

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION AMENDMENTS 1711

1. The 15% reduction in Title I our district and many others had to face this year.

(a) Last year Riverside employed 61 people in Title I. This year, because of the reduction, this number was reduced to 43, a net loss of 18 people.

(b) As a result of this reduction, the entire Title I reading program was eliminated at the senior high school level, and 2/5 of the program was eliminated at the junior high level. While the elementary schools were spared as much as possible, they too were affected through a loss of teacher aides and other supporting services which had previously enabled the preparation of special learning materials for each child.

(c.) If the 85% level is maintained next year, the loss of 15% over a two-year period will be cumulative. This loss is compounded through the effects of normal inflationary trends.

(d.) We have tied in the Title I funds with the district's program of integration. By next September, Riverside will have totally implemented its Master Plan for School Integration, and will have gone in a two-year period from a district with three de facto segregated schools to one of racial balance among all schools. Throughout this period, we have said that mere physical integration is not enough—accompanying it must be provisions for programs for low-socio-economic youngsters—to provide them with the educational background and incentives that they can compete on more equal terms with the more affluent children with whom they are not integrated. If we fall down in this respect, we threaten the very foundation of the principle of integration. I do not believe we can afford that risk.

2. In addition to the problems related to program, there is an even deeper one related to the indefiniteness of Federal funds—to the point that we don't know how to plan from year to year.

(a.) Sound educational planning is one of the chief requisites of school administration. It is a basic of basics.

(b.) From a planning standpoint, it would be better to have no program at all than to plan on one then have to reduce it.

(c.) The chief difficulty in this respect is personnel. We want good people on our projects—so we place our best staff members in the Federally financed programs—and bring in others to take their places in the rest of the program. Once these people are placed—and the project is reduced—some of the project staff then has to be reabsorbed in the regular program—in turn dislocating those who had been employed to take their place. Thus, it is not only the Federal project which is disrupted, but some aspects of the district's total program.

(d.) The urgent need is to know well in advance (as much as two years would be desirable)—in ample time to make the necessary personnel shifts—to know whether we're going to get 85%, 90%, 100% or less than 85%—for the years ahead. Without this lead time, we are forced into last minute planning. People affected by sudden readjustments become increasingly disenchanted with Federal funds.

The needs

1. I have already pointed out that most schools are in financial trouble. Riverside is no exception. Last year we were forced to trim \$450,000 from our program to balance the budget. Next year, we are faced with another \$700,000 reduction, and have no guarantee of the success of a proposed tax election or of an increase in state funds.

2. In this kind of a climate, the district is in enough of a financial turmoil—without the added problems related to the indefiniteness of Federal funds.

3. The district—and other districts in the state and country—need the Federal projects. Riverside perhaps has a special need because of its integration program. Ours was the first Title I project approved in the State of California. We think we have made wise and judicious use of the funds—and we would propose most earnestly that they be continued—and even expanded.

Recommendations

Having proposed that Federal funds be continued, I would hope that certain conditions could be imposed that would make a significant difference to school people across the country.

1. That we have a greater assurance from year-to-year of the level at which we can plan on Federal funds—whether it is to be 95% or 100% or 50%—it is important to know in order to plan our programs.

2. That school districts know well in advance of what the projected funds will be—again so that planning can be done and the projects can be tied in with the regular program to provide the most effective possible education.