

New Solutions Sought to School Unification

Alhambra Superintendent Given Go-Ahead on Developing Methods of Effecting Mergers

BY BQB DIEBOLD

Times Staff Writer

With apparently insurmountable opposition to unification of school districts under present conditions laid down by state law, new ways to attack the problem are being studied.

The Assembly passed a measure this week introduced by Assem-

blyman Robert H. Burke (R-Huntington Beach) putting a moratorium on unification elections until July 1, 1968. The bill now goes to the Senate for approval and, being one of the measures included in Gov. Reagan's legislative program on education, is expected to be signed into law.

In the Alhambra High School District, where unification was voted down on April 18 for the second time, Dr. E. Maylon Drake, district superintendent, has been given the green light by the board of education to open regional studies on the problem.

Seek Assistance

Drake will appear before the County Committee on School District Organization June 7 to ask that group's help in the proposed study.

"I don't know," Drake said, "what directions the study might take, but it is obvious there is a need for creative thinking if we're to solve the problem."

Dr. Fred Bewley of the county committee agreed with Drake that such a study is needed. Preliminary discussions by Drake have evoked expressions of interest in the study from Jack Salyer, superintendent of the El Monte Union High School District, and A. Roland Walker, superintendent of Montebello Unified District.

One of the major obstacles to unification, Drake says, is fear of loss of community identity. Cities have grown up around school boundaries set half a century ago and now spill over into adjoining districts.

Split Into 2 Districts

One-third of Monterey Park, for instance, is in the Montebello district while the rest is in the Alhambra district. A similar situation is growing in the Rosemead area. Rosemead recently annexed South San Gabriel, so high school students from that city now attend Rosemead High School in the El Monte district, and Mark Keppel and San Gabriel High Schools in the Alhambra district.

The moratorium proposed by Burke would allow elementary districts now receiving the \$15-a-pupil state bonus for affirmative votes on unification to retain that income until July 1, 1968, without holding another unification election.

To keep the state aid, the elementary district must vote for unification within two years after the last election. Burke's bill would clarify the two-year law to make all elections apply to the July 1 date, on which the first elections were held in 1964.

In the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys, four areas have failed to unify. Unification was voted down on April 18 in the Alhambra High

Please Turn to Page 8, Col. 1

UNIFY

Continued from First Page

School District and the Chaffey Union High School District in San Bernardino County's West End. El Monte Union High School District unification was rejected by voters on Feb. 14.

La Puente Union High School District voters rejected unification last June. This is the only one of the four which would have been required to hold an election before the July 1 moratorium limit, and would only be affected by a matter of days.

While failing in Alhambra district the Garvey Elementary District's affirmative majority assured it would continue to receive nearly \$100,000 a year in state bonus for two more years. And the Alhambra City School District, voting in favor of unification for the first time, qualified itself for \$140,000 a year for two years.

Gets No Aid

San Gabriel Elementary District, whose heavy negative vote sank the Alhambra High School District unification, will not receive a state bonus as a result.

In the El Monte election in February, only El Monte Elementary District voted affirmatively, continuing for another two years its \$140,000 annual state bonus. Valle Lindo, Mountain View and Rosemead elementary districts disqualified with "no" votes.

None of Hudson, Walnut or Rowland elementary districts are receiving the state bonus in the La Puente Union High School District, because all voted against unification in June, 1966.

In the Chaffey election in April, all nine of the elementary districts rejected unification. Alta Loma district,