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ABSTRACT

This publication is the report of an attempt by the Division of Compensatory Education to evaluate the effectiveness of parent advisory committees as they operate in relation to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title I programs in California Schools. The sample for this study was randomly selected. It consisted of 186 advisory committees that represented ESEA Title I projects in 234 school districts. These districts were located in 43 of the 58 counties in California. On the basis of two mailings of requests of the districts for the names and addresses of the members of their district advisory committees, 3,690 questionnaires were mailed with a cover letter to the advisory committee members, including 305 ESEA Title I project coordinators and school district superintendents. A total of 1,620 questionnaires were returned. Another sample used in the study consisted of all of the 50 consultants in the Division of Compensatory Education. Each was asked to respond to a modified version of the questionnaire, and 25 consultants responded by completing and returning the questionnaire. (Author/JM)

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PARENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION THROUGH DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEES IN CALIFORNIA

A PROGRESS REPORT

**PARENT AND
COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION
IN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION
THROUGH DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEES IN CALIFORNIA**

Prepared for the
Division of Compensatory Education

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FOREWORD

Men are to be served by institutions, not governed by them. The State Department of Education exists to serve the parents and children of California by ensuring that the road of education is broad enough for all. In doing this we must stress the workable and the positive.

The top priority issue facing public education is improving the school achievement of the children of the poor and the disadvantaged, the groups that in the past have failed to receive the full benefits of American education. This is the goal of compensatory education.

Compensatory education programs are not concerned only with students. High priority in California compensatory education programs is placed on improving school-community relations. State guidelines require that each school district operating a compensatory education program establish a two-level advisory structure involving parents of children who participate in the program. The purpose of these advisory groups is to ensure that the community and the parents are involved in the planning and implementation of compensatory education programs.

The advisory committees and other parent involvement activities are based on the recognition that educators cannot hope to improve the classroom performance of children from low-income families without involving their parents in the process.

This publication is the report of an attempt by the Division of Compensatory Education to evaluate the effectiveness of parent advisory committees as they operate in relation to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, programs in California schools. It provides a closer, detailed look at the involvement of parents in the programs. I'm sure this report can be used by personnel in the school districts to involve parents more effectively in the development and implementation of programs that will serve all of the children better.



Superintendent of Public Instruction

PREFACE

This report is based on the preliminary findings of a statewide study conducted in 1970 to determine the current status, role, practices, and problems of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, school district advisory committees in California. Included in this report is a set of recommendations which could strengthen parent and community involvement through the school district advisory committees in the compensatory education decision-making process.

The report provides data which indicate clearly that the district advisory committee is becoming an increasingly important vehicle through which school districts can involve parents of children participating in compensatory education programs.

Many individuals assisted in the research that made this report possible. Kal Gezi, Associate Professor of Education at Sacramento State College, was the research consultant for the study and specifically helped in the statistical analysis of the data. Many members of school district advisory committees, as well as compensatory education program directors, school district superintendents, and consultants in the Division of Compensatory Education, State Department of Education, made this report possible by replying to the questionnaires used in the study.

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INTRODUCTION

The recognition of the value of school-community cooperation in maximizing the learning opportunities for students is not new. Dewey¹ and Hart,² for instance, underscored the interrelatedness of the educational functions of the home, the neighborhood, and the school. Educators today are stressing the role schools can play in contributing to the cohesion of the community. Community participation in educational decision making is also viewed as contributing to the schools' potential for meeting the needs of the communities they serve and, hence, as strengthening their value as educational institutions.

O'Donnell and Chilman³ have indicated that the notion of having lay persons serve on committees in federal programs is not new. They pointed out that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Federal Housing Administration have involved citizens as advisers for decades. The U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare have not only stressed the need and the value of establishing advisory committees but have also specifically described in their bulletins the various functions which such committees might be able to perform. (See Selected References.) Furthermore, several national councils and commissions have strongly recommended the establishment of local advisory committees to help in the planning, operation, and appraisal of school programs. Among those that have made such recommendations are the National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children in 1969 and the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty in 1967.

¹John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916.

²Joseph Hart, *The Discovery of Intelligence*. New York: The Century Company, 1924.

³Edward J. O'Donnell and Catherine S. Chilman, "Poor People on Public Welfare Boards and Committees: Participation in Policy Making?" *Welfare in Review*, VII (May-June, 1969), pp. 1-10, 28, 29.

But despite these recommendations, the participation of persons with low incomes on advisory committees is not without opposition. The opponents to such participation usually cite lack of competence, rate of mobility, disinterest, and lack of time on the part of the persons with low incomes as the major reasons for opposition to the participation of those persons. On the other hand, the proponents of the involvement of low-income parents in educational decision making perceive such involvement as the right of these citizens to share in determining the shape of the education of their children. The participation of persons with low incomes in education can help them become less alienated from the school system, provide them with the opportunities to be heard regarding decisions which affect them, enhance communication between them and persons from other segments of the community, and give them a chance to learn how to adapt to the rest of society.⁴

But it is interesting to note, as Fantini⁵ has pointed out, that "parental and community participation in the education process declined as professionalization of teaching advanced. Two forces also tended to keep parents from participating in the education process. One, . . . has been the low level of the parents' own education relative to the teachers' education . . . the other factor is the growing size and impersonality of the public school system in large cities."

Community participation in the schools has usually taken the three major forms that follow: (1) community members are provided information regarding the school; (2) community members are asked to advise the governing boards of school districts on certain issues; and (3) members of the community are encouraged to work with students, teachers, and administrators to varying degrees in order to improve the educational endeavor. Community involvement has usually occurred through one or more of the three methods that follow: (1) the community as a whole is invited to participate; (2) the parents are involved; and (3) a local advisory committee is formed to provide the community with a vehicle through which it can give input to educational matters. It is the third method of community participation which is the focus of exploration for the study reported in this publication.

Traditionally, school administrators have been fearful that the minute they involve parents and other community representatives in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational pro-

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Mario D. Fantini, "Quality Education in Urban Schools," in *Community Control of Schools*. Edited by Henry M. Levin. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1970, p. 49.

grams they are going to lose control of their organizations. With the increasing interest of communities in sharing in the decision-making process, some loss of absolute control on the part of school administrators is likely to take place. But if the public schools are to serve all of the public well, a stronger bond between schools and the communities they serve must be created so that members of the communities, and especially the poor, will genuinely participate in or contribute to the schools which purport to serve them and that they will become more understanding and supportive of the schools than they have been in the past.

In California, school districts are required by the State Department of Education's *Guidelines: Compensatory Education*,⁶ to form and utilize district advisory committees in planning, implementing, and evaluating compensatory education projects funded under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I. According to the Guidelines,⁷ each school district that applies for ESEA, Title I, funds is required to establish a two-level advisory structure. The applicant local educational agency will establish, in addition to a school district advisory committee, a parent advisory group in each school at which Title I activities take place. The membership of the district committee shall be no less than 51 percent of the parents of children who are Title I project participants, and the membership of the parent advisory group shall consist of parents and shall be selected by the parents whose children attend the target area school. The concept of district advisory committees in ESEA, Title I, projects has evolved as the major vehicle in bringing about community participation in educational programs for children of low-income families.

The Bureau of Community Services and Migrant Education, Division of Compensatory Education, California State Department of Education, undertook a study in order to gather data regarding the current status of community involvement in compensatory education through district advisory committees. The study was made prior to the establishment of the requirement that at least 51 percent of the members be parents of participating children. The sample for this study was randomly selected. It consisted of 186 advisory committees that represented ESEA, Title I, projects in 234 school districts. These districts were located in 43 of the 58 counties in California. A breakdown of the pupil enrollments in these districts follows:

⁶*Guidelines: Compensatory Education*, 1971 Revision. Prepared by the Division of Compensatory Education. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1971, pp. 7-8.

⁷*Ibid.*

<i>Total school population in the district</i>	<i>Number of districts</i>
Over 125,000	2
Over 35,000	11
Over 9,000	51
Over 3,000	53
Over 300	117
<i>Total</i>	<i>234</i>

On April 9, 1970, an initial letter was mailed out to each of the districts that composed the sample asking for the names and addresses of the members of their district advisory committees for ESEA, Title I, compensatory education projects. A follow-up letter was mailed to the districts on May 5, 1970, urging their prompt assistance in this regard. Copies of these letters are on file in the Bureau of Community Services and Migrant Education, State Department of Education.

On the basis of the names of committee members received, 3,690 questionnaires were mailed with a cover letter during May 6-8, 1970, to the advisory committee members, including 304 ESEA, Title I, project coordinators and school district superintendents. Of the total number of questionnaires, 3,403 were in English. In addition, 287 persons with Spanish surnames were sent questionnaires in both Spanish and English. (The English and the Spanish versions of the questionnaire are in the appendixes.) The respondents were asked not to write their names on the questionnaires, were advised that their responses were confidential, and were provided self-addressed, postage-free envelopes for returning the completed questionnaires. A total of 1,620 questionnaires were returned. Of these, 1,573 were in English and 47 in Spanish.

Another sample used in this study consisted of all of the 50 consultants in the Division of Compensatory Education, California State Department of Education. Each of the consultants was asked to respond to a modified version of the questionnaire, and 25 consultants responded by completing and returning the questionnaire.

All of the data from the questionnaires were tabulated through a computer, and the chi-square formula was applied to determine if there were any significant differences in the responses. The coefficient of contingency (C) was also used to ascertain the degree of relationship between certain responses and the various groups of respondents.

FINDINGS

A written summary of the responses to the questionnaire was prepared from the tabulated data. A report of the significant responses follows. The number of responses to each item on the questionnaire is inserted on both the English and Spanish versions, which have been reproduced in the appendixes.

Profile of Committee Members

Of the 1,620 advisory committee members who responded to the questionnaire, nearly two-thirds were women. The overwhelming majority of the respondents were over 30 years of age. The majority of the respondents had lived in the school district of which their advisory committee was a part for more than four years and had completed schooling beyond grade ten. Those respondents holding doctorate degrees were the administrators of the school districts. Approximately one-third of the respondents were members of minority ethnic groups. The overwhelming majority of the respondents were fluent in English, a minority were fluent in Spanish only, and a few were fluent in other languages. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents replied that they did not have children who were participating in a compensatory education program. Slightly less than 50 percent of the respondents were paid employees of the school district. The majority of the committee members were recommended to the district advisory committee by the ESEA, Title I, project director or the school administrator.

A large number of the respondents indicated they were serving or had served on two or more educational and noneducational advisory committees. A sizable number of the members indicated that, aside from their regular committee meetings, they usually participated in meetings at which they reported to groups and individuals, took part in field trips such as visits to schools and centers, and participated in meetings of the governing board of the school district and in countywide advisory committee meetings.

Members' Views of the Committees

A sizable number of the respondents felt that they had a great deal of freedom to disagree with the ideas of the administrators. Only a small minority felt that they had little freedom as committee members to do so.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents indicated that the school district advisory committees on which they served were duly recognized by the governing boards of the school districts. Only 99 respondents indicated that their committees were not so recognized.

The majority of the respondents characterized the purposes of their committee as "somewhat clear." A second large group felt that their purposes were "very clear." A large number of the respondents indicated that their advisory committees arrived at their purposes through a mixture of committee-established goals and administrator-set objectives. The second largest group of respondents felt that their purposes emanated directly from statements given to them by the administration. When the respondents were asked how well they thought their committees were living up to the understood purposes, the majority responded, "fairly well." Nearly one-third responded "very well."

Even though it is evident that there is a considerable variety in the roles performed by advisory committees, the majority of the respondents agreed that the committees on which they served performed the functions that follow from a great deal to some extent: review ESEA, Title I, guidelines and regulations; advise on the kinds of programs needed; work on publicity in support of the program; make suggestions on program operation; and help in the evaluation of the program.

The most frequent sources of information about the compensatory education program to the committee were the project director and the school principal. The majority of the respondents felt that the information supplied to the committee members regarding the program was "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful."

The majority of the respondents felt that they had often or at least sometimes told their wishes and concerns to the board of education and to the school district administrators. Almost one-third of the respondents indicated that they did not know how many important recommendations their district committee had made to the board of education. The majority of the remaining two-thirds did know that their committee made some important recommendations to the board. As to their knowledge of how many of their recommendations had been accepted by the board of education, slightly over one-third of the respondents did not know at all about

the fate of their recommendations to the board. However, a large number of the remainder of the respondents felt that they knew that some of the recommendations had been accepted by the board.

Differences in the extent to which districts involve their advisory committees in evaluating the compensatory education program were evident in the responses to the questionnaire. Nearly 25 percent of the respondents felt that they were involved a great deal in evaluating the program; slightly more than 40 percent were involved to some degree. The remainder of the respondents felt that they were little involved or not at all involved in evaluating the program. But, when the committee members were asked how useful they thought their district advisory committees had been to the compensatory education program, a sizable majority felt that they were somewhat useful or very useful to the program.

The majority of the respondents felt that minority groups and parents with differing income levels were represented "very well" or "somewhat well" on the advisory committees.

The project director appeared to be the person who most frequently rendered valuable leadership or direction to the committee. A majority of the members who responded characterized the work of the members of the advisory committees as being "quite good" or "average."

Relationship of the District to the Committee

The majority of the districts do not pay the expenses of members of the district advisory committees. However, those districts that do pay expenses of their committee members tend to pay for the members' attendance at training workshops and conferences and for mileage.

The respondents were divided as to whether the school districts usually tell district advisory committees what the compensatory education program will be instead of asking for their advice.

Administrators' Views of the Committees

The major problems encountered by school districts in eliciting community involvement, according to the school administrators and the program directors follow. The problems are listed in order of frequency of response: (1) lack of interested people; (2) lack of time, especially on the part of poor persons in the community, to devote to the committee; (3) difficulty in maintaining continuity on the committee in view of the constant movement of people into and out of the community; (4) misunderstanding of the functions of the

committee; (5) language difficulty; (6) conflicting pressure groups want to advance their own points of view; and (7) militancy.

The administrators were asked to respond to some open-end questions. The questions, the recurrent responses, and the number of times each response was given follow:

Please give your suggestions of how we can make your district advisory committee more helpful to the compensatory education program.

- The committees should have more workshops and should arrange for compensatory education representatives to address the community or Parent Teachers Association, because many people do not know what compensatory education involves. (97 responses)
- The committee should work to see that more parents become involved. (91 responses)
- The committee should have more to say as to how the program is run and who is employed in the program. (90 responses)
- The school district should make funds available for committees to work with, as most committees are underfunded. (40 responses)
- The committee should hold more effective meetings. (39 responses)
- The committee should provide more information to persons of low income to keep them aware of what is taking place in the compensatory education program; persons with low incomes also should participate in the program, and their views should be respected. (34 responses)
- The district should educate the committee members as to their responsibilities and limitations and should encourage committee involvement. (31 responses)
- The State Department of Education should provide a printed program of suggestions for guidelines. (27 responses)
- Professionals should provide a great deal of guidance for the committee. (22 responses)
- The committee needs more publicity. (19 responses)
- School districts should pay members as participants, because they contribute their knowledge and experience. (16 responses)
- The committee should work directly with the governing board of the school district. (15 responses)
- The committee should encourage communication between the parents and the schools. (13 responses)
- The school district should explain the guidelines to the committee. (12 responses)

- The district should provide a Spanish-speaking person to communicate with those who need it. (11 responses)
- The school district and the advisory committee should have sufficient time to plan. Deadlines and limited time can hamper the effectiveness of personnel. (11 responses)
- The committee should help give more publicity about Title I to parents and the community. (10 responses)
- The committee should have more contact with the State Department of Education representatives from Sacramento. (8 responses)
- The school district should provide more inservice training for parents. (8 responses)
- The committee should have more teacher aides on it, because teacher aides make the best members. (6 responses)
- The district personnel should use more lay language when they make presentations to groups. (5 responses)
- The committee chairman should inform everyone of meetings in advance, not on the same day. (4 responses)
- The school district should recruit concerned minority project directors for the schools. (3 responses)
- The committee should have fewer "rubber-stamp" members. (3 responses)
- The committee needs parents of different nationalities and with various income levels to serve on it. (3 responses)
- The school district should send a résumé of programs to the committee. (3 responses)

What promising practices are discovered by school districts in community involvement through district advisory committees?

- The committee can be the means for trading information regarding problems and values between the school and the parents; committee members can build mutual respect between ethnic groups by making home visits and through the efforts of a human relations subcommittee. (25 responses)
- The committee improves communication. (18 responses)
- Some excellent teacher aides (some volunteer and some paid) may be identified through their participation on the advisory committees or in workshops. (16 responses)
- Attendance of committee members at meetings of the governing board of the school district is a means of expressing the needs of the community and the school to the officials. (16 responses)
- School district personnel realize that parents of children in Title I target area schools really do care about their children's

education and are a valuable resource; also they will help if they feel they are needed. (10 responses)

- Parents seem to be most useful in the process of program implementation rather than in a discussion of theory; they prefer to participate in something concrete. (9 responses)
- Committee members, especially the chairman, participate in the decision-making process of the governing board of the school district. (9 responses)
- Districts avoid using persons who are members of "pressure groups" and who are narrow-minded as members of advisory committees. (8 responses)
- Through the committees the districts offer adult and bilingual education. (7 responses)
- Committees hold consumer education and demonstration courses on health and nutrition as part of their meetings. (6 responses)
- Districts give stipends to parents so parents can attend regional meetings. (6 responses)
- Districts use community aides or liaison workers (bilingual if needed) to contact target community members, school employees, governing board members, and parents. (5 responses)
- The committee extends a cordial and consistent invitation to parents to visit the school and to attend advisory committee meetings and holds advisory committee meetings at the school. (4 responses)
- The committee uses both English and Spanish in conducting its meetings. (3 responses)
- The committee holds regular meetings. (3 responses)
- The committee encourages the celebration of Mexican holidays by a school observation. (2 responses)
- The committee enlists the aid and cooperation of minority leaders who reside in the target areas. (2 responses)
- Committee members participate in a Title I showcase. (2 responses)
- Parents on the committee present a "feedback" regarding the children's perception of the school program. (2 responses)
- Parents observe the instructional program at school. (1 response)

On the basis of your experience with organized district advisory committees, what practices or ideas have proved to be most helpful to you?

- Let parents talk and give them a free hand to make suggestions and actively participate in decision making through better communication and open discussions. (38 responses)

- Keep parents informed through workshops, reports, inservice training, explanations of how programs function, and participation in training sessions with district advisory committee group. (26 responses)
- Encourage community involvement and participation. (16 responses)
- Listen to parents. (11 responses)
- Have the committee hold informal meetings, including Mexican-American ethnic social entertainment, educational programs, and meetings in parents' homes. (10 responses)
- Have parents visit programs in action. (8 responses)
- Make home visits and phone calls, establishing personal contacts to let people know they are needed. (7 responses)
- Have community aides or workers and teacher aides on the committee. (7 responses)
- Help the committee define and establish its goals. (6 responses)
- Have small group discussions. (5 responses)
- Select members with ability and willingness to work and take an active part. (5 responses)
- Use Spanish-speaking counselors and leaders. (5 responses)
- Meet parents on an equal basis. (4 responses)
- Compose agendas. (Structure the meetings.) (4 responses)
- Use honesty as a guide. (4 responses)
- Have advisory committees serve as liaisons to the Parent Teachers Association and other community groups. (4 responses)
- Provide transportation, babysitting, and other services for committee members. (3 responses)
- Have advisory committees meet jointly with parents and teachers to coordinate student activities and other functions. (3 responses)
- Let advisory committee members attend meetings of the governing board of the school district and make recommendations. (3 responses)
- Implement the committee's recommendations. (2 responses)
- Let advisory committees place priorities for establishing the project budget. (2 responses)

Consultants' Views of the Committees

The majority of the consultants in the Division of Compensatory Education who responded to the questionnaire felt that (1) advisory committee members have little freedom to disagree with the ideas of administrators; (2) the committee recommendations made a little or

some impact on compensatory education programs; (3) the goals of advisory committees are not clearly understood; (4) these goals are usually arrived at by joint committee-administration efforts; (5) advisory committees have not lived up so well to their stated goals; (6) committees' roles include only a little reviewing of guidelines, a little advice on needed programs, a little work on publicity, a minor part in making suggestions on program operation, and a little or no help in evaluating the program; (7) the project director is the main source of information regarding the program; and (8) participation in the work of the committee is a valuable experience to the participant.

The consultants were also asked to respond to some open-end questions. The questions and the most frequently given responses are summarized as follows:

Please comment on how you see the job of the advisory committee member. Do you have any suggestions on how the operations and functioning of these advisory groups could be made more effective?

- More inservice training is needed for most advisory committee members.
- The committee is largely a "rubber stamp" for district administrators. There needs to be more involvement of the committee in the compensatory education program and a clearer identification of the role of the advisory committee.
- As consultants in the State Department of Education, we should be helping to develop the compensatory education programs in the schools and generally following the activities of these programs.
- All advisory committees should have lay chairmen.
- Several important roles can be played by the advisory committees. The appropriate role is determined largely by the reaction of the school personnel to the involvement of the community group.
- Unless the schools elicit valid advisory procedures, the job of the committee member is only that of appearing at a meeting. Schools must *mean* that they want advice.
- The committee chairman should attend all meetings of the governing board of the school district. Questions pertinent to the committee's involvement with the compensatory education program should be addressed to the committee chairman. The chairman should also attend the school parent advisory committee meetings. The advisory committee should be totally involved in planning the compensatory education program

before the project application is submitted to the State Department of Education. The chairman should receive a copy of all letters that are addenda to the project application.

- The committee members should take part in assessing the needs of the participating pupils and the program, in defining the program goals and objectives, and in evaluating the results. To do the preceding requires extensive training for parents and other community members that have low incomes.
- The job of the advisory committee member should be to advise the school district and to work with the district personnel to reflect the concerns of the community. In turn, the committee should work with the community in understanding the position of the district.
- Committee members could possibly be more effective in working as a team with individual school staff members in planning, implementing, and evaluating the compensatory education project.
- Committee members should have more knowledge about ESEA, Title I, and about the role they are to fulfill.
- The school district should provide official recognition, high-quality professional leadership, and information to the committee.

What are the problems encountered by the school district in community involvement through district advisory committees in educational decision making?

- School personnel are largely unskilled in the techniques of community involvement. Community involvement through district advisory committees is a whole new way of operation for school districts.
- Advisory committees are not given enough power by the school districts.
- Many advisory committee members have a lack of interest, because school districts have not given the committees the needed status.
- A major problem appears to be a lack of belief on the part of school personnel in the right and responsibility of the community to help decide its destiny. In addition, the districts do not seem to accept the value and need for the input of the community advisory group, and they lack commitment to share the decision-making responsibility with the community being served by compensatory education.
- School districts are developing problems by being negative and by not involving the communities.

- School district personnel lack understanding with regard to the actual role, responsibilities, and duties of the committee.
- The advisory committee often attempts to deal in areas that are reserved for the governing board and for the school district administration. This is due to a lack of clearly defined roles.
- Because they have large families, need baby-sitters, and have transportation problems, parents often do not have the time or the money they need to serve on the committee as they should. Many parents do not have the background or vocabulary needed to understand the material presented by the districts.

Do you know of any promising practices which have been discovered by school districts in community involvement through district advisory committees?

- The few districts that have earnestly developed parent advisory committees and have made all of the staff members aware of the need for teamwork among all concerned have found the committees to be the most exciting idea around.
- The establishment of parent and community organizations to support and strengthen advisory committees influences school administrators to take advisory committee recommendations seriously.
- By sincerely listening to the concerns expressed by the community through parent advisory members, the school district keeps an open channel of communication with parent advisory groups.
- Districts should use parents to monitor program operations, to evaluate more effectively the effects of the program, and to serve on community-staff program task forces.
- Development programs are beneficial to both advisory committee members and staff members.
- Inservice training workshops for committee members are helpful.
- School districts have found it helpful to translate bulletins and announcements into Spanish and to use community aides to work with the community.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of a preliminary examination of the data gathered by this study, the following conclusions have been made:

- District advisory committees are becoming an increasingly important means of community involvement in compensatory education.
- Members of committees that were duly recognized by the governing boards of the school districts seemed to have a better feeling about themselves, their work on the committees, and the importance of their committees to their communities.
- The clarity of committee objectives was found to be associated with the manner in which those objectives were determined. Members of committees who set their objectives independently or jointly with the school districts tended to have a clearer understanding of those objectives than members of committees whose objectives were mandated by the school district alone. Those committees with clear objectives had better attendance records than those committees which did not have such clear objectives.
- There was no single pattern of communication between school districts and their advisory committees. While some school districts were content to inform advisory committees of what the compensatory education program would be, others sought the advice of the committees. The data clearly showed, however, that more nonadministrative committee members than administrative members agreed that school districts usually told the committees what the program was going to be instead of seeking their advice. Even though the majority of the advisory committee members felt some or a great deal of freedom to disagree with the ideas of the administrators in the meetings, it was interesting to note that those persons who responded to the questionnaire in Spanish, the committee members who were not

employed by the school district, and committee members who were from minority ethnic groups felt significantly less freedom to disagree with the ideas of administrators than did other members who responded.

- Committee members who were 30 years of age and younger were more skeptical than older members of the committee's value, of what it could do, and of the motives of the school district for having such a committee.
- Frequency of attendance at committee meetings was found to be associated with payment by the school district of members' expenses in attending such meetings, knowledge of whether the governing board had accepted or rejected committee recommendations, effective communication between the governing board and the advisory committee, the members' concepts about the committee's functions and importance, and recognition of the committee by the governing board of the school district.
- The feeling on the part of the committee members that they had made important recommendations was associated with their knowledge of how many of their recommendations had been accepted by the governing board of the school district.
- Knowledge of what the school district had done with the committee's recommendations was associated with adequacy of communication between the school district and the committee and seemed to effect increased attendance at committee meetings and a positive feeling about the worth of the committee.
- Members who had children in the compensatory education program, persons who responded to the questionnaire in Spanish, and committee members who were from minority ethnic groups felt strongly about the value of their committees to their own communities.
- Respondents from minority ethnic groups felt more strongly about the value of having persons of minority ethnic groups and persons of low income on the committee than did the other respondents.
- More administrators than laymen felt that they had more influence in committee deliberations than did other respondents.
- The majority of the consultants in the Division of Compensatory Education, California State Department of Education, who responded to the questionnaire felt that if advisory committees are to contribute meaningfully to the

compensatory education program, school districts must show that they are committed to the right of the community to share in the educational decision-making process by earnestly seeking and implementing the advice of the school district advisory committees. Workshops and inservice training sessions for committee members should be provided to help them become more knowledgeable in the development and implementation of compensatory education programs and to aid them in developing the skills needed to evaluate such programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that seem to be warranted on the basis of the data that were gathered follow:

- Governing boards of school districts should reiterate their commitment to the right and responsibility of the community, and especially of parents of participating children, to help decide the educational destiny of their children. The boards should give full recognition to the advisory committees as legitimate partners in the educational enterprise. Educators must realize the potential of parents to make contributions to this enterprise.
- The roles and functions of advisory committees should be clearly and jointly delineated by the members of the committee and the school district. The distinction between advising and policy making must be made clear to the committee, but the committee should not be made a rubber stamp for the decisions of administrators. As one respondent put it, "Unless schools elicit valid advisory procedures, the job is only appearing at a meeting. Schools must *mean* they want advice."
- Recommendations of the advisory committee to the governing board of the school district should be studied very seriously. The governing board should communicate promptly to the members of the advisory committee the result of studying these recommendations.
- In order for the committee to share the responsibility for assessing the needs of the pupils, identifying the goals and objectives for the compensatory education program, and evaluating the results of the program, members of the committee should be given inservice training related to the tasks of the committee. Consultants should be made available to the committee. Fantini¹ has correctly pointed out that, "Skeptics

¹Mario D. Fantini, "Quality Education in Urban Schools," in *Community Control of Schools*. Edited by Henry M. Levin. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1970, p. 73.

who concede the right of parents to participate in the education process nevertheless question their technical qualifications to engage in educational decisions, particularly (though not exclusively) the low-income, poorly educated parents. But the question should be not what parents know now but what they can come to know about the technicalities of education” Workshops and inservice education programs are desperately needed and encouraged.

- More persons with low incomes and persons from minority ethnic groups need to be included on advisory committees. Committee membership should be open and should be designed “to help poor people feel less alienated from the institutions that purport to serve them, to provide poor people with an opportunity to influence the decisions that affect them, to improve communication between low-income persons and other persons in the community, (and) to provide poor persons with an opportunity for socialization into the ways of the community at large.”² Parents with low incomes have long been excluded from sharing in the decision-making process regarding the programs which vitally affect their own children.
- Procedures should be established for district advisory committees to follow up the implementation of recommendations that their committees have made for ongoing evaluation and for future input.
- At least 51 percent of the committee membership should be made up of parents of children enrolled in the compensatory education program. This composition is required in the *Guidelines: Compensatory Education, 1971 Revision*.³
- All of the information that is needed to help members of the advisory committee reach meaningful decisions should be given promptly by the school district to the committee. School districts should allocate certain funds to help defray the cost of attending the committee meetings, especially for those members who have low incomes. Secretarial and other needed staff should be provided for the committee to help it expedite its work.
- The school district can serve the community better by helping to facilitate communication between the advisory committee and the community at large.

²Edward J. O'Donnell and Catherine S. Chilman, “Poor People on Public Welfare Boards and Committees: Participation in Policy Making?” *Welfare in Review*, VII (May-June, 1969), p. 2.

³*Guidelines: Compensatory Education*, p. 23.

- Meetings should be held regularly and should include use of specific agendas and discussion of specific problems.
- When language may be a barrier to communication, the school district must assign staff members to the committee who are bilingual or provide interpreters or information written in English, Spanish, and other appropriate languages.

Clearly a direct challenge to many educators is to put into motion a plan of action to become acquainted more fully with those persons in the community who are being served by compensatory education programs if they desire to establish a working rapport with that segment of the community.

Furthermore, if district advisory committees are to become a meaningful vehicle for involving the parents of participating children and other community representatives in the educational decision-making process, school districts must first become committed to the idea that the people of the community, especially the parents, must have a say in the educational process. The school district, therefore, must give information, support, and financial aid whenever possible to make the work of the community advisory committee come to fruition. The school district must also seek and earnestly consider the recommendations of its advisory committee and act upon those recommendations with promptness. Committee members must always be informed of what decisions have been made by the school district regarding compensatory education and should be involved in following up the implementation of those decisions and in the overall evaluation of the effectiveness of compensatory education for their children.

At the core of the concept of parent and community involvement in education is the fact that the schools in the past have not been accountable to the communities they serve. The time has come when they must become accountable to the total community and especially to the parents of all the children they serve.

APPENDIX A

English Version of the Questionnaire

(Numbers in parentheses are the number of times each response was made to that question.)

1. Sex: Male (614) Female (986) Total = 1,620¹
2. Age: Under 20 (5) 21 to 30 (163) 31 to 40 (522) 41 to 50 (589) 51 and over (243)
3. How long have you lived in this school district? Less than 1 year (77) 1 to 4 years (244) Over 4 years (1,167)
4. Education – your highest grade completed: No school at all (9) K to 6 (43) 7 to 9 (154) 10 to 12 (519)
College – university: A.A. (128) B.A. (267) M.A. (355)
Doctorate (36)
5. What kind of work do you do? Business (37) Farmer (39) Professional (614) Retired (22) Housewife (365)
Political office holder (6) Office worker (79) Skilled laborer (50) Community action program representative (38)
6. Are you a member of a minority group? Yes (569) No (891)
7. Language spoken fluently: English (1,131) Spanish (353)
Portuguese (3) Chinese (1) Other (10)
8. Are you a parent of a participating child(ren) in a compensatory education program? Yes (527) No (956)
9. Are you a paid employee of the school district? Yes (712) No (791)
10. How did you get to be a member of the district advisory committee? Recommended by project director or school administrator (842) Recommended by a community group or agency

¹ Responses to each question do not always total 1,620, since all of the respondents did not answer every question.

(174) Volunteered my services (232) Recommended by non-public school (37) Other (163)

11. About how many district advisory committee meetings have you participated in during the past year? None (74) One (152) Two or three (407) Four or five (338) More than five (554)
12. Do you think your district advisory committee has met: Often enough (1,063) Too often (26) Not too often (147) Not as often as it should (250)
13. On how many educational or noneducational advisory committees are you now serving? Only one (722) Two (446) Three or more (318)
14. How many educational and noneducational advisory committees have you served on in the last five years? Only one (553) Two (377) Three or four (341) More than five (214)
 - Aside from your regular committee meetings, which of the following activities have you participated in?
15. Field trips (such as visits to schools and centers) (837)
16. Countywide advisory committee meetings (409)
17. Board of education meetings (771)
18. Reporting to groups and individuals (855)
19. How much freedom do you feel the members of your committee have to disagree with the ideas of the administrators? A great deal (831) Some (459) A little (138) None at all (68)
20. What difference have the recommendations of your district advisory committee made on the compensatory education program in your district? A great deal (374) Some (706) A little (257) None at all (113)
21. Is your district advisory committee recognized by the governing board of your district? Yes (1,315) No (99)
22. Does your district advisory committee have clearly understood purposes? Very clear (650) Somewhat clear (694) Not clear (153)
23. How has your district advisory committee arrived at these purposes? Committee established its own (206) Administration gave a statement of these purposes (400) A mixture of the two (602) Don't know (230)
24. How well do you think the committee does in living up to its understood purposes? Very well (425) Fairly well (768) Not so well (202) Poorly (74)

● How much does your committee do any of the following?

	<i>A great deal</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>None at all</i>
25. Review Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I, guidelines and regulations	561	563	207	121
26. Advise on the kinds of programs needed	565	623	207	84
27. Work on publicity in support of the program	250	519	386	284
28. Make suggestions on program operation	486	643	244	94
29. Help in the evaluation of the program	415	576	259	192

● Who in the school district and/or the community gave the information about compensatory education to the district advisory committee on which they could make recommendations? (Check one or more of the following.)

30. Project director (983)
 31. Superintendent (277)
 32. School principal (440)
 33. Nurse (56)
 34. Board of education members (114)
 35. Community representative (262)
36. How helpful has the information given to you by the school district been to your district advisory committee in its recommendations? Very helpful (644) Somewhat helpful (598) Not helpful (68) I don't know (175)
37. How often have you, as district advisory committee members, told your wishes and concerns to the board of education and administrators? Often (412) Sometimes (601) Seldom (235) Not at all (240)
38. Do you know how many important recommendations your district advisory committee has made to the board of education? Many (170) Some (519) Few (240) None (106) I don't know (499)

39. How many have been accepted? All (98) Many (189) Some (437) None (103) I don't know (560) The district advisory committee was not told how many (64)
40. How much has your district advisory committee been involved in evaluating the compensatory education program? A great deal (361) Some (599) A little (317) None at all (200)
41. How useful do you feel your district advisory committee has been to the compensatory education program? Very useful (525) Somewhat useful (701) Not useful (133) I don't know (145)
42. How well does your district advisory committee represent minority group parents in your district? Very well (915) Somewhat (360) Poorly (140) I don't know (87)
43. How well does your district advisory committee represent different income levels of parents in your district? Very well (706) Somewhat (486) Poorly (161) I don't know (157)
44. Compared with other members of your district advisory committee, how much influence do you feel you have on committee decisions? Much more influence (120) Somewhat more influence (357) About the same influence (827) Somewhat less influence (88) Much less influence (80)
45. On district advisory committees, sometimes there is a member who gives the whole committee valuable leadership or direction. Who of the following most nearly does this? Superintendent (111) Project director (772) Community representative (196) Parent (134) State Department personnel (15) Other (111)
46. How would you say the work of the members of your district advisory committee is? Excellent (130) Quite good (577) Average (460) Fair (148) Quite limited (155)
47. Does your district pay expenses for the members of the district advisory committee? Yes (424) No (927)

● If yes, do they pay for any of the following?

	Yes	No
48. Baby-sitting	139	455
49. Mileage	256	369
50. Attending training workshops or conferences	407	266
51. Are you paid back for time lost while attending meetings and/or conferences	135	525

52. If there is such a fund, do you feel it is: Too much (20) Enough (322) Not enough (263)

- In general, would you say that your participation in the work of your advisory committee has been a valuable experience for yourself, for the committee, for the development of educational policy?

	<i>A great deal</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
53. Valuable for me personally	910	396	115	52
54. Valuable for the committee	502	645	211	52
55. Valuable for the schools	655	523	187	67
56. Valuable for the community	632	523	217	68

- Please check how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Agree somewhat</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
57. Considering all problems, advisory committees are far overrated with respect to what they contribute.	153	175	454	231	447
58. Although it would "look nice" to have more poor people on advisory committees, this does not help us very much.	173	141	333	211	601
59. District advisory committees may not look like they are very important, but they are really important in our community.	605	413	308	91	73
60. District advisory committees are really "paper committees" which have little or no influence on compensatory education programs.	150	102	327	306	599

61. School districts usually tell district advisory committees what the compensatory education program will be instead of asking for their advice.

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Agree somewhat</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
	241	171	391	274	364

Administrators Only

- What are the problems encountered by the school district in community involvement through district advisory committees in educational decision making?
62. Lack of interest (150)
 63. Do not have time (119)
 64. Language difficulty (56)
 65. Militancy (18)
 66. Pressure groups (32)
 67. Afraid to come to school setting (85)
 68. Difficulty in maintaining continuity with people moving away (112)
 69. Misunderstanding of function (76)
 70. Please give your suggestions of how we can make your district advisory committee more helpful to the compensatory education program. (See pages 8 and 9 for summary of responses to this question. This question was answered by all respondents.)
 71. What promising practices are discovered by school districts in community involvement through district advisory committees? (See pages 9 and 10 for summary of responses to this question.)
 72. On the basis of your experience with organized district advisory committees, what practice or ideas have proved to be most helpful to you? (See pages 10 and 11 for summary of responses to this question.)

APPENDIX B

Spanish Version of the Questionnaire

(Los números en paréntesis es el número de veces que cada respuesta fue contestada a esta pregunta.)

1. Sexo: Hombre (614) Mujer (986) Total = 1,620¹
2. Edad: Menos de 20 (5) entre 21 y 30 (163) entre 31 y 40 (522) entre 41 y 50 (589) más de 50 (243)
3. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha vivido en este distrito escolar? menos de 1 año (77) entre 1 y 4 años (244) más de 4 años (1,167)
4. Educación – su grado más alto: ninguna escuela (9) entre K y 6 (43) entre 7 y 9 (154) entre 10 y 12 (519)
Colegio – universidad: A.A. (128) B.A. (267) M.A. (355) Doctorado (36)
5. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo desempeña Ud.? Negocio (37) Agricultor (39) Profesional (614) Retirado (22) Ama de casa (365) Puesto Político (6) Oficinista (79) Obrero especializado (50) Representante de CAP (38)
6. ¿Pertenece Ud. a un grupo de minoría? Sí (569) No (891)
7. Idiomas (lenguas) que hable con facilidad: Inglés (1,131) Español (353) Portugués (3) Chino (1) Otro (10)
8. ¿Tiene usted algún hijo o hijos que participan en un programa de educación compensatoria? Sí (527) No (956)
9. ¿Es usted un empleado pagado del distrito escolar? Sí (712) No (791)
10. ¿Cómo llegó usted a ser un miembro del comité de consulta de distrito (district advisory committee)? Por recomendación del director del proyecto o del administrador escolar (842) Por

¹ Los totales en esta Tabla son las respuestas a cada pregunta de todos los que participaron en este estudio y no solamente aquellos que respondieron en el cuestionario escrito en Español.

recomendación de un grupo o agencia de la comunidad (174) Voluntario (232) Por recomendación de una escuela de afiliación religiosa (37) Otro (163)

11. Aproximadamente ¿a cuántas juntas del comité de consulta de distrito (district advisory committee) asistió usted durante el año pasado? ninguna (74) una (152) entre dos y tres (407) entre cuatro y cinco (338) mas de cinco (554)
12. En su opinión, se ha reunido su comité: Con suficiente frecuencia (1,063) Con demasiada frecuencia (26) Pocas veces (147) Muy pocas veces (debía reunirse mas frecuentemente) (250)
13. ¿En cuántos comités de consulta educacionales o no educacionales está usted sirviendo *actualmente*? Uno (722) Dos (446) Tres o más (318)
14. ¿En cuántos comités de consulta educacionales o no educacionales ha servido usted en los últimos cinco años? Uno (553) Dos (377) Tres o cuatro (341) Más de cinco (214)
 - Aparte de las juntas regulares de su comite ¿en cuales otras actividades ha participado Ud.?
15. Viaje de estudios (tales como visitas a escuelas y centros de culturas) (837)
16. Participación en juntas del comité de consulta del condado. (409)
17. Juntas del cuerpo de educación del distrito escolar. (771)
18. Reportes a grupos e individuos. (855)
19. ¿Cuánta libertad cree usted que tienen los miembros de su comité para expresar desacuerdo con las ideas de los administradores del distrito escolar? Muchísima (831) Mucha (459) Una poca (138) Ninguna (68)
20. ¿Cuánta influencia tuvieron las recomendaciones del comité de consulta de su distrito (district advisory committee) en el programa de educación compensatoria de su distrito? Muchísimo (374) Alguna (706) Un poco (275) Ninguna (113)
21. ¿Reconoce el cuerpo de educación de su distrito el comité de consulta de su distrito (district advisory committee)? Sí (1,315) No (99)
22. ¿Tiene el comité de consulta de su distrito (district advisory committee) propósitos bien definidos? Muy bien definidos (650) Medios definidos (694) No claramente definidos (153)

23. ¿Cómo determinó los propósitos el comité de consulta de su distrito (district advisory committee)? El comité los determinó (206) La administración los determinó (400) Una mezcla de los dos (602) No sé (230)

24. En su opinión, ¿qué tal cumple el comité con sus propósitos? Muy bien (425) Bastante bien (768) No muy bien (202) Mal (74)

- ¿Hasta qué punto hace su comité cualquiera de los siguientes?

	<i>Mucho</i>	<i>Algo</i>	<i>Un poco</i>	<i>Nada</i>
25. Repasar las reglas y leyes de educación compensatoria bajo el Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I	561	563	207	121
26. Aconseja en tipos de programa que son necesarios	565	623	207	84
27. Trabaja en publicidad para apoyar el programa	250	519	386	284
28. Hace sugerencias en como desarrollar el programa	486	643	244	94
29. Ayuda en la evaluación del programa	415	576	259	192

- ¿Quién en el distrito escolar y/o en la comunidad le facilitó la información, tocante a la educación compensatoria al comité de consulta del distrito (district advisory committee) para hacer sus recomendaciones? (marque una o mas.)

30. El director del proyecto (983)

31. El superintendente (277)

32. El principal (440)

33. La enfermera (56)

34. Miembros del cuerpo de educación del distrito escolar (114)

35. El representante de la comunidad (262)

36. ¿Qué tan útil ha sido para su comité de consulta (district advisory committee) en sus recomendaciones la información

- que le ha dado el distrito escolar? Muy útil (644) Regular (598) No ha sido útil (68) No sé (175)
37. ¿Con cuánta frecuencia han ustedes como miembros del comité de consulta (district advisory committee) expresado sus deseos y preocupaciones al Cuerpo de Educación? Frecuentemente (412) A veces (601) Pocas veces (235) Nunca (240)
38. ¿Sabe Ud. cuántas recomendaciones de importancia ha hecho el comité de consulta (district advisory committee) de su distrito al cuerpo de educación del distrito escolar? Muchas (170) Algunas (519) Pocas (240) Ninguna (103) No sé (499)
39. ¿Cuántas han sido aceptadas? Todas (98) Muchas (189) Algunas (437) Ninguna (103) No sé (560) El comité de consulta del distrito no fue informado (64)
40. ¿Hasta qué punto ha participado el comité de consulta de su comunidad en evaluar el programa de educación compensatoria? Mucho (361) Algo (599) Un poco (317) Nada (200)
41. En su opinión, ¿que tan útil ha sido el comité de consulta de su distrito (district advisory committee) en relación al programa de educación compensatoria? Muy útil (525) Algo útil (701) No ha sido útil (133) No sé (145)
42. ¿Cómo representa el comité de consulta de su distrito (district advisory committee) a los padres que pertenecen a grupos de minoría en su distrito? Muy bien (915) Algo (360) Mal (140) No sé (87)
43. ¿Cómo representa el comité de consulta de su distrito (district advisory committee) los diferentes niveles económicos en su distrito? Muy bien (706) Algo (486) Mal (161) No sé (157)
44. En comparación con otros miembros del comité de Consulto de su distrito (district advisory committee) ¿cuánta influencia cree que Ud. tiene en las decisiones del comité? Mucha más que los otros miembros (120) Más o menos igual que los otros (357) Un poco más que los otros (827) Un poco menos (88) Mucha menos (80)
45. En muchos comités de consulta hay ocasionalmente un miembro que le da al comité dirección valiosa. ¿Cuál de los siguientes desempeña mejor ese papel? El superintendente (111) Un padre (134) El director del proyecto (772) El representante de la comunidad (196) Personal del Departamento de Estado (15) Otro (111)

46. ¿Cómo clasificaría Ud. el trabajo de los miembros del comité de consulta (district advisory committee) de su distrito? Excelente (130) Bastante bueno (577) Promedia (460) Justo (148) Muy limitado (155)
47. ¿Se les pagan los gastos a los miembros del comité de consulta (district advisory committee)? Sí (424) No (927)

- ¿Si su respuesta es "Sí", se les pagan por algunos de los siguientes?

	<i>Sí</i>	<i>No</i>
48. Cuidado de niños	139	455
49. Millaje	256	369
50. Asistir sesiones de entrenamiento	407	266
51. Pago por tiempo perdido de su trabajo cuando asiste juntas y/o conferencias	135	525

52. Si existe tal fondo, le parece a usted que es: Demasiado (20) Suficiente (322) No es suficiente (263)

- En general, ¿diría Ud. que su participación en el trabajo de su comité de consulta de distrito (district advisory committee) ha sido una experiencia valiosa para Ud., para el comité y para desarrollo de programas educativos?

	<i>Mucho</i>	<i>Algo</i>	<i>Un poco</i>	<i>Ningún</i>
53. De valor personal	910	396	115	52
54. De valor para el comité	502	645	211	52
55. De valor para las escuelas	655	523	187	67
56. De valor para la comunicad	632	523	217	68

- Por favor indique si está de acuerdo o no con las siguientes declaraciones:

	<i>Totalmente de acuerdo</i>	<i>Muy de acuerdo</i>	<i>Más o menos de acuerdo</i>	<i>En desacuerdo</i>	<i>Mucho en desacuerdo</i>
57. A los comités de consulto de distritos se les ha dado mas crédito que lo que merecen. Realmente lo que contibuyen es insignificante.	153	175	454	231	447
58. Aunque se "vería bien" tener mas gente pobre en los comités de consulta (district advisory committee) eso no nos ayuda mucho.	173	141	333	211	601
59. Los comités de consulta de distrito (district advisory committee) no parecen ser muy importantes, pero son en realidad importantes en nuestra comunidad.	605	413	308	91	73
60. Los comités de consulta de distrito (district advisory committee) son en realidad "pura papeleria" y tienen muy poca o ninguna influencia en los programas de educación compensatoria.	150	102	327	306	599
61. Los distritos escolares, por lo general le "dictan" a los comités de consulta el programa de educación compensatoria en vez de pedirles su opinión y consejo.	241	171	391	274	364

62. Por favor ofrezca sugerencias que podría hacer que el comité de consulta de distrito (district advisory committee) fuera de más utilidad para el programa de educación compensatoria.

APPENDIX C

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