

**A PROPOSED MODEL  
FOR A  
COUNTY FEDERATION OF  
SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

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**Report of the  
MONROE COUNTY EDUCATIONAL  
PLANNING COMMITTEE<sup>o</sup>**

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**AUGUST 1971**

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Committee



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Staff Assistance From:

Rochester Center for Governmental  
and Community Research

Genesee Valley School Development Association

Genesee Valley Regional Education Center

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on the Regional Demonstration School Task Force. Mr. Harry Thompson, Urban Education Planning Office, Genesee Valley Regional Education Center, Mr. Norman Gross, Administrator, ESEA, Title I and Urban Suburban Transfer Program, Rochester City School District, served on the Task Force on Reducing Racial Isolation.

A special debt is owed to the chairmen of the task forces: Robert Greis, New York State Office of General Services, Chairman of the Transportation Task Force; Dr. John W. Bennion, Superintendent, Brighton School District, Chairman of Task Force on Reducing Racial Isolation; Reverend Daniel Brent, Superintendent of Schools, Diocese of Rochester, Chairman of Task Force on Regional Demonstration School; and Craig M. Smith, Chairman of the Model Task Force and Friedrich J. Grasberger, Chairman of the Finance Task Force, both of the Rochester Center for Governmental and Community Research.

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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND

#### PERSPECTIVE

A 1969 report, Target: The Three E's, on the organizational and financial structure of public education in Monroe County stated that the educational system failed to provide fiscal equity across school districts, failed to provide equal educational opportunity for all children in the county, and failed to provide an efficient organizational structure. To quote the report:

"There is an almost complete absence of overall planning, research and evaluation with reference to areawide needs and services. There are serious gaps in services available and obstacles to full enjoyment of areawide services by all school districts within the county. Perhaps most serious of all is the lack of an effective communication mechanism and the lack of any institutionalized concern, either on the state or local level, for the objectives of metropolitan cooperation in education."<sup>1</sup>

The potential for interaction and action on common problems by the 18 autonomous school districts of the county and the Catholic Diocese existed. Many of the school districts recognized both the importance of local initiative and effort and of voluntary cooperative action. The school board presidents and chief school officers of the City of Rochester and of the 17 other Monroe County school districts and the Catholic Diocese of Rochester have met monthly for more than four years. A number of common educational problems and issues have been identified and discussed in this forum. The dialogue between these representatives generated ideas and plans

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<sup>1</sup>The Rochester Center for Governmental and Community Research (formerly Rochester Bureau of Municipal Research), Target: The Three E's, 1969, p. 5.

for cooperative action toward solving the complex interrelated problems of the area. But effective planning and implementation of such cooperation depends upon the development of a legal mechanism which can analyze information, utilize joint resources, utilize state and areawide funds, and implement agreed-upon programs.

Concurrent with the deliberations of the Monroe County group of educators, the New York State Education Department was also considering metropolitan and regional planning, and in the Spring of 1970, placed a high priority on supporting local efforts directed toward this end. On May 1, Associate Commissioner Stanley L. Raub approved an application submitted by the Wheatland-Chili Central School District to support a comprehensive metropolitan educational planning project for Rochester-Monroe County Schools. The Genesee Valley School Development Association had the responsibility of facilitating all operational components of the project.

It is against such a background that in 1970, as part of the project, the Monroe County Educational Planning Committee was formed and task forces created under it. The Planning Committee consisted of private and public school administrators. This voluntary group has met regularly bi-monthly and on numerous special occasions to plan and discuss the planning efforts of other agencies, design and review the process of its task forces, and consider alternative planning models and processes.

The Committee recognized the need for a far more representative and formal structure and consequently engaged in joint task force effort with the Rochester Center for Governmental and Community Research, Inc.,

for the design and development of a tentative educational planning and organizational model for Monroe County. This Model Task Force was charged with the responsibility to evaluate various areawide approaches to educational planning and to recommend the approach which would be the most effective, practical, and appropriate to the particular needs, problems and unique concerns of the Monroe County metropolitan area.

The task force studied areawide approaches in other cities, counties, and metropolitan areas, including an in-depth review of studies previously conducted in this field by task force member W. T. Lowe.<sup>1</sup> Particular attention was given to the experiences of Nashville-Davidson County, Tennessee; Hartford, Connecticut; Nassau County BOCES; and Metropolitan Toronto. Of these, special emphasis was placed on Toronto due to similarities between problems of Monroe County and pre-Metro Toronto. Accordingly, members of the task force and Research Center staff spent two days on location investigating the Metro Toronto approach to educational planning and financing. Closer to home, BOCES-type services in Monroe County were reviewed, and the potential of BOCES as a base around which to build an educational planning model was evaluated. Additional areawide approaches were discussed with New York State legislative committees and members of their research staffs, officials of the New York State Department of Education, and local education leaders.

The task force adopted as its basic objective the design of an area-

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<sup>1</sup>William T. Lowe, Joan Roos Egner and Frederick H. Stutz, Strategies for Metropolitan Cooperation in Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Project No. 9B129, Grant No. OEG-2-700010 (508), January, 1971; and J. R. Egner, W. T. Lowe and F. H. Stutz, Regional Educational Development in New York State, a Project Report submitted to the New York State Education Department, May, 1970.

wide body, responsive and responsible to local school districts, which would be able to provide leadership, direction, and a means to achieve effective areawide educational planning, financing, decision-making, program provision, and utilization of educational resources. *The continuing autonomy of local school boards and their control over basic educational functions was emphasized as the context within which planning and financing of areawide educational functions should exist.*

To supplement the work of the Model Task Force, the Educational Planning Committee also established a Finance Task Force. The task force--made up of all members of the Planning Committee, with the research also performed by the Center for Governmental and Community Research--recognized that any model for effective areawide educational planning required a new fiscal approach which would provide an areawide source of educational financing for areawide services and also help to reduce or eliminate diseconomies of scale and inequitable financial burdens. Emphasis was placed on the need to reduce reliance on the property tax for educational financing. It was recognized that these fiscal problems must be approached on an areawide basis if a viable solution is to be reached for all school districts.

The importance of a review of educational financing was underlined by the results of a survey of local school board members conducted by the Planning Committee. The survey indicated that the board members gave school finance the highest priority for countywide planning efforts.

Three other task forces were created to study approaches to other

problems thought to be important by the Planning Committee. The Transportation Task Force was charged with the responsibility of conducting a feasibility study on the effect of metropolitan approaches to school transportation problems. The major objective of the task force was to evaluate present interdistrict school busing techniques and identify potential means of improving service and reducing costs.

A Demonstration School Task Force was created to examine the possible establishment of a cooperative effort in developing and disseminating innovative teaching approaches. The remaining task force created by the Planning Committee was the Task Force on Reducing Racial Isolation, which was primarily concerned with increasing support for the continuation and possible expansion of the urban-suburban pupil busing program as a model for helping to reduce racial isolation between the city and surrounding suburban communities.

#### APPLICABLE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATION

Pertinent state legislation was reviewed in order to determine legal bases and restrictions, and to determine where revisions would be necessary to implement the proposals of the task forces.

Any discussion of state legislation affecting areawide educational planning in metropolitan areas must immediately recognize that metropolitan planning is severely weakened by the exclusion of large cities from the intent of Article 40 of the Education Law. This reflects a historical emphasis on the need to centralize and strengthen the rural school district system -- a very justifiable but somewhat limited goal which has failed to adjust to

increasing urban-suburban disparities and problems in the metropolitan areas. The 1948 legislation, which authorizes creation of Intermediate School Districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services as an interim measure, has been implemented in a manner which restricts the law to "non-city" school districts. The declaration of policy of the legislation, as amended in 1953, states:

"In order to improve educational opportunities in rural areas by overcoming the handicaps in rural education that arise from sparsity of population and from other causes and to provide an organization that will enable local school districts to combine their resources for the effective and economic provision of educational services, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the state that present school districts, *except city school districts*, cooperate in order that additional services not now feasible or available may be provided for the children of the community."<sup>1</sup>

The BOCES section of the law has since been amended several times so that it includes all city school districts, except those having a population of 125,000 or more. The sections of the law authorizing the Intermediate Districts do not exclude cities, but have never been implemented.

The exclusion of the cities over 125,000 population prevents them from becoming members of BOCES districts and leads to financial inequities inherent in this exclusion. Although these city school districts are large enough to achieve economies of scale without joining with other districts, their socio-economic character creates a proportionately greater demand for special educational services, and no financial incentive is offered the districts by the state to provide these services. In fact, the effect of the property tax limit on these same cities creates a disincentive

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<sup>1</sup>Laws of New York, 1948, Chapter 861, as amended 1953, Chapter 747. Italics added.