

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with John Ashby

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Education is Key – School Reorganization Oral History project

Interview # AI-A-L-2015-063

John Ashby, interim Superintendent of Bluford, Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education Is Key-School Reorganization* oral history project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Dec. 10, 2015 Location: Bluford, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
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Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:05 / 1.12 hrs.

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The interviews is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract John Ashby, *Education is Key*, AI-A-L-2015-063

Biographical Information: John Ashby was born in Jefferson County, Illinois in 1953. He graduated from Mt. Vernon Township High School in 1971, and attended Rend Lake College before transferring to Southern Illinois University. He earned a BS in business education from SIU-Carbondale in 1975, and later earned an education administration degree in 1985, also from SIU-Carbondale. He began teaching at Galesburg High School in 1975, and then returned to his home area, working at Field Community Consolidated School District (CCSD #3) from 1976 to 2005. His duties there included teaching and administration. From 2011-2012 he served as an interim superintendent at Opdyke-Bell Rive District, and at Bluford/Webber from 2014 to the time of this interview. He also serves as a pastor in the Southern Baptist church.

This interview reviews how a new school reorganization method, the Elementary Hybrid Method, was used in the Bluford-Farrington-Webber Township school reorganization election. Although the Farrington school district voted down the referendum for elementary schools merging, all three schools approved the high school merger. Thus, the Bluford Elementary School District merged with Webber Township School District. In addition, Farrington students now attend the newly formed high school district along with some students who live outside the reorganized boundaries. Ashby discusses the challenges inherent in this new reorganization model, including non-uniform school boundaries, the possibility of electing board members who do not live in the district even while their children attend the school, and the need for triple the number of tax levies. In addition, many state forms and federal requirements still treat the districts as being separate. He talks about the role of the committee of ten, the public meetings that were held, complicated election ballots, and the campaign for a successful referendum of Bluford/Webber Township. The election's loss in Farrington was discussed, as were the state incentives available to the new district. Ashby also discusses how the new district has functioned in its first half year. Currently, there are only three statewide reorganizations that have used this method of reorganization.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Bluford/Webber school reorganization; Elementary Hybrid Method of school reorganization; the campaign, election, and planning needed to open the Bluford-Farrington-Webber district; EAV (Equalized Assessed Valuation) for the hybrid method; school boundaries in the hybrid method; tax levies in the hybrid method; state incentives provided to new hybrid districts; feasibility study for hybrid reorganization

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