment might also be solved by renting a teacher and his
facilities from the surrounding community and scheduling other classes so that sufficient time is
provided for travel to and from the class location” (p. 18). Hence, schools solved this problem by
sharing teachers with other schools and districts.

Extra-curriculum

By the 1960s and 1970s, extra-curricular activities had become an expected part of the
daily school regimen. Gump and Friesen (1964) stated, “It seems obvious that a school that
brings together a large number of students can offer its pupils a richer array of activities than can
a smaller school” (p. 75.). Large schools offered numerous extracurricular programs; yet,
students in the small schools participated in a greater variety and most often held more
leadership positions in the extracurricular programs (Barker & Hall, 1964, pp. 64-74).

Involvement in these activities depended upon the student’s connection to the school and
desire to be involved in activities other than the academic or regular class offerings. It was not
necessarily a problem if students at a small school were more involved than at a large school.
The large school offered a wide range of programs, from numerous athletics to leadership and
service clubs and fine arts activities. The choices and possibilities were present. Bagby and
Schwilck (1968) argued, “The challenge of helping students to develop leadership potential and
participation skills is an important one in all schools. The assumption, however, that all
individuals aspire to be leaders, is a fallacy” (p. 105).

Facilities

Both large and small secondary schools had to contend with school plant inadequacies.
Quite typical of these problems was the lack of proper classroom space. Specialized classes
required laboratories but beyond the limited space for those classes, there was the challenge of
addressing the numbers of students. Strong (1964) noted, “With increasing expenditures and expanding pupil populations, school districts often find their resources inadequate to provide ample educational facilities for their youth” (p. 1). Both large and small schools often had buildings constructed long ago and in the case of the large schools, the plant may have had another purpose originally.

To deal with the numbers the small and large high schools created space by utilizing hallways and closets for additional instructional space. These schools also became creative with the schedule. All sizes of schools looked to devise a schedule that allowed for the use of the present facility. Sturges (1962) determined, “Some schools were forced to use split shifts, others found it necessary to use boiler rooms, church basements, auditorium stages, etc. One large school was temporarily using the same building for junior high school in the morning, and senior high school in the afternoon” (p. 49). The age, space, and design of a building helped or hampered instruction but the administration found ways to make do.

Finances and Regionalization

Cost effectiveness advocates supposed that the small schools and small districts wastefully consumed valuable resources (Sabulao & Hickrod, 1970, p. 3a). By combining schools, the new school would cost less to operate. Holland and Baritelle (1975) suggested, “Since schooling is apparently a process that is characterized by internal economies of size, major cost savings should be obtainable through consolidation of rural schools which are too small” (p. 567). The new consolidated or regionalized school would create a pool of combined financial and physical resources to overcome the previous deficiencies.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, financial difficulties hit the small and rural communities. Many of the farm, coal, and steel related jobs in the rural countryside disappeared
with the collapse of businesses. Metropolitan areas became more attractive. As a result, the populations of these areas of the country, primarily the South, shifted. Large numbers of young men, twenty and over, left the countryside to find more lucrative employment opportunities. Demographers called this out-migration. As a result, the rural countryside appeared old and dying. Beale (1969) described the situation,

> In rural areas, net migration is commonly the major component of population change. It is also a major determinant of age structure. Outmigration of youth, in particular, has been very high since the Depression. From 1950 to 1960, the rural and predominantly rural counties of the United States that had net outmigration lost 40 percent of their youth who reached 20 years of age during the decade. (pp. 415-416)

It appeared that numerous families leaving rural regions justified the call for more consolidated schools.

Demographers looked into the exodus from the countryside and found a unique trend. They took into account the fertility rate and the number of 35 year olds to fifty year olds who stayed in one place and discovered that in time the rural areas began to gain people. This was especially the case with those closest to metropolitan areas. Birth rates rose in the rural areas and people moved back from the urban centers. Beale (1969) continued,

> More than ¾ of all nonmetropolitan urban places of between 2,500 and 25,000 population increased in population between the last two censuses, and their overall growth (including the minority that lost) was 21 percent, exceeding the growth rate of the United States as a whole. (p. 425)

Even though these trends occurred, consolidation of small schools still appeared as an answer to reducing the number of schools needing more resources. Lindsay (1982) observed, “The dominant assumption has been that the larger the school, the more economical, specialized, comprehensive, and effective it must be. In short bigger is better” (p. 57). Hence, the larger the
district, the more savings as the larger schools served more students. White and Tweeten (1973) concluded, “larger school districts offer substantial economies through bigger classes and spreading overhead costs of specialized equipment, administration, and other items over more students. But larger school districts also entail diseconomies particularly from increasing transportation costs per student” (p. 45). Similarly, costs associated with the rate of utilization of the building showed that consolidation might actually increase expenditures if the building was not fully occupied. McGuffey and Brown (1978) found, “Aside from the many internal problems related to school program maintenance, the problems of school housing were multiplied” (p. 374). By the 1970s, research showed that consolidation did not address the needs of all districts and schools. Consolidation as a lone solution for fixing budgetary needs and academic performance desires lost some of its support, yet it was still a choice for trying to conserve and pool physical and financial resources.

*Federal Intervention*

The 1960s ushered in numerous federal plans, which created spending on behalf of schools and the communities those schools served. The Federal intervention targeted poverty, but also affected issues in small and large high schools caused by size. The legislation helped the local school boards and school administrations with additional funding to address shortfalls. Much of this legislation signified the increasing federal role in education.

President Johnson’s Great Society emphasized issues of the poor as he created his War on Poverty. Most of these acts attempted to address societal problems but did little to create a sustained attack that would truly solve the economic, societal, and personal issues that perpetuated poverty. The small schools and the large schools benefited as more attention on their communities resulted in assistance with attempts to cure the fiscal needs of the schools.
Unfortunately, little of the money made it to the most areas in need of the assistance. The following is a brief explanation of several of the acts that began under President Johnson followed by initiatives created during President Nixon’s term. Most school districts utilized these funds to balance the minimal state and local funding.

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 addressed the need for better training of skilled labor. It provided funding to upgrade vocational programs for high school students and adults. According to the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1964b), “The Act will substantially expand the Nation’s facilities for offering vocational instruction. It will help to fund classroom construction at area vocational technical schools and certain other schools offering comprehensive vocational courses and will provide initial equipment for them” (p. 9). Small and large communities needed funding for vocational centers to broaden their course offerings. The Vocational Act of 1963 proposed to do just that. Small and large high schools benefited as federal money subsidized the expansion of curricular offerings to include vocational programs.

School Assistance to Federally Affected Areas, Amendments of 1963 and 1964 extended PL 815 and PL 874 from 1950, granted funding for facilities and everyday expenses to assist with the education of children in areas around federal operations. U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1964b) stated,

In many communities, especially those near military bases, the influx of new families generated by growth of Federal operations has severely strained school facilities. Moreover, some school districts have borne an additional burden in that property acquired by the Federal Government has passed into tax-free status and been lost to the community as a source of revenue. (p. 23)

Many of these federal areas affected the schools around the federal property; this law allowed for compensation to assist with the numbers of students added to the enrollment of the local schools.
Small and large high schools benefited as this act created a flow of fiscal resources to expand facilities to address the growing student enrollments.

The Library Services and Construction Act of 1964, sought to put libraries in regions where none existed and to upgrade outdated libraries. Most small schools needed a library and the large urban communities needed upgrades desperately to address the greater numbers of students. The U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1964b) noted,

The Act amends the Library Services Act of 1956, passed originally to help states develop library services for rural readers. It does two main things: (1) It provides for the first time, for Federal assistance in the construction of libraries as well as in library services, and (2) it extends Federal assistance, in both construction and services, to urban as well as rural areas. (p. 26)

The library required funds for not only space that housed books and periodicals, but also it required current technology and a librarian. These expenses often seemed extravagant to local boards making budgetary decisions.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10) or ESEA zeroed in on the disadvantaged youth of the nation. The law addressed the needs of children who attended schools in low-income areas of the nation by providing funds for academic endeavors. Whether small or large high schools, the poverty of the region hampered the ability to pay for adequate equipment and facilities, therefore ESEA helped to overcome the shortfall of fiscal resources. Halperin (1975) concluded, “ESEA, a five-pronged effort, began its work of helping ‘disadvantaged children,’ stocking school libraries, promoting community-wide projects for educational change, spurring educational research and development, and upgrading state departments of education” (p. 5). The law addressed the needs of children of poverty, multi-lingual, handicapped, and Native Americans as well as other under represented groups. ESEA’s most famous segment was Title I, which during the 1974 re-authorizaton of ESEA received
much more attention. This law also introduced the language of accountability. Halperin (1975) argued, “HEW drafted statutory language which was designed to give parents leverage over ineffective schools and the public a way to gauge the effectiveness of tax expenditures” (p. 8). The federal intervention of the 1960s focused on poverty but helped to overcome issues of size. The money helped to overcome a lack of proper equipment, a lack of adequate facilities, and a lack of a diversified curriculum. Although the funding was helpful, it came with strings of accountability and rhetoric that echoed the efficiency movement of the past.

President Johnson’s 1966 Executive Order Number 11306 created the National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty “to make a study of current economic situations and trends in American rural life” (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1971, p. 3). The result of this commission appeared in two reports, *The People Left Behind* and *Rural Poverty in the United States*. In these reports, the commission identified the effects of rural poverty and noted that urban and rural poverty were connected. The reports emphasized that the country needed to set into motion programs to address the high level of poverty in the rural areas, otherwise the problem would get worse. McPherson (1968) stated, “Emphasis was given to changing the conditions believed to give rise to poverty-preventive measures that would increase opportunities” (p. 1364). Yet again, the federal intervention designed to address poverty assisted in providing funds to overcome issues of size. The poverty regions of the country had large and small high schools. The populations of these regions could not support the financial needs of the schools. The commission brought rural and urban poverty to the attention of Congress and the entire country and at the same time addressed issues of adequate facilities, equipment, and classes offered.

By 1972, some of President Johnson’s recommendations existed in new legislation. The Rural Development Act of 1972 attempted to create opportunities for rural regions to help
themselves through developmental projects aimed at improving the quality of life. Title V of the Act authorized funds to create land-grant colleges for projects that emphasized rural recovery and development and the growth of small farms. This act was extremely important for the small communities and their schools. The law attempted to create an environment where people would want to stay, live, and raise their families (Woolley & Peters, 2008). The law also created the Experimental Schools program (ES) within the Office of Education. The program identified ten small school districts and attempted to assist them with their challenges. Herriott (1983) determined,

Although funds were awarded to these school districts to support local efforts at planned educational change, the major objective of the program was to increase knowledge of the special problems faced by both the federal government and rural school districts in collaborative attempts to plan and implement such change. (p. 345)

In the past the rural communities of the country felt that, the concerns of their regions went unnoticed. Typically, only urban challenges appeared of concern to the federal government. The program itself failed in producing anything sustainable.

The short life span of the Experimental Schools program showed that the federal government needed to learn more about how local operations worked prior to trying to implement anything. According to Herriott (1983),

All ten rural districts developed ES projects that-if not comprehensive-were significantly larger in scope than anything that previously had been attempted in those settings. Yet none of them achieved the ambitious goals expressed in their formal plans. (p. 363)

The Experimental School program attempted to understand the needs of the rural school systems. The teams discovered that the federal government understood very little about the day-to-day operations of the small schools and their districts.
The federal interventions in the 1960s and 1970s, showed a change in operation for the federal government. Ovard (1966) noted,

There is no national organization on curriculum. However, over the years the federal government has influenced the curriculum through legislation that has made money and services available to the states for educational purposes. (p. 111)

The federal government left behind its passive nature toward education in the United States. No longer just a warehouse for information, the federal government influenced state behavior with money. The federal money assisted the small and the large high schools in addressing their specific needs for operating their secondary schools, but at a cost. Unfortunately, the lasting impact of the legislation from the 1960s and 1970s was a greater focus on corporate management of all public schools. Tyack and Cuban (1995) commented, “A demand for accountability and cost-effective management in public schools revived the cult of efficiency in education during the 1960s and 1970s. Reformers urged educators to reinvent educational management and budgeting by adopting techniques developed by corporations, the military-industrial complex, university budgeting experts, and government agencies” (p. 115). The federal influx of funds assisted small and large schools as it complemented the local and state resources. Yet, strings attached issued forth the new federal rhetoric about accountability and restrictive controls over schools.

Relationships

During the 1960s and 1970s, some educators discovered that consolidation, reorganization efforts, and migration patterns of families might have created consequences that reduced the connection and interaction between students, staff, and community. Guthrie (1979) advocated, “Indeed, the trend persists despite evidence that it may have produced few, if any, cost savings or educational gains, and may have damaged citizen allegiance to and lay control
over public schools” (p. 17). Personalization within the high school appeared to disappear with the growth of the high school. The close environment of the small high school may have been able to connect the young people and their teachers more effectively.

The forcing together of schools and communities through consolidation may have encouraged the elimination of many community ties (Sher & Tompkins, 1976; Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977, pp. 28-32). Students often had to spend an hour or more on a bus. The transportation of students to save money seemed to have created a negative relationship by assisting in eliminating other community connections. Hence, the larger high schools and communities had to address the elimination of close relationships. The large school administrations tried to address this by breaking up the size of the school. Gores (1966) concluded,

If, regardless of its size, a school is operated as though it were small, zoned into separate subschools or houses in such manner that the pupil identifies himself with some recognizable unit of, say, 400 pupils, which constitutes ‘his own school’ and in which he is known and knows he is known by someone responsible for him, the traditional rules no longer apply. (p. 138)

The schools within a school concept focused on reducing the impersonal nature of the larger school. The thought was that if the group were smaller the children would feel more connected and more willing to stay in school (Monahan, 1965, p. 124; Lindsay, 1982, p. 64).

Another special strategy was homeroom. This special period when implemented correctly kept students and a teacher together for their four years in high school. Homeroom looked to address the disconnectedness through the guidance activities served by the homeroom teacher (Elicker, 1964. p. 72). The students knew that at least one teacher knew their name and something about them. Ovard (1964) determined, “The homeroom teacher is expected to know his students
better than other teachers…” (p. 314). The homeroom program assisted the establishment of relationships with more teachers in the larger schools.

Larger schools tried to address the attacks claiming that they had an impersonal environment. They used initiatives designed to break up the size of the high school, yet, focused on keeping the school intact (Monahan, 1965, pp. 123-124). They also required teachers and students to work together in the same class over four years to assist in developing connections between the teacher and the students and the school.

*What Were the Findings from Research Related to* 

*High School Size from 1961 to 1980?*

Research findings on high school size of the era 1961 to 1980 continued to focus on finding an ideal or optimal size for a high school. Most of the research focused on discovering what one factor associated with school size impacted achievement the most. Research published in books, journals, and as dissertations covered the topic extensively, especially prior to 1970.

Many academic discussions focused on determining the optimal size of the secondary school. Researchers continued looking to find what factors, such as personnel, curricular offerings, community involvement, cost, academic achievement in college, and others, had the greatest impact on students’ achievement when associated with the size of the school.

As was the case in the past, the rhetoric of small school advocates emphasized a personalized environment in the small high school and impersonal, factory-like conditions in the large high school. Beckner and O’Neal (1980) highlighted some of the strengths of small schools,
• Close relation between faculty and administration
• Less red tape
• More participation in decision making by teachers and students
• Greater sense of community and school loyalty
• Closer relations between teachers and students (p. 6)

The promoters of large high schools emphasized cost-effectiveness and access to resources to provide a wide-range of classes and activities. Cashen (1970) suggested in reference to the benefits of the large schools,

> It is generally agreed that there are certain advantages that the large high school may enjoy over the small one: the ability to attract and retain the master career teacher, a broader, deeper, and more varied curriculum, more equipment, and a greater opportunity for the individual student to find others of similar ability to stimulate and challenge him. (p. 256)

What was readily apparent was there were a large number of proponents of small and large high schools with little commonality between their definitions of the sizes and very little research evidence that one size was optimal. Clements (1970) stated, “Because of these difficulties, each time someone claims to have seen the vision of ideal high school size, it has turned out to be a mirage” (p. 2).

By the end of the era of 1961 to 1980, the optimal or ideal size of a high school debate still had not generated agreement. Schloerke (1965) remarked, “We are not so knowledgeable as to whether ‘bigness in size’ is related to ‘goodness of quality’ in secondary education. Nor are we aware of a particular school size that will provide us with all the maximum values we seek for our students” (p. 20). The following section summarized some of the findings from that research.

In 1967, James B. Conant published The Comprehensive High School: A Second Report to Interested Citizens. In this work, he revisited the conclusions of his first study, The American High School Today (1959) in relation to public high schools almost ten years later. In The
American High School (1959), he had concluded that the large high school had to fight off forces that wanted to convert it to a school that only addressed a specific population. This specific focus, for example, math, science, and vocational, would destroy its ability to serve all students in one comprehensive high school. He also noted that all small high schools that had less than 100 in their graduating classes were too expensive; therefore, the schools of this size needed elimination.

Conant’s newest study (1967) utilized questionnaires sent to 18,500 comprehensive high schools. Out of the total 15,000 came back and his team decided to use the comments from medium sized high schools who then received a follow-up questionnaire. For the purposes of his study, he defined medium sized as 750 to 1,999 students enrolled. He defined small schools as 500 students and less and large high schools as 2,000 or more.

Conant’s new research sought feedback on the suggestions he made in his first study. For example, Conant (1959) recommended, “One full-time counselor (or guidance officer) for every two hundred fifty to three hundred students in the high school” (p. 26). What he found was that only 13.9 percent of the schools reviewed had this ratio. Conant concluded, “In a vast majority of the schools under consideration my recommendation is far from reality” (p. 26).

Another proposal made in the first study suggested the operation of a free summer school for all students, not just those who had failed classes. Conant (1967) stated, “In 80 percent of the 2,000 schools reporting, a summer school is available; only about 58 percent of the schools, however, offer instruction in the summer school of the sort that might be classified as ‘enrichment.’”
In revisiting his recommendations, Conant focused on the comprehensive high school program requirement he had suggested and how there was a need for better financial support of secondary schools. Conant (1967) argued,

> Every comprehensive high school should provide instruction in several vocational fields as well as a diversified list of academic electives. But to meet such requirements a school board must be in a position to have a larger staff than would otherwise be the case. A larger staff means more money. (p. 13)

He further advocated that current funding of most comprehensive high schools suffered. He recognized that many times a good budget came from the migration of families with significant wealth. Conant (1967) speculated, “By the accidents of the movement of population and of industry, adjacent school districts within a state may differ in their taxable resources by several fold” (p. 20). In short, he recognized that to support a comprehensive high school as he outlined in 1959, school boards would have to change school funding. As he noted, “Inadequate finances spell an unsatisfactory school” (p. 2).

In terms of the optimal size of a high school, his research revealed that there might be no such thing. In fact, he discovered there were more important factors than size of enrollment that influenced student achievement. Conant (1967) reflected, “Whether a school has an enrollment of 750 or 2,000 (the limits of our category), size seems to make little difference except in two respects: the school’s ability to offer a wide program in foreign language, and its ability to offer students opportunities for advanced placement” (p. 11).

In 1974, Stemnock published *Summary of Research on Size of Schools and School Districts*. This document provided an overview and summaries of research on school and school district size from the 1920s to the 1970s. Stemnock (1974) contended, “It does not attempt to
arrive at definitive recommendations, but it does provide educational decision makers with an insight into the thinking of others on these questions” (p. iv).

The report named specific studies and categorizes them between two key groups. Stemnock (1974) noted, “This Research Brief is divided into two sections. One section reviews research and opinion dealing with attempts to define an ideal size for school buildings at various instructional levels. The second section examines research and opinion on the size of intermediate and local school districts” (p. 1). The report contained a chart that identified the source of the information, its recommendations for school size, factors studied, and the nature of the study. It also provided an extensive reference list.

A similar comparison appeared earlier as Educational Research Service (ERS) Information Aid No. 8 (no author given) in June 1971. This document, entitled Size of Schools and School Districts, provided similar charts for comparison as well as an extensive reference list. This report did not provide credit to anyone person, but it closely resembled the Stemnock research brief from 1974. Both reports contained the author’s interpretation of the push to find an optimal size for the high school as well as specific information pertaining to the arguments advocating large or small high schools.

Another report similar to the other two was Enrollment Size and Educational Effectiveness of the High School produced by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1964, prepared by Grace S. Wright. It highlighted eighteen different research studies on high school size by explaining the researcher’s methods and stating the conclusions. Wright (1964) concluded, “These 18 attempts to assess the optimum size of a high school have resulted in widely differing recommendations” (p. 2).
Wright (1964) identified five common factors that the researchers used to try to find an optimum size. These factors were curriculum offerings, extra-class activities, staff qualifications, relationships, and pupil achievement. The report recognized that the authors typically focused on one of these factors to try to determine the optimum or ideal school size. In the end, the studies came to many different conclusions about optimum size, whereas, Wright (1964) theorized, “The optimum size of a high school for all-around educational effectiveness appears to be something less than the 2,000 suggested there. Also, optimum size would appear to be equal to or above the minimum of 100 in the graduating class recommended by Dr. Conant” (p. 3).

In the early 1960s, numerous dissertations attempted to identify the optimal size of a high school. Many of these studies looked at identifying factors that influenced high school size, expenditures and size, relationships between teachers and students and its relationship to the size of the school, and pupil achievement and size. Most of these studies concluded that there was not one optimal or ideal size, but a range of sizes depending upon the community. This section looked at the findings of four studies.

Gray (1961) studied forty high schools in Iowa. The investigation divided the forty into four groups of ten high schools of specific sizes. Those sizes were:

- Group A: 1000 and over
- Group B: 400 – 999
- Group C: 150- 399
- Group D: 0-149 (p. 35)

The schools chosen had given the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED). The student subjects graduated in 1959. All participants, graduates, teachers, administrators, librarians, and other staff participated in interviews. Gray looked at school size in relation to student achievement, college enrollment, faculty characteristics, counseling services, participation in extra-curricular program, library services, quantity of program, and tuition costs.
From the start, Gray knew that problems existed with the study. Gray (1961) suggested, “In an investigation of this type where the ultimate purpose is to try to determine what an optimum size for a secondary school might be, there are definite limitations” (p. 120). He recognized that the immediate challenge was identifying all of the possible factors that might affect the interpretation of an ideal size for a high school. Which made Gray (1961) acknowledge, “Another facet of this same limitation concerns agreement as to which factors should be selected for use when only a limited number can be included” (p. 121).

Gray discovered that the smallest schools did not fair as well as the larger schools. Gray (1961) revealed, “There was a progression in quality from small to large schools with a tendency for this progression to level off at an enrollment beyond 400 students” (p. 125). Even so, the evidence collected assisted him in concluding that no size can be determined optimum for the high school.

McDaniel’s (1963) A Study of Pupil Achievement as it Relates to School Size, used Conant’s (1959) conclusions from his work, The American High School Today, as the basis for his research. McDaniel (1963) concluded, “Conant’s recommendation about the one-hundred pupil senior class has had more bearing on educational thought where school size is concerned than any other such statement in history” (p. 7). He stated that Conant spoke directly to issues of financial constraints and not to pupil achievement. McDaniel’s (1963) purpose was to use Conant’s suggestions “as a dividing point in an attempt to compare the achievement of secondary school pupils in the small school with the achievement of pupils in the large schools” (p. 8).

McDaniel examined high school students in the eleventh grade in the State of Alabama who completed two tests the state required in 1959. That year Alabama contracted to have the students tested using the California Achievement Test Battery and the California Test of Mental
Maturity. McDaniel selected students from high schools in towns of populations as small as 3,000 and as big as 15,000. He sought to eliminate the extremes of too large and too small by selecting these towns. In addition, from these towns he chose thirty schools. Fifteen of the schools had 40 to 94 students in the graduating class and fifteen of the schools had 104 to 204 pupils in the graduating class. McDaniel then selected four hundred students from the two samples to look at their achievement on the test.

McDaniel (1963) argued, “There is no significant difference in basic learning ability between pupils from secondary schools having one hundred or more students in their graduating classes and pupils from secondary schools having less than one hundred pupils in their graduating classes” (p. 56). He also noted that there was not a significant difference in academic achievement within the areas of mathematics, reading, and language. McDaniel (1963) commented, “High school pupils in Alabama are not penalized in regard to learning the basic academic skills because they attend secondary schools with less than one hundred students in their graduating classes” (p. 57). As to the question of the optimum size of a high school McDaniel (1963) stated, “After the available material on this subject had been scanned the inevitable conclusion reached was that there is no one answer to the question” (p. 2).

Morris’ (1964) study, *Relationship of School Size to Per Pupil Expenditure in Secondary Schools of Nine Southern States*, culled its information from the state departments of education of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. He used their “school accreditation reports, teacher certification records, and teacher salary records” (Morris, 1964, p. 16). He accessed information covering 3,727 public secondary schools, which was “95 percent of the public secondary schools at that time” (Morris, 1964, p. 47).
Morris sought to determine if there was a relationship between the size of the school and per pupil expenditures. Morris emphasized the role that seven specific instructional factors played. Morris (1964) identified those factors as

1. Number of courses offered  
2. Number of subject areas in which courses were offered  
3. Class size  
4. Pupil-teacher ratio  
5. Number of special services provided  
6. Level of training of teachers  
7. Percentage of pupils taught by noncertificated teachers  

(p. 11).

He believed that these factors would assist in showing the effect that the size of the school had on expenditures. Within each of these areas, there was evidence that the costs of the smaller schools outweighed the benefits.

The investigation revealed that a direct relationship did exist. Morris (1964) contended, “In schools enrolling fewer than 200 pupils a rapid increase in per pupil expenditure was noted as enrollment decreased” (p. 91). He also found that in schools with enrollments between 200 and 600 pupils that there was a decrease in expenditure, whereas, above 600 the expenditures hit a plateau. Morris (1964) discovered, “When all factors were considered, the study showed that schools enrolling fewer than 200 pupils were paying a premium price for an inferior program” (p. 93).

Morris (1964) suggested, “various attempts have been made to identify an ‘ideal’ secondary school size for the most effective and efficient utilization of program, personnel, and finance” (p. 6). What has been evident is that the smaller schools cost more and that there is “no clear minimum or maximum size of secondary school (that) has been established through research” (p. 45).
Monahan’s (1965) study, *Teachers’ Knowledge of Students Related to Urban High School Size*, emphasized the possibility of a lack of communication between adults and students in the large high school. Monahan (1965) remarked, “This paper will concern itself with effects of organizational size on inter-personal relations” (p. 3). He recognized that in order to study the effect of size on relationships that he would have to determine where that variable was measurable. He concluded, “Therefore, one measurement of the effect of size on the educational organization in a high school is the amount of knowledge which a teacher has of his students” (p. 10).

The study looked at fifteen high schools in the Los Angeles City School District. The fifteen schools fell into three categories: enrollments of 1,500, 2,000, and 3,000. The researcher found five schools for each category and a random sample of tenth graders volunteered to respond to questions about their teachers. Teachers selected had to meet certain criteria as stated by Monahan (1965):

1. They had taught in the same high school since the beginning of the school year.
2. They had taught the student at least four periods a week for the entire semester.
3. They had the student in only one class.
4. They had not taught the student the previous semester. (p. 59)

The teachers then completed a questionnaire of sixteen questions that sought to discover how well the teachers knew their students.

Monahan’s hypothesis proposed that the larger the school, the less the teacher knew the students. Monahan (1965) concluded, “As the size of high schools increased there was less communication among teachers regarding individual students” and “The accuracy of teachers’ knowledgeable responses to questions measuring primary sources of information significantly diminished in the schools with enrollments around 2,900” (pp. 121-122). Monahan (1965) stated,
“This study indicates that if a school district has the opportunity, it should limit the high school size to 2,000 students” (p. 123).

Summary

The size of secondary schools and school districts continued to be a subject of debate throughout the era 1961 to 1980. Cost effectiveness advocates pursued the elimination of small schools and small districts through consolidation and reorganization or regionalization. As a result, the numbers of small school districts tumbled (see Table 5.4) from 127,531 in 1932 to 16,271 in 1976.

Enrollments across the country continued to climb in elementary and secondary schools, until the low birth rates during the late 1950s and early 1960s affected the high school enrollment numbers of the 1970s. In 1960 the 9-12 enrollment (see Table 5.2) broke 8,821,000 and by 1976 enrollments in 9-12 reached 14,314,000, but in 1977, enrollments in 9-12 dropped to 14,203,000 students. The numbers continued a downward trend into the 1980s.

Offerings in the small and large schools focused on traditional college preparatory classes: English language arts, social sciences, and mathematics. In the small high schools, schedules often rotated classes on a multiple year cycle to overcome a shortage of teachers. Small districts shared teachers between schools to address an instructional need (Sher, 1975; Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977). The large schools, typically, had the resources to offer a broad and varied curriculum. Teachers did not have to travel between schools and their workload typically did not require extra preparations (Flanagan, Dailey, Shaycroft, Orr, & Goldberg, 1962; Educational Research Service, 1971b, 1974).

By the end of the 1960s, cost-effectiveness advocates still pushed for the elimination of small high schools, but small school supporters stressed the importance of the more personal
interaction between students and teachers the small high school environment encouraged (Baird, 1969; Beckner & O’Neal, 1980). Backers of the large high schools discussed its superior capability of addressing the college preparatory curriculum and its multifaceted offerings within the extracurricular programs. According to them, the large school could offer a little bit of everything (Mayo, 1962; Morris, 1964; Bagby & Schwilck, 1968).
CHAPTER 6

Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to inform current discussions about school size with insights from historic discussions of school size during the period 1900 to 1980. The research focused on answering the following questions: What size issues did high school educators face? How did high school educators address these issues? What were the findings from research related to high school size? What is the relevance of the research and professional literature on high school size of the past for today’s discussions of high school size? Three sections comprise this chapter: An overview of the study, findings organized by the research questions, and a discussion of implications of the findings for practice and for further research.

Overview

Between 1900 and 1980, high school size was a constant topic of discussion among educators. During this period, high school enrollments continued to rise (U. S. Office of Education, 1940; 1951) and necessitated a corresponding increase in the number of schools (See Table 4.2). Every community wanted its own high school. Until 1930, high schools with less than 100 students enrolled comprised almost 54 percent of all high schools through 1930 (See Table 3.3).

Efficiency experts and, later, cost effectiveness advocates called for the elimination of small high schools. They decried the inefficiency of small schools that had insufficient funds to support a varied curriculum (Taylor, 1911; Wright & Allen, 1929; Callahan, 1962). The ideal high school (Livingston, 1956) was a large school supported by a wealthy community that could provide all of the equipment, facilities, and teachers necessary for a varied curriculum that addressed the needs of all students (Wiggins & Spaulding, 1933; National Commission on
School District Reorganization, 1948; Educational Research Service, 1971b). Noticeably missing from discussions of high school size were definitions of “small”, “large”, and “optimal” (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Brown, 1956; Woods, 1957; Schloerke, 1965).

Consolidation, later referred to as reorganization and regionalization, was the tool used to eliminate small high schools (Conant, 1959; Krug, 1972; Angus & Mirel, 1999) and the problems associated with them. Efficiency experts and cost-effectiveness advocates sought to combine small schools and small districts to create schools that could share resources and offer a wider curricular program (Dawson, 1934; Seyfert, 1937a; Wright, 1964; Stemnock, 1974). By 1977, over 148,000 small schools had been consolidated into larger schools (See Table 5.1). The process continued until the late 1970s, when enrollments declined because of the low birth rates at the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s.

By the 1960s, some educators began to wonder whether consolidation had severed community connections (Smith, 1961; McDaniel, 1963). It appeared that societal changes revealed an increase in the alienation of adolescents from adults (Heath, 1970). Large high schools received the blame for this alienation (Monahan, 1965; Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977). High school instructional techniques sought to address the supposedly factory like, impersonal nature of large high schools. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, criticism of large comprehensive high schools increased and support for small high schools became more prevalent (Clements, 1970; Sher, 1975; Stemnock, 1974; Beckner & O’Neal, 1980).

*What School Size Issues Did High School Educators Face During the Period 1900 to 1980?*

From 1900 to 1939, public high school enrollment grew from 519,251 students to 6,226,934 students. In 39 years, the enrollment of high schools increased 1199% (See Table
Except for the waning years of World War II, during the 1940s and 1950s enrollment in public high schools in the United States continued to grow. In 1945-1946, public 9-12 schools enrolled 5,664,528 students; by 1957-1958, enrollment had increased to 7,905,569 students (See Table 4.2). This was an increase of 2,241,041 students, or 39.6%, in twelve years. In 1960 the 9-12 enrollment (see Table 5.2) broke 8,821,000 and by 1976 enrollments in 9-12 reached 14,314,000. This growth in enrollment stalled in 1977, as the lower birth rates of the late 1950s and early 1960s affected high school enrollment. Enrollments continued downward into the 1980s.

With the growth in enrollments came increase in school size and in turn new issues that educators had to contend with that revolved around funding, teacher qualifications, breadth of curriculum, extra-curricular offerings, facilities, and impersonal school environments. Table 6.1 highlights the common school size issues and the typical responses from the era of 1900 to 1980. High schools needed a sufficient number of teachers, a broader curriculum, more extra-curricular offerings, more equipment, an adequate school plant, and to ensure that there was an environment for creating positive relationships between the students and adults (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Brown, 1956; Menozzi, 1959; Monahan, 1965; Stemnock, 1974). Small communities and school districts often struggled to secure sufficient funding to provide enough teachers, specialized equipment, and proper space for educational activities like science laboratories, auditoriums, athletic fields, gymnasiums, and libraries (Koss, 1927; Seyfert, 1937a; Edmonson, Roemer, & Bacon, 1953; Knezevich, 1975).

The majority of funding for schools came from the local tax base and the budgeting of the school board, supplemented by states (Educational Finance Inquiry Commission, 1924a; Gaumnitz, 1959a; Stemnock, 1974). Adverse effects developed for smaller communities with
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Note. This table is a summation of the prominent school size issues for 9-12 public high schools for these eras. It lists the most common, recurring issues as well as the most common responses.

smaller schools because of a lack of local funds. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Federal government offered states fiscal support at greater levels (Johns & Morphet, 1960). Poor funding for schools in small communities usually resulted from a lack of businesses and property to generate efficient financial resources. Throughout this eighty-year period, migratory shifts of people, spurred by changes in transportation, also affected tax coffers (Havighurst, 1968). In the
1920s and 1930s, rural youth, farm youth, and poor moved to the urban regions to seek employment. In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, metropolitan regions developed because of suburban growth on the outskirts of the cities (Havighurst & Levine, 1971). By the 1970s, suburban and rural growth happened simultaneously, as small communities became fashionable as people looked to escape urban problems. Large and small, suburban and urban communities suddenly became wealthy with the addition of new people with wealth; communities left behind saw a dramatic loss in financial resources (Havighurst, 1968; Havighurst & Levine, 1968, 1971). These changes in population and wealth typically drained the ability of small communities to provide the curricular, personnel, and facility requirements for the vacated high schools and communities.

The growth in high school enrollments created a shortage of teachers (Good, 1943). Larger communities with more financial resources typically attracted the most qualified teachers with better pay (See Table 4.6) and better opportunities for promotion beyond the teacher position (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Fine, 1947). As a result, smaller schools sometimes hired unqualified teachers (American Association of School Administrators, 1948).

The comprehensive high school required teachers with specialized teaching degrees and skills (Ferris, 1927; Alexander & Saylor, 1959; Ovard, 1966). Without key teachers in highly specialized teaching fields, curricular offerings suffered. Often smaller high schools offered a college preparatory curriculum only, while larger high school was able to experiment with different vocational and elective offerings (U. S. Bureau of Education, 1915a; Dawson, 1934; Seyfert, 1937; American Association of School Administrators, 1948). Large high schools had the ability to offer a wide variety of courses (Brown, 1956). Small high schools typically tried to imitate the large high schools, but at extreme cost (Hutchinson, 1950).
School size also affected the extra-curriculum. During the twentieth century, extra-curricular classes had become an expected part of the school experience (Gilchrist, Dutton, & Wrinkle, 1957). Smaller schools often settled for a few programs that staff members could handle, while larger high schools offered a wide array of activities (Barker & Gump, 1964). Seyfert (1937) noted that the varied programs in larger schools did not necessarily serve students any better (Barker & Gump, 1964). Small schools could not match the variety of course offerings large schools could support.

Because of the increase in enrollments, small and large high schools tended to require more space and updated facilities (Kandel, 1948). Small schools typically had a building that lacked auditoriums, science laboratories, and gymnasiums, while large high schools often made do with a makeshift building that required modifications to accommodate the extreme increase in student enrollment (Cornell, 1957; Grant, 1964). Both small and large schools needed financial resources to adapt the buildings to the needs of their communities and to the needs of students (Englehardt, 1934; Collins, 1963).

To many, the larger schools involved a lack of personal interaction between students and teachers. Accusations of impersonal, factory-like environments plagued larger high schools (Dawson, 1934; Seyfert, 1937a; Edmonson, Roemer, & Bacon, 1953). Critics complained that large high schools only made students feel unwelcome and unknown (Heath, 1970). Small school advocates argued that the small environment encouraged student involvement in activities and classes (Barker & Gump, 1964; Gump & Friesen, 1964).

How Did High School Educators Address These Issues During This Period?

The increase of the size of a school often created new issues that educators had to contend with that revolved around funding, teacher qualifications, breadth of curriculum, extra-
curricular offerings, facilities, and impersonal school environments. School districts developed creative ways to overcome the limitations that stemmed from school size.

Staffing problems plagued schools and districts. Small size hindered schools from attracting and keeping the more qualified teachers. Smaller schools often paid less, required more class preparations, and lacked sufficient opportunities for promotion (U.S. Office of Education, 1933a; National Education Association, 1958; Morriss, 1964; Bagby & Schwilck, 1968). Larger schools typically robbed smaller schools of the most qualified teachers to address their teacher shortages as they paid better and offered a wider curriculum (Cashen, 1970).

Smaller schools solved staffing problems in several ways. A common solution required the school principal to teach classes. This strategy helped reduce the number of classes that needed a teacher, which in turn meant that at least one or two teachers had a reduced number of class preparations (Horrell, 1922). Creative scheduling reduced teaching workloads, as well. One example of this involved scheduling a class in a semester or quarter rotation so that the class occurred only a few times in a two-year period (U.S. Office of Education, 1925, 1934a, 1948).

Another common solution called for the combination of schools or districts known as consolidation (also, reorganization and regionalization). This method attempted to increase access to financial resources of schools and districts by forcing small schools and districts to become one. The new district or school would have more funds to provide better facilities and equipment as well as better salaries (U.S. Office of Education, 1930b, 1957; Tamblyn, 1971; Sher & Tompkins, 1976).

Another strategy involved sharing teachers between districts and schools to offer more classes without needing more teachers (Briggs, Leonard, & Justman, 1950; Flanagan, Dailey, Shaycroft, Orr, & Goldberg, 1962; Holland & Baritelle, 1975). Schools and districts then could
offer a broader curriculum without trying to find more teachers. In addition, communities addressed teacher shortages by recruiting teachers with teaching certificates in multiple areas. Colleges in the late 1920s and 1930s began encouraging the development of combination certifications; therefore, a teacher certified to teach history might also teach Latin or English. Combinations of content sometimes reached three, four, and even five distinct areas of certification (Ferriss, 1927; Koos, 1927; U. S. Office of Education, 1934b). Teachers with these certificates could then address multiple curricular needs therefore, expanding the school’s offerings without needing to hire more teachers. Finally, many of the smaller schools and districts resorted to hiring unlicensed or substandard teachers (Schloss & Hobson, 1960) to address the lack of large numbers of teaching candidates to choose from.

Large and small schools suffered from inadequate facilities. From 1900 to 1980, districts had schools that were too small to house the new growth of students, buildings that did not function well as a school, and buildings that needed repairing and possibly replacing (Englehardt, 1934; Maxwell & Kilzer, 1936; U. S. Federal Security Agency, 1950). To solve the inadequacies of the school buildings, districts began paying closer attention to the design of new facilities so that they would allow for future growth and school required spaces like gymnasiums and science laboratories (Manheimer, 1937; Herrick, McLeary, Clapp, & Bogner, 1956; Strong, 1964). Other attempts to address problem structures involved acquiring state and federal aid to assist in subsidizing the repair, rebuilding, or development of new structures as well as adapting space within the existing structure such as hallways, closets, boiler rooms, basements, and auditorium stages (Sturges, 1962). Other avenues involved purchasing or utilizing community buildings and fields to overcome the shortfalls of the schools (Buss & Herriott, 1951). Creative
scheduling, also allowed schools to prevail over inadequacies of buildings by offering split shifts that divided the enrollment between different hours of attendance in the same building.

Communities often assisted a school or school district with additional building space to address a lack of adequate facilities. Existing town structures often housed classes with special needs, like printing offices and mechanic shops (U. S. Office of Education, 1925, 1947, 1948). By the 1950s and 1960s, mobile libraries or bookmobiles helped to solve the library shortage (Sher, 1977). Schools also shared private athletic fields and gymnasiums, until the community could build their own (U. S. Office of Education, 1933a, 1933b).

Educators accused larger schools of creating impersonal environments that encouraged the alienation of young people from the adults (Cattell, 1932; Woods, 1957; Gann, 1958; Guthrie, 1979). In an attempt to create a sense of community, large schools encouraged the development of homerooms, houses, and schools within schools. The homeroom concept kept a specific number of students together over the four years of high school with the same adult teacher. By being together for that long, the student would know that at least one adult knew her well (Maxwell & Kilzer, 1936; Elicker, 1964; Ovard, 1964). Houses divided the large high school into smaller units, possibly of 450 students or less. This created a sense of community within the large school (Garinger, 1940; Monahan, 1965). Schools within schools, similarly, divided the large high school into four or five small schools, each with approximately 400 to 600 students, located under one roof, but treated as their own school (Monahan, 1965; Gores, 1966; Lindsay, 1982;).

Ultimately, school size created issues of funding. Many of the smaller communities lacked the financial resources, such as an adequate tax base, to provide a large enough budget to accommodate the curricular and plant requirements of the students. Communities, large and
small, turned to the state and then to the federal government for relief. From 1900 to 1980, the role of state and federal money dramatically increased. Although the additional funding assisted in addressing the issues of size, it did not solve them (Brooks, 1902; Educational Finance Inquiry Commission, 1924a, 1924b, 1924d; Neulen, 1928; American Association of School Administrators, 1948; McLure, 1952, National Education Association, 1956; Fitzwater, 1957; Johns & Morphet, 1960; U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1964b; Ovard, 1966; Halperin, 1975).

What Were the Findings From Research Related to High School Size From 1900 to 1980?

An effort to identify the optimum size of a public secondary school was the centerpiece of research on school size for 80 years. Stemncock (1974) concluded, “Much of the research on school and school district size has been based upon the premise that there is an optimum or ideal size for schools and districts” (p. 1). Consistently, though, research findings supported different ranges of enrollment, not one ideal size. These ranges fell between 750 and 2,000 students (Brown, 1956; Woods, 1957; Menozzi, 1959; Morris, 1964; Conant, 1967). A distinct part of the difficulty has been the inability to define small and large high schools with common terms, as well as the multitude of premises for studying the effects of school size (Clements, 1970). Hence, researchers came to many different conclusions. Wright (1964) determined, “Most of the researches were conducted within the confines of a single state and drew upon schools whose enrollments place them in diverse groupings” (p. 2). Quite frequently, one definition of a large school matched another researcher’s definition of a small school, while the inclusion of ninth grade or its exclusion from the sample also created inconsistency in studies (Wright, 1964; Stemncock, 1974). These limitations made it difficult to identify an optimal size for a high school.
Even with these limitations, researchers from 1900 to 1980 studied various attributes of school size namely funding, teacher qualifications, breadth of curriculum, extra-curricular offerings, facilities, and impersonal school environments in relation to school size (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Seyfert, 1937a; Brown, 1956; Conant, 1959, 1967; Menozzi, 1959; Gray, 1961; Monahan, 1965;). Typically, looking to find the optimal size of a high school, these educators focused on the affect that one or more of these variables had on student achievement. Their findings created more questions than answers.

The researchers of this era discovered that funding influenced student success the most. Many of them determined that costs significantly increased the smaller the school. If the schools had inadequate resources, equipment, teachers, curriculum, and facilities, budgetary constraints often were to blame. Small and large schools had issues of funding. Smaller communities often could not afford to update facilities and lacked the resources to offer a broad curriculum and extra-curriculum. These shortcomings in turn made it difficult to attract and keep qualified teachers. Meanwhile, larger schools with more funds enticed teachers with better pay and a better chance of teaching in field (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Ryan, 1936; Seyfert, 1937a; Brown, 1956; Conant, 1959, 1967; Menozzi, 1959; Smith, 1960; Gray, 1961; McDaniel, 1963; Morris, 1964; Monahan, 1965;).

To assist with funding, many researchers focused on the need to combine resources. The consolidation, reorganization, and regionalization practices became the necessary tools to eliminate the shortfalls of a lack of adequate monetary resources. Even though this increased travel time for students and possibly decreased community connections with the schools, the elimination of many small schools appeared to be a solution (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Conant, 1959; 1967).
As schools increased in size, concerns regarding impersonal conditions rose. Research discovered that there was a relationship between larger schools and a lack of communication between parents and the school. It also appeared that teachers in large schools knew less about their students than teachers in smaller schools knew about their students (Monahan, 1965).

Ultimately, there were recommendations that a comprehensive high school should meet the needs of all students (Dawson, 1934; Conant, 1959, 1967). Researchers discovered that communities needed the flexibility to create schools that addressed the wants of the local students and the comprehensive high school met that desire with a broad curriculum (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Conant, 1959; 1967).

What is of Relevance From the Research and Professional Literature on High School Size of the Past for Today’s Discussions of High School Size?

Status of School Size

Some issues surrounding school size appear the same. There are still disagreements of what constitutes small and large schools and there are still educators looking for the optimal size or size range for a high school (Howley & Howley, 2004; Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2007; Lee & Ready, 2007). There are educators who continue to use terms like impersonal and factory–like to describe large high schools (Cotton, 2001; Toch, 2003; Fine, 2005; Knowledge Works Foundation, 2005). Questions of high costs haunt the small schools movement as well as accusations that small schools lack the breadth of curricular and extra-curricular offerings found in larger high schools (Knowledge Works Foundation, 2005; Harris, 2007). The greatest difference from the era of 1900 to 1980 is that the current disagreement over the size of the high school developed within a drive to dismantle the comprehensive high school model. Since 1983 with the Nation at Risk Report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the
comprehensive high school has become synonymous with what is wrong with American education.

Education reform advocates intertwine the definition of a comprehensive high school with that of a large high school. Small school advocates continue to place blame for schools failing students and society’s ills on the comprehensive high school. Many powerful celebrities like George Lucas and Bill Gates have created foundations to support the small schools movement. Bill Gates (2005), during an opening session of the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, declared, “America’s high schools are obsolete” (see video). His statement leads the mindset of the political arena and education reformers of today.

Reformers blame the large public schools for ill-prepared workers, racism, and remediation of first year college students. Gonzalez and DeJesus (2007) declared, “We unequivocally declare death on the social institution known as the large comprehensive urban high school, because it has miserably failed students of color, particularly Latina/o youth” (p. 74). The attacks against the comprehensive high school depict it as large and impersonal. Descriptions of the teachers paint pictures of uncaring and disconnected adults. Toch (2003) argued, “Students typically work much harder in the classroom when they sense their teachers and other adults in their schools value them. But in large schools teachers struggle merely to learn their students’ names” (p. 9). Similarly, Noguera and Wing (2006) maintained that small schools might be able to, “provide ways of eliminating the disparities in achievement among students of different races, minimizing campus violence and student alienation, and transforming the relationships between teacher and students, students and peers, school and community, administration and teachers, and administration and community” (pp. 225-226).
Modern rhetoric often places blame for the larger high schools on James B. Conant. Many educators believe that his encouragement for eliminating the overwhelming number of small schools that existed in the United States (Conant, 1959) encouraged the consolidation movement and the building of larger high schools. As Toch (2003) determined,

Conant’s endorsement intensified educator’s loyalty to the concept of the comprehensive high school, and his declaration that small schools represented ‘one of the serious obstacles to good secondary education throughout most of the United States’ quickened a nascent movement to consolidate the nation’s schools and school systems. (p. 4)

Reformers who blame him overlook that the schools that he advocated included 400 to 500 students meaning that by using Lee and Smith’s (1997) measurement he envisioned small high schools.

Since 1980, school size and its possible effects on student achievement continue to be a source of disagreement within the education reform movement. References to large, impersonal factory-like high schools are common within the school size commentary. Today, small high schools are good whereas in the past there was an intensified drive to eliminate the smallest high schools.

Implications for Practice

As suggested by the revisit to the modern era, the research from 1900 to 1980 has direct implications for practice. Relevant issues of the past are still relevant today. The researchers of the current era are typically unaware of the school size discussions from the past and therefore spend time and money coming to the same conclusions that educators from 1900 to 1980 developed. The greatest implication for practice of this study is the unveiling of forgotten or ignored information to guide current discussions on school size and student achievement. This lost research identified the importance of funding, teacher quality, the breadth of the curriculum,
and the need for extensive extra-curricular programs, the significance of adequate equipment and facilities, and addressing the impersonal nature of larger schools.

The problems of school size today reflect the same concerns identified during the period 1900 to 1980. Recently, Liou (2008) reviewed Conchas and Rodriguez’ (2008) book, *Small Schools and Urban Youth: Using the Power of School Culture to Engage Students*. In this essay, Liou (2008) emphasized, “The relationships between school size and student learning have been well documented” (p. 2). Yet, Liou (2008) warned,

> While the benefits are currently perceived to outweigh its limitations, my work in this area have found small schools to struggle with issues closely related to sustainability, inadequate facilities, low teacher retention rates, and range of curricular offerings. (p. 2)

Strike (2008), *Small Schools: Size or Community*, contended, “There are numerous examples of successful small schools and a growing body of literature documenting their success” (p. 169). He determined that large schools often lacked the connections with their students to inspire them to care about the curriculum and learning. Strike (2008) argued, “They do not care because the schools they attend are large, impersonal, and bureaucratic. They do not feel cared for, affirmed, or valued by adults” (p.177). These two works identified problems of school size like sustainability, inadequate facilities, low teacher retention rate, small range of curricular offerings, and impersonal environments, as problems of today. Between 1900 and 1980, educators faced many of these same issues. Some of the solutions they identified may speak to similar problems today.

In the past, financial problems were addressed by combining the smallest schools and districts. Consolidation, reorganization, and regionalization created new larger schools and districts that had a greater tax base and therefore more resources. (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; U. S. Office of Education, 1930b; Dawson, 1934; Conant, 1959, 1967; Sher & Tompkins, 1976).
The combination of some of the smallest schools and districts today could help make more schools viable.

Many modern facilities lack appropriate classroom space, auditoriums, science laboratories, athletic fields, gymnasiums, and libraries. From 1900 to 1980, school leaders solved these problems by tapping community resources such as buildings that sat vacant, utilizing club and community athletic fields and gymnasiums, and converting existing space into laboratories, libraries, and offices. School districts also created mobile libraries to take books to the most rural of places without needing to fund construction of a new building. Ultimately, the educators of the past also learned that in designing a new building or when reconfiguring a building, they must look to design space to meet the demands of curricular offerings (U. S. Office of Education, 1925, 1933a, 1933b, 1947; Englehardt, 1934; U. S. Federal Security Agency, 1950; Sher, 1977). All of these strategies and responses are reasonable solutions today.

The ability to offer a good education centered on attracting and retaining quality teachers and on creating a varied curriculum to meet the needs of all children. Larger schools tended to take teachers from the smaller communities primarily because they offered better pay, better opportunities for advancement, and a smaller workload. To overcome this problem smaller schools and districts had to generate more funds for teacher pay and reduce the teacher workload created by there being too few teachers. Consolidation (reorganization and regionalization) helped to alleviate much of the financial stress (Koos, 1927; Cyr, 1937; Douglas, 1938; Conant, 1959, 1967). The pooling of fiscal resources allowed the smaller districts to increase their teacher pay and add additional incentives to attract teachers. Districts also shared teachers. This freed more resources for other needs within the school or district. By sharing teachers, schools could offer more classes and content without spending as much money (Briggs, Leonard, & Justman,
1950; Flanagan, Dailey, Shaycroft, Orr, & Goldberg, 1962; Holland & Baritelle, 1975). The more content offered, the more likely that a teacher could teach what she wanted to teach. The more teachers that the school had access to, the more likely that the class loads diminished. These strategies seem promising for addressing similar problems today.

Varying the curriculum produced better opportunities to address the needs of all children. The more qualified teachers the school had access to, the broader the curriculum could become. Creative scheduling assisted in developing more curricular offerings. For example, scheduling a class on a rotation so that it occurred every two or three quarters or semesters helped to offer more courses but did not require more teachers (Edmonson, Roemer, & Bacon, 1953; Educational Research Service, 1971b). The principal teaching courses also expanded course offerings without requiring more teachers (Horrall, 1922). Finally, another strategy for broadening the curricular offerings involved actively seeking teachers with multiple certifications (Langfitt, 1938, 1949; Romine, 1946). Therefore, a teacher could teach several subjects. All of these techniques are quite possible today.

Finally, accusations against large high schools stressed that these schools had factory-like conditions and impersonal, unfriendly environments. Today the trend is that small high schools are depicted as good and large high schools as bad. To address the problem of impersonal interactions, large high schools developed the use of homerooms where students met with the same teacher for their tenure in high school. The idea was that at least one adult in the building knew the student well (Maxwell & Kilzer, 1936; Elicker, 1964; Ovard, 1964). Another technique used was the creation of a school within a school. In essence, the division of the larger school into several smaller schools with its own staff helped to reduce the feeling of alienation. This strategy reduced the number of students in classes and reduced the number of students that a
teacher needed to know, hence making it possible for the staff to know the students (Monahan, 1965; Gores, 1966; Lindsay, 1982). The advent of houses divided the larger school into smaller units. This created small communities within the large school therefore, assisting the students with overcoming the overwhelming size of the school plant (Garinger, 1940; Monahan, 1965). Educators today could implement these techniques to overcome the impersonal nature of larger high schools.

Ultimately, the most significant implication of this study is that the uncovered information from the past pertaining to high school size is relevant to education researchers today. The concern of finding the optimal size for a high school has been around for over one hundred years. The issues of the past are still significant and should guide current school size research.

*Implications for Future Research*

Research on school size from 1900 to 1980 revealed many possibilities for future study. Notably, the identification of variables affecting school performance such as costs, teachers, curriculum offerings, extra-curriculum programs, adequacy of facilities and equipment, and teacher and student relationships (Dawson, 1934; Seyfert, 1937a; Brown, 1956; Menozzi, 1959; Wright, 1964; Stemncock, 1974) appear as reasonable topics for further study. Identifying variables presented the most difficulty to research in the past, as they were unable to disentangle the variables from the size of the school. Future research should find ways to isolate school size from other variables; until that happens advocates of small high schools cannot understand the impact of school size on student achievement.

Consolidation also deserves revisiting. The process of consolidation (regionalization or reorganization) did more than just the eliminate small schools (Conant, 1959; Krug, 1972; Angus
Centralized districts appeared as local boards and communities lost some of their control of the schools. The possibilities of power struggles existed as some boards refused to give up control. Yet, another aspect of the consolidation of schools was the need to transport students. In the earliest years, 1900-1930s, an apparent side effect involved the need to purchase buses and pay drivers and mechanics to maintain the vehicles, thus increasing local costs. Finally, another aspect of consolidation was the accusation that the combining of the schools negatively impacted community ties and identity as the local school closed and the students left for a facility that may have been thirty minutes distant (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Seyfert, 1937a; Sher & Tompkins, 1976). Future research could focus on the actual impact of the consolidation movement beyond its intended outcomes.

Additionally, the impact of school leadership on student achievement appeared as a topic for further research. In studying the topic of school size throughout the different decades, from 1900 to 1980, it became apparent that an aspect of school success depends heavily on the quality and focus of the principal (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Edmonson, Roemer, & Bacon, 1953; Stemnock, 1974). Although typically only noted in passing, this key variable could have more affect on a school than size or any other factor.

Finally, the migration of people from urban to rural to suburban communities greatly influences the high school. The ebb and flow of communities reduces or increases the financial resources for a school and its districts (Havighurst, 1968; Havighurst & Levine, 1968, 1971). Throughout the literature and the research, educators have spoken of large schools stealing teachers from the smaller schools for greater pay and benefits (Jessup & Coffman, 1914; Dawson, 1934; Sher & Tompkins, 1976). These migration patterns of families and of staff continue today. Rural schools continually find it difficult to hire the highest qualified teachers, as
do many urban schools. Competition from schools with more resources lures staff and families continuously. In the current, political environment of high stakes testing many schools have student populations that are characterized by extreme poverty and a regression of academic skills as many families leave to find schools with greater wealth.
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