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A Study of the Perceptions of School Administrators Regarding the Current Condition of Public Schools in Illinois South of I-80

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A Study of the Perceptions of School Administrators

Regarding the Current Condition of

Public Schools in Illinois South of I-80

BY

Myrtle A. Carey 12-7-50

FIELD EXPERIENCE

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**SPECIALIST IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS**

1997

**I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS FIELD EXPERIENCE BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE**

October 23, 1997
DATE

October 23, 1997
DATE

ADVISOR 0

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Abstract

The intent of the study was to collect data concerning the perceptions of Illinois public school administrators in districts south of Interstate 80 in the following areas:

- 1. Current condition of educational facilities.**
- 2. Funding sources available for renovation of facilities.**
- 3. Strategies of the district to address deterioration of school buildings.**
- 4. The impact of the current building conditions on the educational process.**

Results were obtained through the use of a questionnaire sent to 170 administrators who were responsible for educational structures. One hundred and twenty-one administrators returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 71%. Respondents indicated that their school buildings were in need of major renovations in the following areas: (a) instructional space--84%; (b) plumbing--73%; (c) athletic space, air flow and air conditioning--72%; (d) lighting--70%; (e) consistent heating--65%; and (f) adequate wiring--59%.

Conclusions drawn from the results of the study follow:

- 1. A majority of the administrators answering the questionnaire were housed in facilities that were from 50 to 90 years old. This gave the respondents a valid basis for their opinions in evaluating the relationship between the age of the structure and maintenance planning needed to keep the facilities in good working condition.**
- 2. Districts were complying with Illinois guidelines to maintain safe facilities by having the buildings inspected on a yearly basis.**

3. The Regional Offices of Education were available to assist in understanding areas of maintenance deficiencies as set by Illinois guidelines.

4. Administrators' presence at the yearly inspections showed that they were actively maintaining a working knowledge of the condition of the facilities.

5. Administrators needed to build a foundation of understanding for their district concerning the condition of the facilities and the need for renovation or replacement.

6. School board members were concerned about the conditions of the buildings and did attempt to keep themselves informed.

The recommendations of the researcher were that Illinois school administrators should focus on the following areas:

1. Educate the public concerning the real condition of their educational structures.

2. Demand that state legislators set aside monies for educational facilities that could not be used for mandated educational programs.

3. Campaign for and support a change in the tax structure that funds the public educational system through increased sales taxes, lottery funds or licensing of gambling establishments.

4. Establish a building watch program that has the same credibility as the budgetary watch program currently in place in Illinois.

The field experience and the degree are now completed, but not without a great deal of support from some very special people. To these people I want to express my deepest gratitude for your support as I completed this project.

Dr. Freddie Banks, you gave me the encouragement to look for a topic that I could value even when the project lost its' excitement. You made sure that I knew what I wanted to learn and why. This understanding was an important anchor throughout this process. Thank you for making sure it was in place from the beginning.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

The intent of the study was to collect data concerning the perceptions of Illinois public school administrators in districts south of Interstate 80 in the following areas:

- 1. Current condition of educational facilities.**
- 2. Funding sources available for renovation of facilities.**
- 3. Strategies of the district to address deterioration of school buildings.**
- 4. The impact of the current building conditions on the educational process.**

Educational journals such as The American School Board Journal have provided information concerning problems with the facilities throughout the United States, but limited information is available concerning Illinois school administrators' perceptions on the current condition of educational facilities, funding for new or updated facilities, and strategies to address the deterioration of the school buildings.

After reviewing the evaluation of the educational facilities in the United States and Illinois developed by the General Accounting Office, this researcher was drawn to focus on the current need in the Charleston Community Unit School District No. 1, Charleston, Illinois. Life safety questionnaires that were completed two years ago by a representative of the regional superintendent's office and the school building administrators resulted in a proposal of \$15.5 million in additional building repairs. The list included roofing, plumbing, structural improvements, lighting and many more major building improvements to provide a safe educational

environment for the students of Charleston, Illinois (J. McNary, personal communication, October 2, 1996). In 1995, the General Accounting Office reviewed research contained in the Facilities Inventory Report of 1990 and determined that 85% of all school facilities in Illinois were in need of major repair (GAO, 1995). In an update of the 1995 General Accounting Office Report, published by the federal government in 1996, it was found that the need to provide major repairs to current school facilities in Illinois had risen to 89%. The focus of this report was on the need for facilities to update space, heating, air conditioning and wiring (GAO, 1996).

It was evident from a cursory examination of the educational structures of the Charleston Community Unit School District No. 1 by the researcher that they were aging and were significantly outdated for use with new technology and new programs of instruction. The current conditions of plumbing, wiring and air flow quality within the aging structures were proving to be a constant drain on the district maintenance fund. The Charleston School District was also experiencing problems with space utilization based on an increased student population (T. Everett, personal communication, September 24, 1996). A study of the other structures within the region provided information concerning similar problems with aging structures, plumbing, wiring, and space utilization (J. McNary, personal communication, October 2, 1996).

Statement of the Problem

With the use of descriptive statistics, the researcher attempted to ascertain the perceptions of school administrators concerning the current building conditions,

intent for revitalization of buildings, and funding possibilities through analysis of the results of a questionnaire sent to 170 administrators within Illinois. The region surveyed encompassed approximately 2,600 school buildings and 1,900 school administrators.

The focus of the sample group was school principals, some of whom were also serving as district superintendents. The intent of this study was to collect data concerning the perceptions of school administrators responsible for the educational structures in various districts throughout Illinois. Compilation of this information should lead to a greater understanding of the problems with current structures that are shared by many districts throughout the region.

It was the goal of this study to provide information about the administrators' perceived needs of the local districts for fundamental improvements on the current educational structures. It was further expected that the data collected could be used by districts to validate their need with any governmental agency that was processing monies for the region.

The background information needed for an adequate study of the structures used for educational facilities required a brief review of reports filed yearly with the Illinois Superintendents of Regional Offices of Education. This review provided a background of the past schedules of evaluations, problems that were documented, and the current requirements for compliance with safety issues and procedures.

Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the four research questions about the perceptions of school administrators concerning the educational structures in Illinois

south of I-80. The questionnaire items that provided data to answer each research question are listed in parentheses after the research question.

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the deterioration of the current Illinois school structures used for attendance centers south of I-80, as perceived by public school administrators? (Questions 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 25, and 30 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 2: What method is used by each district to update its facilities? (Questions 13, 14, 21, 22, and 27 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 3: What funding sources are available for updating current facilities? (Questions 18, 23, and 24 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 4: What is the impact of the current building conditions on the educational process, as perceived by public school administrators? (Questions 26, 28, and 29 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Assumptions

This study included the following assumptions:

1. All districts complied with the ten year inspection cycles for continued student attendance (Braun, 1996).
2. Administrators were aware of the procedures necessary to report all maintenance problems to the district superintendent for evaluation.
3. Superintendents were aware of procedures to contact the Regional Office of Education for assistance in requesting health and life safety reviews.

4. Regional superintendents evaluated the buildings on a yearly basis as prescribed by law.

Limitations

This study was conducted within the region south of I-80 in Illinois. The study was based solely on the random sampling of administrators in school districts within the stated region. This region encompassed approximately 2,600 school buildings and 1,900 school administrators.

Delimitations

Data were analyzed as “a whole” (aggregate) rather than being disaggregated by position and gender.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were used to establish clarity within the study.

Annual inspection process. The process by which a qualified inspector sent by the Regional Office of Education completes an annual inspection of the region’s school facilities.

Door closures. Devices attached to door frames to assure closing of the doors safely. Door closures are required on virtually all doors that need to have a fire resistance rating of 30 minutes or more.

Electrical and light systems. All equipment, wiring and appliances which are required to be maintained in a safe and approved manner. Where it is found that the electrical system in a structure constitutes a hazard to the occupants or the structure by reason of inadequate service, improper fusing, insufficient outlets, improper wiring or installation, deterioration or damage, or similar reasons, the

defects shall be required to be corrected to eliminate the hazard.

Health and life safety. The evaluation of facilities to determine whether they are safe for occupancy of students and the educational staff.

Plumbing. Apparatus (pipes and fixtures) concerned with the distribution and use of water in a building. All plumbing fixtures shall be properly installed and maintained in good working order and kept free from obstructions, leaks and defects and be capable of performing the functions for which such plumbing fixtures were designed.

Perception. The physical sensation interpreted in the light of experience; a mental image: concept. (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1996).

School building. Any structure suitable for use as a classroom, including a school facility such as a laboratory, library, school eating facility, or facility used for the preparation of food. This definition includes any gymnasium or other facility that was specially designed for athletic or recreational activities or for an academic course in physical education. It also includes any facility used for instruction or housing of students or for the administration of educational or research programs.

Ventilation. The circulation of fresh air throughout the facility. Contaminants in the breathing atmosphere must be exhausted to the outdoors according to the mechanical code for all public school buildings. Mechanical ventilation shall conform to the requirements of the mechanical code.

Chapter 2

Rationale, Related Literature, and Research

Rationale

When viewing public school structures from the outside, it may seem that the buildings are sturdy and useable. However, this does not mean that the structures are in suitable condition for attendance centers. Pearson (1997) stated that, thanks to state law mandating health and safety standards in public schools, few districts face life-or-death threats to students. The real threat is out-of-control costs and out-of-date buildings. Therefore, the need to ascertain the current condition of public school buildings in Illinois was a viable research topic.

Literature and Research Reviewed

Many of the current educational facilities in Illinois were built during an age of renewal throughout the country. It was the beginning of the Baby Boomer Era, the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was the close of the Korean Conflict and the time of a general belief that our country was headed to a new era. It was the rudimentary beginning of the age of technology that forced educational systems to develop new educational programs (Worthen, 1987).

The structures built during the early phases of the public education era of the 1940s were intended to last from 50 to 100 years. The idea was to build for a lifetime. The classrooms were designed for the current population with little perspective that the population would grow rapidly.

In the early 1970s, rapidly changing educational goals led architects to submit plans for buildings that addressed the projected needs of districts for the

next 20 to 30 years. It was evident that the population and needs of the districts were changing rapidly and conservation measures were the primary concerns of many school boards. The intent of school boards was to address the immediate need and to allow districts time to develop recommendations for future building changes. The result of this phenomenon was all of the structures would need repair or renovations at approximately the same time--2000 (General Accounting Office [GAO], 1995).

The public structures used for the educational systems were fundamentally the same in the beginning. As trends in building changed, so did the style and materials used in the school buildings. An example of this change was school building roofs. In the 1940s, the roofs were made to last at least 30 years. As Delsas and Griffis (1995) explained, the change in the role of roof from a moisture barrier to a heat containment device has caused a loss in the life expectancy of the roof. Roof deck insulation forced the heat to build up in the membrane of the roof materials and it would then split, blister and age early. Energy was conserved, but the roof leaked (Delsas & Griffis, 1995).

As elements of life changed in the 1950s through the 1980s, they have changed in the 1990s. The structures that were adequate to house students in previous years are now grossly out of date. It was evident in the 1995 GAO Report that the need for space accommodation would increase by 20% between 1990 and 2004 (GAO, 1995). The classrooms were designed with the intent of housing 20-25 students. Today, many of those classrooms are used to address the educational needs of 30-35 students. The Charleston School District, for example, has projected

a minimum of a 5% increase in student enrollment for the 1997-98 school year. It also projected an additional 2% to 5% increase in enrollment for the 1998-1999 school year (J. McNary, personal communication, October 2, 1996). This projection coincides with the student enrollment projection of the 1996 General Accounting Office study. The GAO statistics revealed that by the year 2005 there will be a need to serve four million more students in the public school system than were enrolled in 1996 (Rotherham, 1996).

A comprehensive study of school facilities was completed by the General Accounting Office between March 1995 and May 1996. The data indicated that the Department of Education was the last governmental agency that had assessed the condition of the nation's school facilities in 1965. The Department of Education found that almost one half of the nation's schools had at least one major defect such as structural soundness (General Accounting Office [GAO], 1996). The General Accounting Office Report was the most comprehensive analysis of the nation's schools that the United States government had instituted in the previous 30 years. The focus of the General Accounting Office investigation was in three general areas:

1. The number of students attending schools with inadequate conditions.
2. The condition of the schools.
3. The amount of funding needed to repair or upgrade the current facilities (GAO, 1996).

The General Accounting Office Report provided a wealth of information. The three previously mentioned general areas managed to provide data in the following seven more expansive areas:

1. It was determined that the condition of the schools, the funding needed to repair or upgrade the facilities, and the number of students attending the schools with inadequate conditions all differed. This difference was characterized by location, community type, percentage of minority and disadvantaged students, and the school level and size.

2. The study also showed that the number of schools and states needing to upgrade conditions within the schools varied widely.

3. The schools' environmental and physical conditions showed a wide variance by region, states, community type, percentage of minority and poor students served and school type and level.

4. The study indicated that the largest percentages of schools that had inadequate environmental and physical conditions were in the western United States and in central cities that served minority and poor students.

5. The financial estimate to meet the need to upgrade the educational structures was determined to be about \$112 billion. This averaged approximately \$1.7 million per school.

6. Administrators of the individual schools reported that they would require approximately \$9.2 billion over the next three years simply to comply with federally mandated upgrades of educational structures.

7. The final and most pronounced finding of this report was that approximately one quarter to one third of the nation's students attended school districts with at least one inadequate building, and schools with at least one inadequate building feature and at least one unsatisfactory environmental condition

(GAO, 1996).

This information, that was developed by the General Accounting Office, was used to support the initiative presented by President Bill Clinton. He stated that he knew that the study presented a bleak picture of the facilities that house the nation's students. He also indicated his belief that students could not concentrate on the information being presented if the buildings where they were receiving instruction were falling down around them. He further proposed that the United States government provide federal support in the amount of \$20 billion for school construction projects over the next four years. This money would be used to address the health and life safety issues within the school districts or to upgrade facilities to meet the demands of the technological age of the 21st century (Holmes, 1996).

President Clinton's proposal indicated that the money could be used for a number of key areas. Following are key highlights of Clinton's proposal:

- 1. Fixing leaky roofs, crumbling walls, inadequate plumbing, poor ventilation, heating and lighting problems were the first priority in this initiative.**
- 2. Funding for increased safety and security within the public school buildings was tantamount to providing a safe learning environment.**
- 3. Improving the access for the disabled was covered by the American Disability Act, but was currently needing more subsidy by the federal government. Individual states were finding the compliance laws to be a major problem.**
- 4. It was essential that the improvements address the need for conservation of natural resources. Energy efficiency must be a key concern in any restructuring**

plan.

5. The drive for energy efficient buildings in the 1970s had caused many buildings to have a problem with air quality that must be fixed in the 1990s.

6. Technology was essential for the 21st century. and the changes required to address this need must be supported by this initiative.

7. Finally, new school buildings were needed by a vast number of districts to replace those constructed in the 1950s and earlier (“Summary of President Clinton’s Initiative”, 1996; Holmes, 1996).

As the information provided by the General Accounting Office was reviewed, it was essential to determine what elements contributed to the current state of the educational facilities. Marcus (1995) presented some insight into the problem of dilapidating educational structures when he stated that the main reason for the status of the public school buildings was deferred maintenance. Marcus indicated that the federal government was the culprit in the deplorable conditions of the nation’s educational facilities. He stated that the federal government had mandated so many instructional changes without funding them that the building maintenance monies were redirected to cover the mandates. The results of these mandates were the falling ceilings and walls.

It is understood that energy conservation must be considered in all facilities. The problem was that one type of saving often created a negative effect in another area. Maintenance of the entire building was essential to sound fiscal action. It was the balance of the energy-saving techniques with the projected result that did create the most advantageous situation for individuals. This was where the term

“retrofitting” emerged. This was the process of replacing existing equipment with a higher level of energy-efficient materials (Cray, 1993).

If the government was attempting to subsidize the upgrade, the major question would not necessarily be who most needed the money, but who could skillfully manage the renovation process. As the need to update and build facilities for the public school system was evaluated, it was essential to consider the processes used, the persons who would oversee the process, and the most compelling needs of the districts as a whole (Cray, 1993).

The building construction personnel for any type of work on the public schools must be individuals who understand the ideas of the district as they are relayed by the architect. The district must determine who is best suited for this task. DuBray (1993) felt that any district should employ a construction manager to work with the district. He felt that a construction manager would be the most economical personnel to employ for any major construction.

Futral (1993) suggested that the principal was a key player in this initiative. The principal was the educational leader for the individual building and must project the mission of the educational system. Futral also indicated that the principal was key to presenting the needs of the students, teachers, staff and community. The principal was the resource person who could best advise the architect on what worked best within district and whether the district was looking to change the building or just retrofitting the school for technology.

During the process of collecting data for this study, several articles began to appear in local newspapers indicating the need for funding for the Illinois school

system. The articles all had a central theme of attempting to find funding for school facilities that did not require an increase in property taxes. One article in the Charleston Times Courier indicated that Illinois legislators were attempting to once again use gambling sources as a funding source for education. The plan was to allow cities to own gambling establishments and split the gain with the State. It also indicated that this would be the beginning of the \$10 billion school bond construction program (“Big Gamble,” 1997). The following week, another article indicated that the battle between the political parties focused on how the funds would be developed to help all districts without increasing property taxes. Once again, the proposal was for dollars gained from gambling revenues to be dedicated to schools and specifically \$1 billion to school construction programs for all districts (“Leading GOP Lawmaker,” 1997).

On April 14, 1997, a headline in the Charleston Times Courier was also related to the funding of the school systems in Illinois. This time the article centered on the governor’s proposal to have a state income tax increase that would generate \$1.9 billion. The proposal then stated that it would lower state property taxes by \$1.5 billion. This was seen as an attempt at developing an equitable plan for the citizens of Illinois to pay for their deteriorating school systems (“Edgar in TV Blitz,” 1997). Two days later, House Speaker Michael Madigan reiterated the need for funding of the school facilities and embraced Governor Edgar’s proposal (“Republicans Take Madigan,” 1997).

The end of the week brought news that the Illinois House had passed a bill for \$1 billion to renovate “crumbling buildings.” The measure was presented by

Representative Philip Novak, Democrat from Bradley, Illinois. The proposal passed 99-18 and established a plan for the state to borrow the \$1 billion. The House also unanimously passed a bill that would authorize \$360 million in bonds for repairing schools. The final proposal reported in this article tied the funding of all projects to gambling taxes that Illinois would collect through newly established gambling enterprises (“Legislators propose up to \$1 billion,” 1997).

On May 23, 1997, another school district was cited in the Charleston Times Courier concerning districts with dilapidated buildings. This time it was an article discussing the next steps to be taken by the Martinsville district to bring its buildings into compliance for the 1997-98 school year. The article revealed that the district had just completed a regularly scheduled 10-year inspection by its architectural firm. The buildings registered a violation cost of nearly \$115,600. These violations were deemed repairable with life safety monies (Hunt, 1997).

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

General Design

This chapter describes the methods and procedures that were used to gather and analyze the data required to answer the research questions. Questionnaire items, which provided data to answer research questions are indicated in parenthesis at the end of each research question.

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the deterioration of the current Illinois school structures used for attendance centers south of I-80 as perceived by public school administrators? (Questions 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 25, and 30 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 2: What method is used by each district to update its facilities? (Questions 13, 14, 21, 22, and 27 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 3: What funding sources are available for updating current facilities? (Questions 18, 23, and 24 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 4: What is the impact of the current building conditions on the educational process, as perceived by public school administrators? (Questions 26, 28, and 29 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Sample and Population

The questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 170 of the 1,900 principals within Illinois. These individuals represented 82 separate counties and 118 districts

south of I-80 in Illinois. At least one administrator from each county was randomly selected from a directory of public school administrators for Illinois. Additional administrators were randomly selected from counties that had more than one school district. The names and addresses for the study were obtained from a directory of administrators for Illinois (1997 DIRPRO Directory of Illinois Schools, 1997).

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Information for this study was obtained from a questionnaire developed by the researcher that was sent to a random sample of school administrators within Illinois regarding their perceptions of their educational facilities (see Appendix A). Included in each questionnaire packet was a cover letter (see Appendix B) explaining the administrator's role in this study.

The region included in this study encompassed approximately 2,600 school buildings and 1,900 school administrators. The focus of the sample group was school principals, some of whom were also district superintendents. The intent of the study was to review the perceptions of 170 administrators responsible for the educational structures in various districts throughout Illinois.

The questionnaire contained both qualitative and quantitative items. Considering the projected research questions, basic information was requested from the participants. This information was separated into five distinct categories. The first question asked respondents to identify their geographic locations by county. Questions two through ten addressed demographics. This was to elicit the various enrollment totals and faculty population and general information regarding the gender of the administrator, the exact position held by this individual, number of

years in the position, and the highest level of education this person had acquired.

The questionnaire garnered information from the respondents for each of the four research questions in the following manner:

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the deterioration of the current Illinois school structures used for attendance centers south of I-80, as perceived by public school administrators? Questions 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, and 30 requested information concerning the building age, additions to the facility, inspection practices and the result of those inspections (see Appendix A).

Research Question 2: What method is used by each district to update its facilities? Questions 13, 14, 21, 22, and 27 asked for information concerning the position of the person responsible for reviewing the building needs of the district and whether there was an established plan by the district to cover building structural needs (see Appendix A).

Research Question 3: What funding sources are available for updating current facilities? Questions 18, 23, and 24 addressed information concerning the funding through current tax rate, tax rate increases and future plans established by the district to cover the educational needs of the district (see Appendix A).

Research Question 4: What is the impact of the current building conditions on the educational process, as perceived by public school administrators? The final focus covered by the questionnaire was that of administrative perceptions. Administrative perceptions elicited concerned school board involvement, community needs, and effect on student achievement. This last part of the questionnaire contained a combination of open- and close-ended items concerning

general demographic type of information. Questions 26, 27, 28, and 29 required simple selection of categories such as 0-5 years, yes or no, 1900-1920 or fill in the necessary tax rate (see Appendix A).

Qualitative data included the administrators' perceptions of the need for improvements, the need for school board involvement and the impact of a maintenance plan to prevent deterioration of facilities. The final question of the School Facilities Questionnaire, item 30, contained a continuum scale with excellent, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory and not applicable choices. This item of the questionnaire proved to be a source of information for research question numbers one and four. The questionnaire included a total of 30 questions with multiple answers to eight questions (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire was field tested in an Eastern Illinois University graduate class in educational administration before the actual mailing. The pilot questionnaire was modified as a result of comments from students in that class. The changes included removal of narrative sections that were converted to choice answers that would be easier to tabulate. Narrative sections were retained in seven of the questions to allow the respondents to express their perceptions of their district needs.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the content that was retrieved from the completed questionnaires. The statistics were compiled as frequencies and percentages. Tables were developed to enhance the understanding of the data. Comments from the respondents were compiled and included in

appendices.

All data collected in this study were compiled and analyzed by the author using Microsoft Access Data bases and Excel spreadsheets.

Chapter 4

Results of the Study

Overview

The analysis of the data for each research question is presented in tables. The analysis of the research encompassed demographic data and the four research questions for this study.

Illinois is comprised of 102 counties. It was the intent of the researcher to contact 170 administrators in public school districts south of I-80 that encompassed approximately 82 of those counties. Results were received from 121 of the 170 administrators for a response rate of 71%. All response percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

Results of Demographics

The information compiled from the questionnaires concerning the demographics of the school districts are presented in the following tables.

Table 1 presents the demographic data collected from questions three and five of the questionnaire about gender. The data showed that 79% of the respondents were male and primarily in the position of principals. The responses of male principals comprised 85% of the information received concerning the district facilities. It was further noted that only 10% of the respondents held both principalship and superintendency positions. Of this population, only four females were responsible for the district and local school facility.

The demographic information concerning educational background is presented in Table 2. Seventy-two percent of the administrators indicated that their

Table 1**Position and Gender of Respondents**

Position	Number	Percentage	Male	Female
Principal	103	85%	79	24
Superintendent	18	15%	14	4

Note. n=121**Table 2****Highest Degree Acquired by Respondents**

Degree	Number	Percentage
Masters	87	72%
Specialist	22	18%
Ph.D.	12	10%

Note. n=121

highest held degree was the master's degree required by state law for principals.

The remaining 28% of the respondents had earned a specialist or doctorate.

Annotations concerning the population size of the districts represented are found in Table 3. The questionnaires revealed that the populations within the respondents' school districts were predominately rural and suburban in nature. Of the 121 respondents to the questionnaire, 55% presented their district as having a

population in the rural category of 0-1,000 students, and 43% fell into the category of 1,001-9,999 students. Demographic data concerning district and school enrollment, faculty population and non certified staff population were found not to be relevant to the study; therefore they are not presented.

Table 3

Population Size of School Districts

Type	Number	Percentage
Rural (0-1,000)	67	55%
Suburban (1,001-9,999)	51	43%
Urban (10,000-20,000)	3	2%

Note. n=121

Table 4 presents the data concerning district longevity of the administrators that responded to the questionnaire. Of the 121 respondents, their tenure in administrative positions was varied. It was not surprising to find some of the individuals in the suburban areas to have had an established tenure of more than 11 years. Longevity of administrative service showed a majority of the principals and superintendents were in the mid range of years of service (4-10 years).

Results of Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the deterioration of the current Illinois school structures used for attendance centers south of I-80, as perceived by public school administrators?

Table 4**Years of Experience of Current School Administrators**

Years of Experience	Number	Percentage
0-3	32	26%
4-6	30	25%
7-10	37	31%
11-15	13	11%
16+	9	7%

Note. n=121

Tables 5 and 6 present the data related to the age of the structures used as attendance centers. More specifically, Table 5 indicates the time span when the school buildings of the respondents were built. Ninety percent of the original structures were built prior to 1961.

As indicated in Table 6, a thirty-six year time frame of 1961 through 1997 reveals an influx of structural additions to the school buildings. Approximately 54% of the respondent districts experienced an addition to their buildings during those years.

Table 7 indicates that 65% of the respondents reported school building roofs to be in satisfactory condition. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that building roofs were in good or excellent condition, while only 8% reported unsatisfactory roofs.

Table 8 indicates the administrators' assessment of their buildings' current

Table 5**Dates Original School Buildings Were Built**

Year	Number	Percentage
Pre 1900	6	5%
1900-1920	28	23%
1921-1940	35	29%
1941-1960	39	33%
1961-1980	9	7%
1981-1997	4	3%

Note. n=121

wiring. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents noted that building wiring was unsatisfactory.

One of the major areas for concern of the respondents was the plumbing within their facilities. This information is presented in Table 9. Only 27% of the respondents gave a satisfactory or better rating to this aspect of their facilities. Concern for this is noted in the responses in which administrators were asked to prioritize the areas that were in the greatest need of attention within each building (see Appendix C).

Air conditioning and air quality are two major concerns for a school facility. In Tables 10 and 11, the assessment of these two areas is presented. Both areas tabulated with similar results. Seventy-two percent of the respondents rated the air

Table 6**Dates Additions Were Made to Current Educational Structure**

Year	Number	Percentage
1950-1960	9	7%
1961-1970	17	14%
1971-1980	20	17%
1981-1990	12	10%
1991-1997	16	13%
No response	47	39%

Note. $n=121$ **Table 7****Current Condition of the School Building's Roof**

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	28	23%
Good	5	4%
Satisfactory	78	65%
Unsatisfactory	10	8%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. $n=121$

Table 8**Current Condition of the School Building's Wiring**

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	14	11%
Good	8	7%
Satisfactory	28	23%
Unsatisfactory	71	59%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. n=121**Table 9****Current Condition of the School Building's Plumbing**

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	14	11%
Good	6	5%
Satisfactory	14	11%
Unsatisfactory	89	73%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. n=121**conditioning and air flow of buildings as unsatisfactory.**

Table 10

Current Condition of the School Building's Air Conditioning

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	11	9%
Good	6	5%
Satisfactory	6	5%
Unsatisfactory	87	72%
Not Applicable	11	9%

Note. n=121

Table 11

Current Condition of the School Building's Air Flow

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	8	7%
Good	11	9%
Satisfactory	8	7%
Unsatisfactory	87	72%
Not Applicable	6	5%

Note. n=121

Assessment of adequate instructional space available within the school

building was rated as one of the least satisfactory elements of the questionnaire. As indicated in Table 12, only 16% of the respondents rated this feature as satisfactory or better.

Table 12

Current Condition of the School Building's Instructional Space

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	3	2%
Good	5	4%
Satisfactory	12	10%
Unsatisfactory	101	84%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. n=121

Table 13 denotes the evaluation of the adequacy of athletic space within the school building. This aspect of the school building fared only slightly better than the instructional space with 28% of the respondents indicating that athletic space was satisfactory, good, or excellent.

The next areas of evaluation by the respondents were interior and exterior walls. As shown in Tables 14 and 15, only 2% of the respondents responded that interior walls were unsatisfactory, and only 4% reported that exterior walls were unsatisfactory.

The questionnaire asked administrators to assess the condition of the lighting

Table 13**Current Condition of the School Building's Athletic Space**

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	3	2%
Good	9	7%
Satisfactory	23	19%
Unsatisfactory	86	72%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. n=121**Table 14****Current Condition of the School Building's Interior Walls**

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	3	2%
Good	23	19%
Satisfactory	93	77%
Unsatisfactory	2	2%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. n=121

within their facilities. As revealed in Table 16, only 30% of the respondents

Table 15

Current Condition of the School Building's Exterior Walls

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	9	7%
Good	23	19%
Satisfactory	84	70%
Unsatisfactory	5	4%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. n=121

reported satisfactory or better lighting in their school buildings. Table 17 illustrates that 93% of the respondents felt that they had fixtures that were in satisfactory, good, or excellent condition.

Heating systems were a facet of the assessment of the school buildings that the administrators were asked to evaluate. As shown in Table 18, 65% of the respondents indicated that building heating systems were unsatisfactory. Only 35% of the respondent administrators reported buildings' heating systems in good, satisfactory, or excellent condition.

Administrators were also asked to indicate the current conditions of their school buildings' windows and doors. As indicated in Table 19, 91% of the respondents reported the windows to be in satisfactory, good, or excellent condition. Table 20 indicates that only 2% of the respondent administrators believed that

Table 16

Current Condition of the School Building's Lighting

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	9	7%
Good	19	16%
Satisfactory	9	7%
Unsatisfactory	84	70%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. $n=121$

Table 17

Current Condition of the School Building's Fixtures

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	12	10%
Good	37	31%
Satisfactory	63	52%
Unsatisfactory	9	7%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. $n=121$

school building doors were in unsatisfactory condition.

Table 18

Current Condition of the School Building's Heating System

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	5	4%
Good	19	16%
Satisfactory	18	15%
Unsatisfactory	79	65%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. $n=121$

Table 19

Current Condition of the School Building's Windows

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	9	7%
Good	16	13%
Satisfactory	85	71%
Unsatisfactory	9	7%
Not Applicable	2	2%

Note. $n=121$

Data concerning the timely manner of inspecting the individual school

Table 20

Current Condition of the School Building's Doors

Response	Number	Percentage
Excellent	9	7%
Good	19	16%
Satisfactory	91	75%
Unsatisfactory	2	2%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Note. n=121

buildings are noted in Table 21. Ninety-four percent of the respondents stated that their buildings were inspected on a yearly basis.

Table 21

When Building Was Last Evaluated

Response	Number	Percentage
Yearly	114	94%
No Current Inspection	4	3%
No Response	3	3%

Note. n=121

As revealed in Table 22, 81% of the respondent administrators indicated that

they were present at the time of the building inspection. As revealed in Table 23, 85% of the respondents did have a discussion with the inspector from the Regional Office of Education concerning the deficiencies noted in the inspection report. As indicated in Table 24, 74% of the respondents felt that repairs were more essential than new facilities.

Table 22

Administrator Present for the Inspection

Response_	Number	Percentage
Yes	98	81%
No	20	16%
No Response	3	3%

Note. $n=121$

Table 23

Inspector Discussed Needed Repairs

Response_	Number	Percentage
Yes	103	85%
No	16	13%
No Response	2	2%

Note. $n=121$

Table 24

Stronger Need for New Facilities or Repairs

Response	Number	Percentage
New Facilities	27	22%
Repairs	90	74%
No response	4	4%

Note. n=121

Results of Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What method is used by each district to update its facilities? As revealed in Table 25, 12% of the respondents indicated that school boards were responsible for reviewing building needs, while 41% indicated that the superintendent assumed such responsibilities. The principal was responsible in 26% of the cases, while 21% of the respondents indicated that building committees assumed the responsibility for reviewing building needs. As revealed in Table 26, however, 65% of the respondents reported that the board of education had not prepared needs assessments for new district facilities. Furthermore, as indicated in Table 27, 56% of the respondents reported that their district did not have a building plan.

Results of Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What funding sources are available for updating current facilities? As shown in Table 28, only 37% of the respondents stated that

Table 25**Responsible Person for Reviewing Building Needs**

Response	Number	Percentage
School Board	14	12%
Superintendent	50	41%
Principal	32	26%
Building Committee	25	21%

Note. n=121**Table 26****Needs Assessment Prepared for New Facilities**

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	42	35%
No	79	65%
No response	0	0%

Note. n=121

the inspector offered information concerning financial assistance available through Illinois for school building repairs or additions.

Table 29 indicates that 58% of the districts reported tax levies of \$3.99 and below per \$100 assessed valuation. Only 38% of the respondents reported a tax levy

Table 27**District Has (New/Renovation) Building Plan**

Response_	Number	Percentage
Yes	47	39%
No	68	56%
No response	6	5%

Note. n=121**Table 28****Inspector Suggested Financial Assistance Sources**

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	45	37%
No	76	63%
No Response	0	0%

Note. n=121

rate of \$4.00 and higher per \$100 assessed valuation. It was a flaw of the questionnaire in not specifying what portion of the tax levy was specifically for the building fund. Therefore, the data presented represent total educational tax levies.

As revealed in Table 30, 79% of the respondents indicated that current tax rate levy had not been increased within the last five or more years. The same four

Table 29

Current Tax Levy for District Education Fund

Response	Number	Percentage
\$5.00-\$6.00	11	9%
\$4.00-\$4.99	36	29%
\$3.00-\$3.99	35	29%
\$2.00-\$2.99	31	26%
\$1.00-\$1.99	4	3%
No response	4	3%

Note. n=121

respondents who gave no response to the question data in Table 29 (Current Tax Levy for District Education Funds) concerning the current tax rate stated that the levy had not been raised within the last five years and stated that repairs were needed, but did not give specific information concerning the current building fund tax rate. The respondents did not offer any information as to how the district would accomplish an increase in the building fund tax rate.

In reviewing what funding sources are available for updating current facilities within the districts and in Illinois, the responses were all tied to the tax rate and the possible use of health and life safety monies. Comments provided by some of the respondents indicated that they initiated referendum proposals within their districts, but were unsuccessful in passage of the initiative.

Table 30

Last Time Tax Levy Rate Raised

Response	Number	Percentage
This year	8	7%
1-3 years ago	17	14%
5 years ago	41	34%
10+ years ago	55	45%

Note. n=121

Results of Research Question 4

Research Question 4: What is the impact of the current building conditions on the educational process, as perceived by public school administrators? The main area of concern was instructional space. Whether this space was in the form of a science lab or a computer lab, the need for space was noted in some of the respondents' comments. Table 31 shows that the respondents felt their school buildings were in need of major renovations in the following areas: (a) instructional space--84%; (b) plumbing--73%; (c) athletic space, air flow and air conditioning--72%; (d) lighting--70%; (e) consistent heating--65%; and (f) adequate wiring--59%.

The perceptions of the school administrators in relationship to the school board members' roles in the evaluation of the condition of the facilities and the maintenance schedules for buildings are shown in Tables 32 and 33. As revealed in Table 32, 88% of the respondents indicated that school board members made

Table 31

Summary of Administrator Perception of Building Conditions

Building Feature	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Roof	23%	4%	65%	8%	
Wiring	11%	7%	23%	59%	
Plumbing	11%	5%	11%	73%	
Air Conditioning	9%	5%	5%	72%	9%
Air Flow	7%	9%	7%	72%	5%
Space for instruction	2%	4%	10%	84%	
Space for athletics	2%	7%	19%	72%	
Interior walls	2%	19%	77%	2%	
Exterior walls --					
bricks/frame	7%	19%	70%	4%	
Lighting	7%	16%	7%	70%	
Fixtures (shelving, coat racks,					
desks, tables, etc.)	10%	31%	52%	7%	
Heating	4%	16%	15%	65%	
Windows	7%	13%	71%	7%	2%
Doors	7%	16%	75%	2%	

Note. n=121**annual trips throughout the district to review building conditions. Table 33,**

Table 32**Annual Review by School Board Members of Building Conditions**

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	107	88%
No	10	9%
No response	4	3%

Note. n=121

however, indicates that 58% of the respondents did not believe that school board members' review of the buildings would be beneficial in the decision making process for the maintenance.

The final area of consideration addressing Research Question 4 was the perceptions of administrators concerning the impact of maintenance schedules in relationship to the current condition of the school buildings. As indicated in Table 34, 69% of the respondent administrators indicated a belief that past maintenance schedules had been a key factor in the condition of the buildings.

Table 33

Benefited from School Board Member Involvement in Maintenance Schedule**Planning**

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	41	34%
No	70	58%
No response	10	8%

Note. n=121

Table 34

Maintenance Schedules Key to Building Condition

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	83	69%
No	22	18%
No response	16	13%

Note. n=121

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

This study investigated the condition of public school facilities within Illinois south of I-80. The intent of this study was to examine the perceptions of school administrators concerning the status of the educational facilities throughout Illinois. It was the goal of this study to identify the needs of the local districts for facility improvements in the current educational structures. It was further expected that the data collected could be used by districts to validate their need for improving the current educational facilities.

The specific research questions were:

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the deterioration of the current Illinois school structures used for attendance centers south of I-80, as perceived by public school administrators? (Questions 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 25, and 30 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 2: What method is used by each district to update its facilities? (Questions 13, 14, 21, 22, and 27 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 3: What funding sources are available for updating current facilities? (Questions 18, 23, and 24 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Research Question 4: What is the impact of the current building conditions on the educational process, as perceived by public school administrators?

(Questions 26, 28, and 29 from School Facilities Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

This study was based on data collected from a questionnaire sent to a random sample of school principals, (some of whom were also serving as district superintendents) in an 82 county region south of 1-80 in Illinois. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data collected for each specific research question. Qualitative data included comments made by the administrators concerning their perceptions of the need for improvements, the need for school board involvement and the impact of a maintenance plan to prevent deterioration of facilities.

A review of the current literature and research was completed. The most current comprehensive research available was the General Accounting Office report (1996) relating to the differing conditions of school facilities throughout the United States. In the General Accounting Office Letter Report: School Facilities: America's Schools Not Designed or Equipped for 21st Century (1995), strong evidence was presented concerning the lack of school facilities designed or equipped for the 21st century. Articles concerning the subject of deteriorating or inadequately fitted public school facilities within the professional journals and on line through the internet were identified. Research completed by Office of Educational Research and Improvement, American School Board Association and the Illinois School Board Association was reviewed.

The research that was completed by the General Accounting Office was a national look at the public school system. It offered many demographic models and showed that the educational facilities in affluent regions were better equipped and more properly maintained. This report included information concerning Illinois.

Data in the report were general and did not answer the basic question, “What is the extent of the deterioration of the public school buildings in Illinois as perceived by school administrators?”

Conclusions

The data collected revealed that the perceptions of the administrators responding to the questionnaire were that current Illinois school structures south of I-80 used as attendance centers were deteriorating and in need of renovation. This conclusion was drawn from data collected to answer four research questions. Data from the demographic information (Tables 1-4) showed that the respondents had the necessary educational background and longevity in their positions to evaluate the facilities in relationship to the educational needs of the communities.

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the deterioration of the current Illinois school structures used for attendance centers south of I-80, as perceived by public school administrators? As documented in the study data, 90% of the original educational structures were built before 1961. This means that a majority of the administrators answering the questionnaire were housed in facilities that were from 37 to 97 years old. This gave the respondents a valid basis for their opinions in evaluating the relationship between the age of the structure and maintenance planning needed to keep the facility in good working condition.

The administrators responding to this research question indicated that they had essentially the same areas of concern about educational structures as presented in the data from the General Accounting Office 1996 Report. The focus of the General Accounting Office 1996 Report was on the need for facilities to update

space, heating, air conditioning and wiring (GAO, 1996). The results of this study showed that the same concerns were present in Illinois school districts with a few additional concerns. As found in Tables 7 through 20, a wide range of unsatisfactory conditions were reported in the 121 school facilities surveyed. This information is summarized in Table 31. The areas were: (a) instructional space--84%; (b) plumbing--73%; (c) athletic space, air flow and air conditioning--72%; (d) lighting--70%; (e) consistent heating--65%; and (f) adequate wiring--59%. This was true in the newer structures as well as the old facilities.

Additionally, 97% of the respondents indicated that their buildings were inspected on a yearly basis. Eighty-one percent of the respondents stated that they were present at the time of the building inspection, and 85% reported receiving guidance from the Regional Office of Education inspector concerning the areas needing repair. The conclusion drawn from this information is that the districts are complying with Illinois guidelines to maintain safe facilities by having the buildings inspected on a yearly basis. The information further indicates that the Regional Office of Education is available to assist in determining areas of maintenance deficiencies as set by Illinois guidelines. Additionally, the administrators' presence at the yearly inspections showed that they were actively maintaining working knowledge of the condition of the facilities. This behavior may have increased the validity of their perceptions concerning the condition of the school buildings.

Conclusions concerning the methods used by each district to update its educational facilities were developed through the data from Research Question 2: What method is used by each district to update its facilities? The data in Table 25,

revealed a majority of districts delegated this responsibility to the superintendents and principals. Twenty-one percent of the respondents felt that building committees were beneficial to assist in the review of building needs. The respondents indicated that the building committees included the principals and superintendents as members. As revealed in by the data, 74% of respondents indicated that buildings were in need of repairs, and 22% indicated a need for new facilities.

Furthermore, it was concluded that the administrators needed to build a foundation of understanding of building problems in their districts. The study revealed that 65% of the respondents had not prepared a needs assessment. Fifty-six percent of the districts did not have new or renovation building plans. If 74% of the buildings were in need of repairs, and 22% of the respondents felt that the district needed new facilities, it would be valid to expect that some type of assessment for new facilities would be available. When reviewing the respondents' notations on the questionnaires, 13 administrators stated that their districts had attempted referendum initiatives that had failed. An effort by the administrators to lay a foundation of understanding with a needs assessment of the district might provide a basis to develop remodeling plans.

Research Question 3 asked, What funding sources are available for updating current facilities? The data for this question were documented in three separate tables. Table 28 addressed the information concerning the helpfulness of the building inspector from the Regional Office of Education with information concerning state funding of facilities. In development of the questionnaire, it seemed logical to expect that the inspector assigned to evaluate the school building

would also be knowledgeable in possible funding information available through Illinois. The data showed that this was not a valid premise. Respondents stated that only 37% of the inspectors offered information concerning funding sources through the state. The statutes are very broad in the area of finance, and it would be more reasonable to ask for assistance in reaching the proper individuals in state government for funding rather than to assume an inspector would have this information.

With regard to information requested concerning tax levies, the questionnaire was flawed in that it did not specify what portion of the tax levy was specifically for the building fund. Therefore, the data presented represent the total education tax levies and consequently fail to gain all of the information desired to answer this research question. It was noted that while 88% of the local school boards reviewed the condition of their district facilities each year, there had been no proposals to increase tax levies in the last five or more years in 79% of the districts.

The final area considered in this study dealt with Research Question 4: What is the impact of the current building conditions on the educational process, as perceived by public school administrators? From the data collected and reported in Tables 7-20 and summarized in Table 31, the main areas of concern were: (a) instructional space--84%; (b) plumbing--73%; (c) athletic space, air flow and air conditioning--72%; (d) lighting--70%; (e) consistent heating--65%; and (f) adequate wiring--59%. The comments presented in Appendix C from questions 26, 28, and 29 are a reiteration of the data in Tables 7-20. When considering this information, it is evident that the problems within the educational structures are not minor. It is

also apparent that each category is not an inexpensive problem to resolve.

Resolution of the problems presented by the respondents needs the assistance of the school board. The perceptions of the school administrators in relationship to the school board members' roles in the evaluation of the condition of the facilities and the maintenance schedules for buildings were revealed in the study. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents reported that the school board members made annual trips throughout the district to review building conditions. This showed that the board members seemed to be concerned about the conditions of the buildings and did make an attempt to keep themselves informed. Based on the responses received from the questionnaire, however, 58% of the administrators indicated that they did not believe that school board members' review of the buildings would be beneficial in the decision making process for building maintenance. The respondents did not appear to want the help of the board members. The problem, in this case, is the fact that the school board members control the budget that supports the needed improvements.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondent administrators believed that past maintenance schedules had been a key factor in the condition of the buildings. Therefore, it would seem essential that the administrators and the school board members find a common ground that budgets monies to improve the condition of district educational facilities.

Recommendations

It is imperative that the general public get a new perspective of the educational facilities that are currently being used to house students. When the

students are required to attend facilities that are in virtual disrepair, how much learning can be accomplished?

It is essential that Illinois administrators begin to deal with the deterioration of educational facilities. This process should include the following actions:

- 1. Educate the public concerning the “real condition” of educational structures.**
- 2. Demand that the state legislators actually set aside monies for educational facilities that cannot be used for mandated educational programs.**
- 3. Campaign for and support a change in the tax structure that funds the public educational system through increased sales taxes, lottery funds or licensing of gambling establishments.**
- 4. Establish a building watch program that is as important as the budgetary watch program.**

The first concern in alleviating the problem of deteriorating school facilities is to educate the public concerning the real condition of educational structures. Many individuals believe that the brick buildings they pass on the way to work each day are in fine condition. If they do not have children attending the facilities, they may never enter one of the structures. Many of the school buildings give an impression of strength because of their brick structures. These buildings have stood the test of time and weather, and it is easy to be unaware that the structures are deteriorating. It is important that the superintendent and school board members find ways to invite the general public into these facilities on a yearly basis.

The superintendent needs to make an annual public informational report to

the citizenship of each community. It should be a “State of the District” address that is printed in the local newspaper and possibly aired on the local public television network and/or radio. Since these media are in the business of public information, it should not be a costly venture. In the superintendent’s address, the current budget needs and successes should be shared. There should be a statement of the educational goals that have been established for the district. The general public should be made aware of what resources are and are not available to meet the goals. For those goals that are not being met, it is important that the superintendent realistically state why this is happening and offer suggestions as to what could be done to remedy the situation. The results may depend on how well the district’s case is presented to the voting public.

It is the researcher’s opinion that in our current financial world, many special interest groups have needs and demand that the state legislature address those needs. In dealing with the public education system, it has become a habit for legislators to mandate educational reforms, but never allocate funding for those mandates. School administrators should attempt to convince citizens to demand that the state legislators stop this activity. If a program is essential for the general public educational system, then it is also essential that the legislatures actually set aside monies for educational facilities in which the programs must be taught. There must be an end to the drain on the building fund by mandated educational programs.

Illinois is currently considering a change in the tax structure that funds its K-12 educational systems. Governor Edgar has proposed a change in the income tax

structure that will ease the property tax assessment system. It is important that this initiative be considered. The public must find a new method to fund the educational system. There must be an effort to restructure the system. There have been several attempts to find means for supporting the rising costs of education and, in particular, the costs of rebuilding our educational facilities. These suggestions have come in the form of raising sales taxes used, lottery funds and the licensing of gambling establishments. Whatever method is adopted, it must be as fair as possible or we will find the same problems facing the communities in the future.

Finally, it would be wise if Illinois would consider establishing a building watch program that is considered as important as the budgetary watch program. Regional superintendents do complete yearly building inspections and have the power to close any facility that is not meeting the general guidelines. This researcher feels that it would be very wise to have a “watch” program that sets up an alarm system for districts that cannot get the public to understand the need for dealing with deteriorating facilities. A building watch group could assist in educating the public concerning the dangers within the buildings and developing an understanding as to what needs to be accomplished to make educational facilities safe. If the district is experiencing a sharp economic decline, a watch group could attempt to gain assistance from Illinois to maintain good educational facilities.

These recommendations are not quick fixes for the districts. They are not absolute answers for the problems that do exist, but they are a starting point to begin dealing with the problem of deteriorating educational facilities. Our educational facilities must be repaired or replaced. Our young citizens deserve the

best educational environment that the most powerful nation in the world can afford.

As citizens struggle to provide adequate educational programs for their students, it is also their plight to develop structures that will house the students.

The struggle will be on going as the new century brings new and more challenging ideas. What will not change is the demand that the environment be safe and conducive to learning.

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Appendix A

School Facility Questionnaire

Instructions: Please respond to the following questions in the space provided.

Please keep comments brief.

1. What county do you represent? _____
2. How long have you been in your current position?
(Check one) Years: 0-3 ____ 4-6 ____ 7-10 ____ 11-15 ____ 16+ ____
3. What is your administrative position? (Check one)
Superintendent ____ Assistant Superintendent ____
Principal ____ Assistant Principal ____ Business Manager ____
4. What is your highest educational degree? (Check one)
Masters ____ Specialist ____ Doctorate ____
5. Your gender is? (Check one) Male ____ Female ____
6. Type of District: (Check one)
Rural 1-1000 ____ Suburban 1,001-9,999 ____ Urban 10,000+ ____
7. What is your District's actual enrollment? _____
8. What is your School's actual enrollment? _____
9. Number of faculty members: (Check one) 26-50 ____ 51-99 ____ 100+ ____
10. Number of non certified staff members:
(Check one) 26-50 ____ 51-99 ____ 100+ ____
11. When was your original school building built? (Check one)
Pre 1900 ____ 1900-1920 ____ 1921-1940 ____ 1941-1960 ____
1961-1980 ____ 1981-1997 ____

12. When, if any, were additions made to the current educational structure?

13. Who is responsible for reviewing your building needs? (Check one)

School Board ____ Superintendent ____ Principal ____

Building Committee ____

14. Do you have a building resource committee within your school?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

15. When was your school building last evaluated? _____

16. Were you present for the inspection?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

17. Did the inspector discuss all the areas needing repair?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

18. Did the inspector make any suggestions regarding financial assistance available through the State for school building repairs or additions?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

They were: _____

19. What areas were specifically noted as needing repair?

20. What areas do you feel need special attention?

21. Does your district have a (new/renovation) building plan?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

22. Has your school board prepared a needs assessment for new facilities?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

23. What is the current tax levy rate for your district? _____

24. When was the last time this rate was raised?

(Check one) This year ____ 1-3 years ago ____

5 years ago ____ 10+ years ago ____

25. Do you feel there is a stronger need for new facilities or to repair existing structures?

(Check one) New Facilities ____ Repairs ____

26. Please state briefly the problems you have encountered with your current facilities, (for example wiring for a new technology lab).

27. Do your school board members make annual trips throughout the district to review building conditions?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

28. Do you feel the school board members' review of the buildings would be beneficial in the decision making process for maintenance schedules?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

Why or Why not? _____

29. Do you feel your past maintenance schedules have been a key factor in the condition of your building?

(Check one) Yes ____ No ____

Why or Why not? _____

30. Rank the current condition of your building.

(Place an X in the appropriate column)

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Roof					
Wiring					
Plumbing					
Air Conditioning					
Air Flow					
Space for instruction					
Space for athletics					
Interior walls					
Exterior walls bricks/frame					
Lighting					
Fixtures (shelving, coat racks, desks, tables, etc.)					
Heating					
Windows					
Doors					

Appendix B

Letter to Administrators

March 20, 1997

Dear School Administrator:

I am a graduate student working on my Specialist in Educational Administration degree at Eastern Illinois University. I need your assistance in completing my research that involves a study to investigate the current condition of the public school buildings in Illinois. I am interested in your perceptions of the current condition of your facilities, the availability of funding resources for your district and what impact student population fluctuations have had on space utilization within your district.

Please take a few moments to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the enclosed addressed envelope as soon as possible.

If you would like a copy of the results, please include your name and address on a separate sheet of paper. If you have an e-mail address, please include it and I will forward the results by way of the internet.

Thank you for your time and your candor!

Sincerely,

Myrtle A. Carey

Myrtle A. Carey

Appendix C

Administrators in Response to Questions 26, 28, and 29

26. Please state briefly the problems you have encountered with your current facilities, (*for example wiring for a new technology lab*).

- **Technology--Meeting the wide scope of our student needs.**
- **Wiring is too weak to handle demand, plumbing, roof leaks.**
- **None, we just finished a technology wiring program.**
- **No money--Only 26% of people pay taxes. Board represents taxpayers.**
- **Limited electrical service (blow fuses, not enough outlets). No wiring for technology throughout building, rain leaks into several areas.**
- **Insufficient wiring, bricks falling off, roof leaking, controlling the temperature.**
- **Overcrowding**
- **Water leaks, wiring, not enough in each room. Not enough space.**
- **Need space for media center. Wiring for new technology needed.**
- **No multipurpose room for grade school children.**
- **Size, number of rooms, cafeteria, bathrooms, cost of maintenance.**
- **Modern science lab facilities.**
- **Lack of land; lack of flexibility in 1927 portion of building.**
- **Building is kept in repair--few problems.**
- **New safety regulations are constantly changing requiring updating even on our new building.**
- **All old. All need preventive maintenance and major repair--pipes,**

29. Do you feel your past maintenance schedules have been a key factor in the condition of your building? Why or Why not?

- **Done each year--3 year maintenance program.**
- **For the past 5 years, this district has attempted to build on additional facilities, but could not pass a referendum. During that time little was done to keep the building repaired. We have done some repair work this past year.**
- **That is why we are still standing.**
- **Our maintenance has been timely and appropriate.**
- **Not timely in the past few years.**
- **Cash flow low--so buildings were ignored until critical conditions occurred.**
- **Two buildings are new and maintenance is beginning to become an issue.**
- **We follow a relatively thorough summer work list/plan.**
- **No schedule.**
- **Lack of finances.**