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ABSTRACT

This study has two major purposes: 1) to report on the numbers of economically and or educationally disadvantaged elementary school students who do and do not receive compensatory services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 2) to report on the benefits students derive from such services during more than one school year. During the 1975-76 school year, principals of U.S. public elementary schools were asked to provide brief descriptive information about their schools: geographic location, student enrollment, student poverty and ethnic background, proportion of poor readers, availability and nature of summer programs, and receipt of compensatory funds from different sources. A survey form was sent to each of 5,035 principals and responses were obtained for 5,010 of the schools (99.5% response rate). The results show that compensatory funds in general, and Title I funds in particular, are targeted to a pronounced extent on schools that can be judged the most needy by different criteria. Further, because of the high degree of relationship that exists among schools between their concentration of students from poverty families and their concentration of poor readers, the results suggest that to allocate funds on the basis of high poverty tends also to allocate on the basis of low achievement. Finally, because so many schools with low concentrations of poverty students receive Title I funds, some concern should be given to what should be an adequate level of concentration of funds per pupil in making intra-district allocations. (Author/AM)

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EVALUATION STUDY Executive Summary

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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U.S. Department of
Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of Education
Office of Planning, Budgeting
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Methodology

Early evaluative studies of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (as amended) were inconclusive due in part to the infancy and diffuseness of the program (not focused on basic skills and not always serving the most needy students) and due also to the lack of adequate evaluative data. In recent years the program has become more focused on the provision of basic skills instruction to children who manifest the greatest need for special assistance while national evaluations have been oriented toward specific aspects of the program and have been conducted in a more rigorous and comprehensive manner. A recently completed study of compensatory reading projects funded by Title I showed that the poorest readers were receiving supplemental assistance and that they benefitted from such assistance by not falling further behind their less needy, unassisted peers in their reading skill development. For some reading skills they were closer to their less needy, unassisted peers at the end than at the beginning of the school year. Further, compensatory students tended to become more favorable towards themselves as readers and toward their reading activities to a degree that was equal to or greater than that of their less needy, unassisted peers. These results pertained to students in the elementary grades during the course of a single school year. However questions about the extent to which these benefits were sustained over the summer months and in subsequent years, especially when students no longer received such assistance, remained unanswered by this study.

In order to obtain answers to such questions as well as to respond to a Congressional mandate for information on the numbers of disadvantaged children served by the program, in 1975 the Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation (OPBE) of the U.S. Office of Education initiated a multi-year study of compensatory education. This new study has two major purposes: (1) to report on the numbers of economically and/or educationally disadvantaged elementary school students who do and do not receive compensatory services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act 1/, and (2) to report on the benefits students derive from such services during more than one school year. To fulfill the first purpose, a nationally representative sample of elementary schools was required. To obtain such a sample and to verify its representativeness, it was necessary to obtain limited information about slightly more than five thousand elementary schools. Selected results from this survey that pertain to the nature of elementary schools receiving compensatory funds, inclusive of Title I, are presented in this summary. 2/

1/ As required by Section 417(a)(2) of the General Education Provisions Act as amended by Section 506(a)(1) of P.L. 93-380.

2/ For other aspects of this study, including the broader sample of schools selected to illuminate the benefits students derive from such services, see Hoepfner, R., Wellisch, J., and Zagorski, H., Report #1: The Sample for Sustaining Effects Study and Projections of its Characteristics to the National Population, System Development Corporation, Santa Monica, CA. March, 1977.

During the 1975-76 school year, principals of U.S. public elementary schools (those having one or more of grades one through six) were asked to provide brief descriptive information about their schools: geographic location; student enrollment; student poverty and ethnic background; proportion of poor readers; availability and nature of summer programs; and receipt of compensatory funds from different sources. A survey form was sent to each of 5,035 such principals; responses were obtained for 5,010 of the schools (a 99.5 percent response rate). This Executive Summary presents selected results of that survey. In examining the relationships that follow, the reader should bear in mind that they are based on principals' estimates using broad judgmental categories and are only indicative of what might be obtained using more refined measurements. They are, however, appropriately weighted for their sample properties. 1/

Findings

What Proportion of Schools in the Nation Received Compensatory Funds?

The following graphic presentations refer only to whether or not funds were received from different sources, not to the amounts of funds received. Figure 1 indicates that the receipt of compensatory funds is almost ubiquitous in public elementary schools today with 82 percent of them receiving some form of compensatory funds. Title I reaches 68 percent of all elementary schools.

Figure 2 shows that among schools that receive compensatory funds, Title I is by far the most frequent contributor, reaching 82 percent of all such schools.

Figure 1 - Percent of All Elementary Schools by Sources of Compensatory Funds

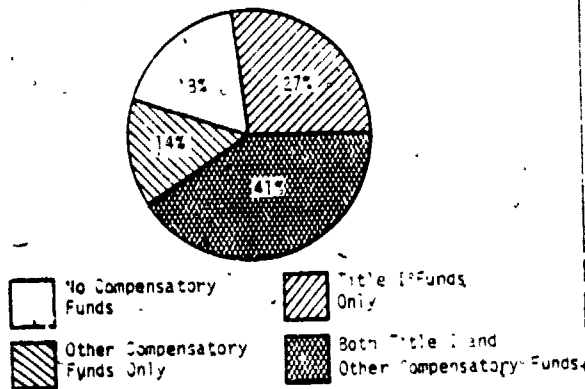
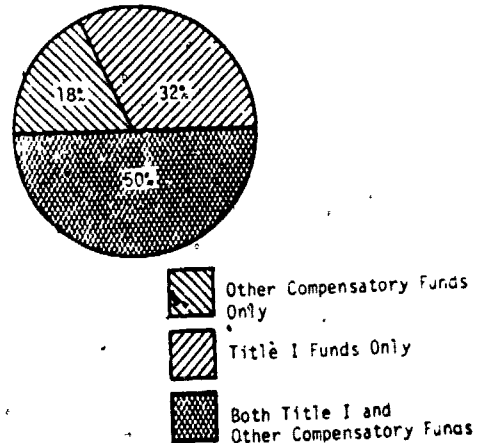


Figure 2 - Percent of Elementary Schools That Receive Compensatory Funds, by Sources



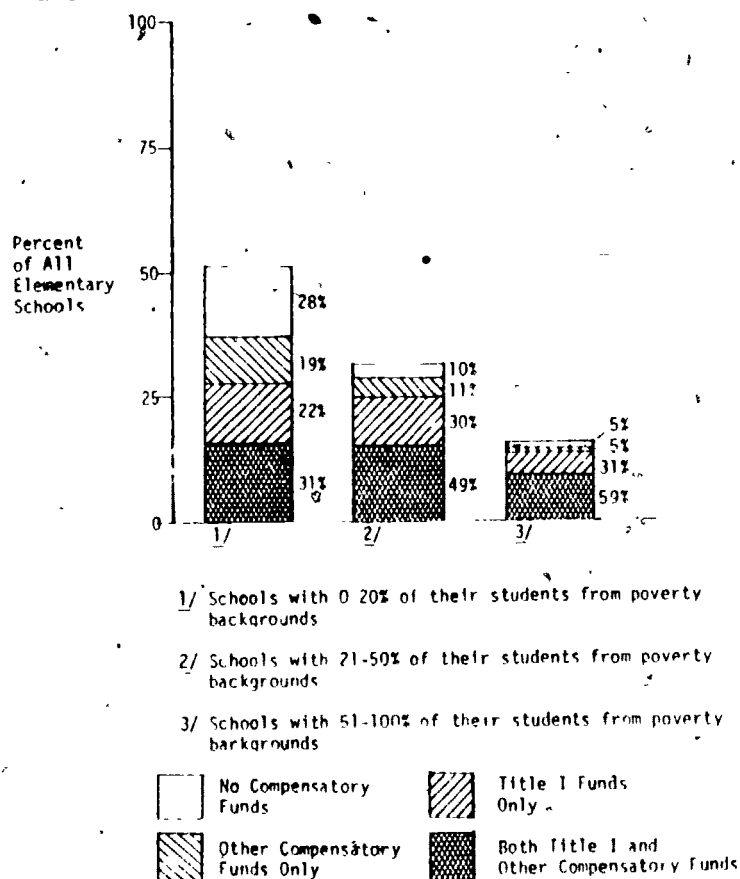
1/ Sampling strata included the poverty level of the school district in which the school was located, the number of students enrolled in the district and its geographic local (for more details see, Hoepfner, R., et al., op. cit.).

Do the Most Needy Schools Receive Compensatory Funds?

1) Schools With Concentrations of Students from Poverty Families

The first bar in Figure 3 refers to schools with one-fifth or fewer of their students from poverty families. Over half of all elementary schools fall in this category (51.6 percent). Fifty-three percent of the schools falling in this category receive Title I funds (alone or in combination with State and local funds). This percentage rises to nearly seventy-two percent (72.2) when schools that receive only State or local compensatory funds are also considered. Examination of the percentages on the other bars indicates that as the proportion of children from poverty families in a school increases, so too does the percent of schools that receive Title I funds. When the receipt of compensatory funds (inclusive of Title I funds) is considered, almost all schools with moderate to high proportions of students from poverty backgrounds receive at least some compensatory funds.

Figure 3 - Percent of All Elementary Schools by Their Concentrations of Students from Poverty Backgrounds, by Sources of Compensatory Funds



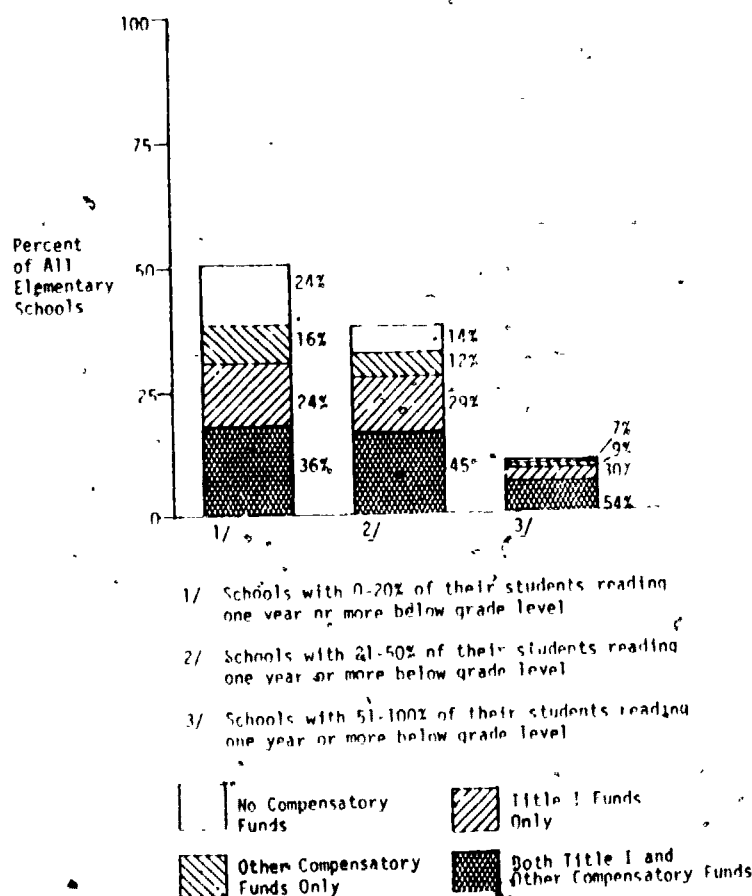
Such results suggest that compensatory funds in general, and Title I funds in particular, are targeted to a remarkable extent on schools with high concentrations of poverty students. This is the intent of the current Title I allocation

procedure. On the other hand, it is not clear why so many schools with low concentrations of poverty students receive Title I funds. A number of explanations are possible. First, for those school districts that have poverty children fairly evenly spread across all their elementary schools, each school would receive Title I funds even though the percent of that school's students from poverty families was fairly small. If there are many such districts, they would have a substantial effect on these totals. A second reason may be that out-of date income information (i.e., census data collected almost six years ago) was used to make the county-level allocations although the district may now have fewer areas with high concentrations of poverty students to be served than in earlier years. Finally, the current concentrations of funds per pupil may be of a magnitude that enables services to be provided in schools with low concentrations of poverty students as well as in the more heavily concentrated schools.

2) Schools With High Concentrations of Poor Readers

Figure 4 illustrates that compensatory funds in general, and Title I funds in particular, are targeted on schools with high concentrations of poor readers to an extent only slightly less than that for schools with high concentrations of poverty students. This is a reflection of the strong relationship that exists between high concentrations of students from poverty families and high concentrations of poor readers at the school level (though it may be less pronounced at the individual student level). That relationship is shown in Figure 5.

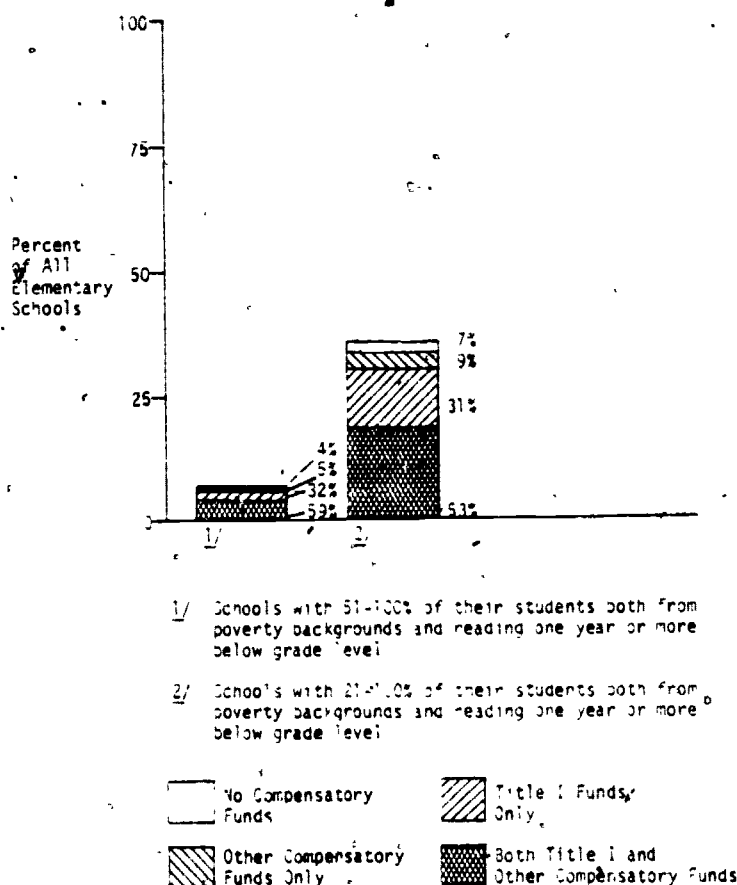
Figure 4 - Percent of All Elementary Schools by Their Concentrations of Poor Readers, by Sources of Compensatory Funds



3) Schools With High Concentrations of Students from Poverty Families and Poor Readers

In schools where over half of their students are both from poverty families and are reading one or more years below grade level (figure 5), 91 percent receive Title I funds and almost 97 percent receive some form of compensatory funds (inclusive of Title I). When the point of concentration is lowered so that schools with over one-fifth of their students are both from poverty backgrounds and poor readers, we observe that 93 percent receive some form of compensatory funds (inclusive of Title I).

Figure 5 - Percent of All Elementary Schools by Their Concentrations of Students Who Are Both from Poverty Backgrounds and Poor Readers, by Sources of Compensatory Funds



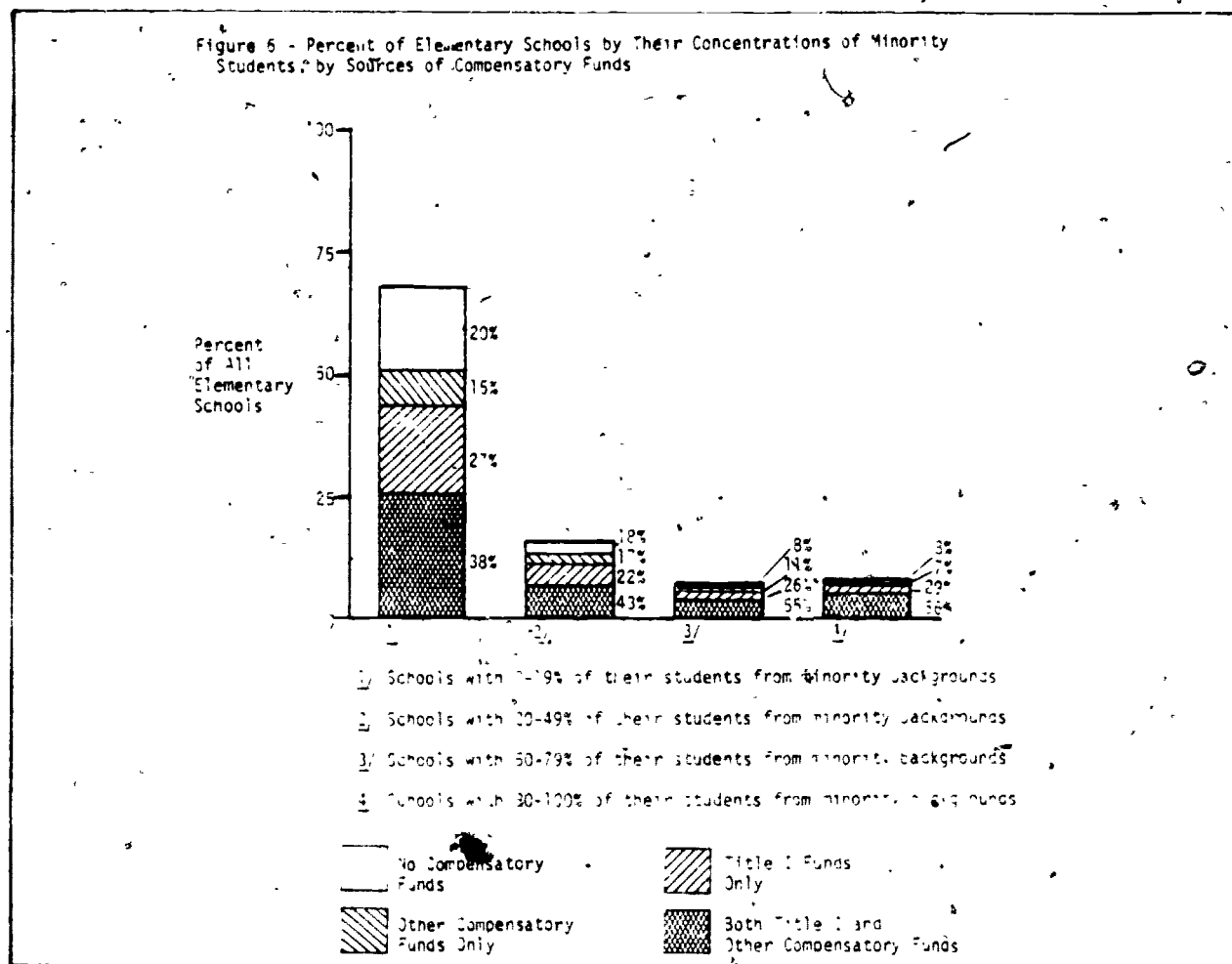
Other analyses suggested that the schools that did not receive compensatory funds (either from Title I or from any other source) but that might be considered needy (i.e., had high concentrations of students from poverty backgrounds and poor readers) were more likely to be located in urban areas than in rural or suburban areas.

Such results suggest that to allocate funds on the basis of high poverty tends also to allocate funds on the basis of low achievement (and vice versa). These

results must be regarded as suggestive due not only to the qualifiers mentioned earlier (principals' estimates using coarse groupings), but also because they do not deal with the allocation process in a single district. Rather, they are based on the relationship that exists among all elementary schools across all districts.

4) Schools With High Concentrations of Minority Students

The last graph in this series (Figure 6) shows that as the proportion of minority students in a school increases, so too does its chance of receiving Title I funds or other compensatory funds (inclusive of Title I).



In sum, the preceding results show that compensatory funds in general, and Title I funds in particular, are targeted to a pronounced extent on schools that can be judged the most needy by different criteria. Further, because of the high degree of relationship that exists among schools between their concentration of students from poverty families and their concentration of poor readers, the results suggest that to allocate funds on the basis of high poverty tends also to allocate on the basis of low achievement (and vice-versa). Finally, because so many schools with low concentrations of poverty students receive Title I funds, some concern should be given to what should be an adequate level of concentration of funds per pupil in making intra-district allocations.