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Foundations,  
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CONSOLIDATION CALLED INTO QUESTION (366 pp.)

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This study is an inquiry into the possibilities and limitations of school consolidations. The study begins by exploring the history of school reorganization from the common school movement to the present. From this history we learn that unchallenged assumptions regarding school consolidations and efficiency and effectiveness gains have thrived. My research draws attention to the scarcity of post-consolidation studies that provide discernable evidence that either school or district consolidations have resulted in enhanced efficiencies or effectiveness. Difference-in-Difference (DiD) Estimation calculations were performed on national and state data looking for evidence that consolidations improved efficiencies or effectiveness. The results are inconclusive.

Thrown into the mix of efficiency and effectiveness goals was consolidation for equity, which came into play in the 1960s. The study of consolidation through the lens of equity shows that desegregation and fiscal considerations have remained the foci of the pursuit of equal educational opportunity, for about fifty years. Looking at the Warren City School District's consolidation experience over the past three decades, we see that consolidation based on the premise of educational equity has often resulted in upheaval

for minority and economically disadvantaged children, their families, and their communities.

The elusive concept of local control of schooling is examined to ascertain whether local control can act as a bulwark against consolidation efforts. We learn that there is no consensus concerning what local control means, at what level it exists, and who actually does the local controlling. Furthermore, we see that the state has extraordinary powers to wrest any local control that a community may enjoy. The study concludes with an exploration of the significance of neighborhood and local schools in struggling communities. Consolidation too often removes schools from the most fragile of communities, resulting in further degradation of poor and minority neighborhoods. The experience of the extinct Farmington School District and the boarded up West Farmington Elementary School provide insight into what happens to a community without a school.