

A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF
THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
COMMITTEE AS IT FUNCTIONS IN THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF THE LANSING
SCHOOL DISTRICT AND AS PERCEIVED
BY ITS MEMBERS

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.
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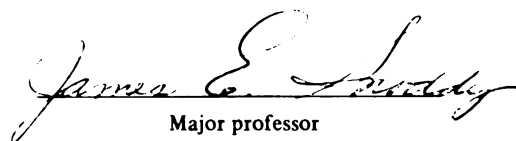
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ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE AS IT FUNCTIONS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF THE LANSING SCHOOL DISTRICT AND AS PERCEIVED BY ITS MEMBERS

By

Charles W. Ford

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on community involvement in public education. Many educators and community leaders believe that the quality of education increases when citizens participate. Consequently, school districts across the nation began to search for models that would fit their situations. The Lansing Michigan School District began, in the late 1960's to develop one that would meet their specific needs. This thesis is a study of the Community Involvement Committee model which they developed and adopted.

The population for the study included all forty-seven elementary schools within the Lansing School District. Six schools were randomly chosen for the sample. A survey instrument containing nine items was designed to gather information vital to the study. The questionnaire was sent to 101 persons and a total of 95 were returned.

The six primary Community Involvement Committee

objectives were translated into hypotheses so that they could be quantitatively studied. A statistical treatment of the responses showed that the first three hypotheses were not supported, while the second three were. Hypotheses one, two and three related to the Community Involvement Committee as the primary communication link, cross-section neighborhood representation and participation in school planning. The second three related to decision-making, needs assessment and solving school-community problems.

Recommendations for improving the organization based on the findings of the study are summarized below.

1. Develop programs designed to involve all elements of the community
2. Encourage all citizens who attend meetings to participate in the proceedings
3. Make certain that committees are involved in the initial planning stages of programs
4. Items relating to expressed needs should be included on the agenda
5. Committee chairmen should be selected with great care

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By

Charles W. Ford

A DISSERTATION

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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1976

DEDICATED

to

My Wife

Rosemary R. L. Ford

and

Our Four Children

Becky

Kevin

Julie

Daniel

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a democratic society citizen participation and involvement in the functions of its institutions is highly desirable and should be encouraged. As institutions such as government and public education increase in size and complexity, participation by individual citizens becomes a more difficult undertaking. People whose lives are busy with occupational, family and recreational pursuits often find it rather difficult, though not impossible, to find time for participation in activities that do not demand immediate attention. The pressures on individual citizens in this highly complex American society seems, at times, to be almost unbearable.

For many decades in the history of American public education citizen involvement was minimal. The growth of school systems resulting in part from the migration of people to the cities and the consolidation of school districts made individual participation in school operations more difficult. Some organizations such as the PTA were formed and did encourage community participation in school affairs.

In recent years educators, school boards and community leaders have sensed the need for and the desirability of involving parents, grandparents and other laymen in the educational process. This, along with federal and state requirements for citizen participation in the funding of special educational projects, has given rise to the development by school districts of various models for citizen involvement. The focus of this thesis will be on a Citizen's Involvement Committee Model developed by a relatively large school district in Central Michigan.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

It is an almost universal tenet of education today that school and community cooperation is essential to providing quality education for children. Manifesting his concern in this area Pittinger writes:

Public education must go beyond a system which is largely the preserve of professionals operating under the legal authority of a citizen school board. A nine citizen board whether members are elected or appointed, partisan, non-partisan or bi-partisan, can never exhaust a community's interest in its public schools. And so, teachers, administrators and school boards will have to look to a broader community, the citizens at large, for the support they will need in the next few years.¹

Citizens are continuing to demonstrate concern about their children's educational environment. Communities today are

¹John C. Pittinger, "Community Involvement is Here to Stay", Pennsylvania Education, No. 6 (July-August, 1972), p. 2.

not only expecting more from their schools but are, in some instances, demanding more. Many educators, too are rapidly awakening to the reality that the community is a vast reservoir of rich educational resources. To effectively tap this invaluable source some type of program must be developed to bring the two together into a reasonable working relationship.

Historically, the PTA has been the primary agency designed to bridge this gap. Focusing primarily on school-neighborhood problems has proven difficult for it in many cases because of its wide scope of operations. Being involved in city, state and national organizations, its attention often is focused on these different levels. Many of its resources, financial and human, are distributed over this wide area. In the past it has performed admirably and has been instrumental in influencing legislation favorable to public school operations. It has become, in many school districts, a major influence on the social life of the neighborhood.

Many people in communities today are seeking to become involved not only in social and advisory capacities but also in over-all planning and decision-making. In many cases, they no longer are content to attend school social functions and to be informed about school policy. They want a share in the decision-making. How to tap community resources, organize the community for action and involve citizens in the vital processes of education are

problems that many school systems are wrestling with today.

In the late 1960's the Lansing, Michigan School District began to lay the foundation for developing an administrative organization that would implement a philosophy of more local school control. This endeavor eventually led the school district to adopt and implement the concept of school decentralization. At that time several community involvement models were studied and field tested. Finally in 1973 after considerable study the Lansing School System adopted and introduced to its schools the model described in this thesis; the Community Involvement Committee, usually known by its acronym, the CIC. After three years of operation a study designed to evaluate its effectiveness in achieving its objectives might be of considerable benefit. It also would be helpful to the CIC committees and to others who are interested in its operation, to view both its strengths and weaknesses; the purpose being to determine where changes and adjustments might be made to improve its structure or implementation process.

PURPOSE To be considered along with the desirability of citizen involvement in school operations are the requirements of federal and state government regarding special educational programs, such as Title I and Chapter III. Tied closely to their funding is a mandate for community involvement in the planning and decision-making phases. For schools to qualify for some of these monies

they need to present documentary evidence of citizen participation.

Specifically, this study has a threefold purpose. First, it will describe and examine the organization as it exists and functions now in the Lansing School System. It would be well for the reader to keep in mind that there are considerable variations between committees both in structure and function. Those in the Lansing School District who participated in developing the model were careful to build in the element of flexibility. Along with variations, there are also some commonalities. The primary focus of this study will be on these commonalities which are inherent in the CIC objectives. The second purpose is to identify strengths and weaknesses in its structure or implementation process through a survey of its members. Third, the study will make recommendations for improving and upgrading the CIC based on the findings of the survey.

IMPORTANCE There are several reasons why a study of this nature is not only important but timely as well. First, the roots of many of today's school conflicts and problems are deeply embedded in the community from which the students come; therefore to effectively deal with these problems citizen participation and cooperation are not only desirable but often essential. Parents are asking for a larger voice in matters that so deeply affect the lives of their families and neighborhoods. What committee members think about the effectiveness of this

model at this point could prove to be highly significant in charting the future course.

Second, school boards, educators and community leaders are convinced that a closer working relationship with the community is necessary if school operating millages are to be successfully passed. It is believed that as citizens become more intimately involved in the planning and implementing of school programs communication begins to flow both ways creating a greater understanding of the problems being encountered. The Citizen's Involvement Committee in the Lansing Schools was designed to function as a liaison group linking the school and neighborhood.

Third, educators are becoming increasingly more aware of the vast educational resources sometimes hidden in their community. Parents, grandparents and other citizens often possess expertise in fields related to the school curriculum. Companies and businesses sometimes offer demonstrations, lecture programs or often can serve as laboratories for field trips. Rosenstein did a study in this area and found that all too often school personnel made little effort to identify available resources.² In analyzing the results of his survey he writes:

It was unanimously agreed that school personnel should make specific requests of directors of community institutions for resources needed in

²Irving Rosenstein, "The Availability of Community Resources for Urban Schools", Education, Vol. 95, No. 1, (Fall, 1974), p. 37.

school programs. The directors felt that community institutions would make these resources available for use by schools if they were requested. None of the directors felt, however, that they should notify schools in the community that they had resources available.³

The quality of both education and community life is enhanced immeasurably as they become involved in each other's operations. The CIC was designed to help develop and to foster better communication between community and school that hopefully would result in greater use of community resources by the school.

Fourth, as citizen input is mandated by many government funded programs it becomes necessary for school systems to establish committees to work in this area. School districts across the nation who have made application for these funds have been faced with the task of securing citizen participation. The PTA board has served in this capacity in some schools but often it did not meet such necessary requirements as cross-section community representation; therefore many schools set machinery in motion to develop citizen committees that would come closer to meeting desired standards. Developing a model that truly is representative of the neighborhood and whose contributions are based on an enlightened knowledge and understanding of community and school needs is highly significant at this stage. The rubber stamp variety will not meet this

³Ibid., p. 37.

need; therefore the time, effort and patience exerted in developing a viable and democratically functioning involvement committee would, in the long run, pay great dividends to both school and community and particularly to children.

Finally, the CIC has been operating in the Lansing Public Schools for three years and is considered by most of those who have participated in its efforts to be effective, at least to some degree, in achieving its goals. Others believe its potential has not been as yet wholly realized. From the experience gained during the time it has been operating many of the participants have suggested that some adjustments could be made at this point that would increase its effectiveness. To identify these areas is of considerable importance to those who are in positions of leadership. Consequently, a study of this nature is appropriate to evaluate the CIC with the goal in mind of identifying its strengths and weaknesses and possibly suggesting areas where revisions would strengthen it.

NEED FOR THE STUDY In a democratic society public apathy toward institutions is a most undesirable condition. Institutions of government, business, industry, religion and education need to be responsible either directly or indirectly to the public. An unconcerned attitude by the public may lead to excesses and abuses of power that can have disastrous or even tragic results. Presently there seems to be a call for more citizen input and involvement

in the operation of these institutions.

In the political arena, perhaps resulting from Watergate and other abuses of political power, some candidates for office are encouraging more citizen participation in government. They are not only making promises but are seeking citizen input and opinion.

In education, too, during the last decade there has been an increased effort to involve citizens. School districts across the nation have established committees and advisory counsels in an attempt to cope with this problem. In a survey done by Education U.S.A. it was found that a vast majority of school districts in America do have citizens' advisory committees of one kind or another.⁴

There are several reasons why a study of this nature is timely and needful. Some of these reasons are listed and discussed below.

1. Citizen committees are employed on a wide scale by school districts across the nation. It is estimated that less than 5% of the school districts in the United States have resisted and continue to resist using citizens' committees in school tasks and issues.⁵ Conducting research on an

⁴Citizen's Advisory Committee, A Publication of the National School Public Relations Association, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, Virginia, 1973.

⁵Ibid., p. 7.

issue so widely discussed could yield significant findings that might prove helpful to school districts contemplating the establishing or revising of a citizen's committee.

2. Many citizen involvement committees currently operating in school districts were developed recently. In some cases they were hurriedly organized because of some outside pressure such as application for federal or state monies or the emergence of a problem that demanded citizen attention. Even school districts that approached the problem scientifically found little actual research on which to base the developmental process. Because of the recent blossoming of these committees along with the relatively short period of time many have been functioning, the kind of research needed has not yet been developed.
3. The Citizen's Involvement Committee as it operates in the Lansing School District needs to be studied with the goal in mind of determining its present status, identifying strengths and weaknesses and recommending ways to upgrade it. The Lansing School District developed and field tested this model and introduced it to its schools three years ago. Hopefully, out of this study will come findings that will assist those who participate

in its operation to make important adjustments in its structure or implementation process as they plan for the future.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY Although the findings of this study may prove to be of value to those concerned with citizen's involvement it does have limitations. It would be well for the reader to be aware of them as he reads, interprets or applies the findings.

First, there is the problem of membership. Theoretically any person living in the school attendance area can be a member of the CIC. Even the term member itself needs explanation as most committees do not have a formal membership program like the Parent Teacher Association. The organization is similar to the old New England town meeting where attendance was taken as membership; therefore any person living in the school attendance area who attends a meeting is qualified to participate and vote on any issue on the agenda.

The Lansing School District encourages CIC officers to strive for cross-section representation at meetings and undoubtedly many do; but the possibility does exist for the administrators to call only selected persons when deciding crucial issues.

A second problem which is closely related to the one just discussed involves the population and sample of this study. The population includes all forty seven

elementary schools within the Lansing School District and six of these schools were chosen for the sample on a stratified basis. (This part is discussed more thoroughly under methodology.) Because the membership is somewhat fluid there was some possibility for bias in choosing the sample. Participating principals were requested to send the researcher a list of all persons who attended meetings during the 1975-1976 school year. How closely the sample represents the school population is a problem one should keep in mind when reading this study. If a principal consistently encouraged those parents who usually participate in school functions to attend CIC meetings, then it would be difficult to get an unbiased sampling of the population.

A third limitation one should keep in mind while reading this study is that the findings are based primarily on the perception of the respondents. Although many studies are similarly based it is a factor one should consider because different people perceive and interpret a situation in a somewhat different manner.

As one considers these limitations it should be kept in mind that this thesis is a study of the Community Involvement Committee as it existed and functioned in the Lansing Schools during the 1975-1976 school year. The writer believes that even with the possibility of some degree of bias, as well as the other limitations, the study did yield findings that may serve as a guide in charting the future course of the CIC.

GENERALIZABILITY It is worth indicating that the findings of this study may have impact beyond the limits of the study itself. Although the population is limited to the Lansing elementary schools many school districts throughout Michigan and the country are searching for community involvement models to adopt to fit their situation. Although it is true that no one citizen's involvement committee model will fit every situation, any research that is done in this area could prove to be of considerable benefit to schools that are endeavoring to establish one or are working to revise one already in operation.

There are two primary reasons why the findings of this study can be generalized. First, the stratified method of choosing the sample should make it quite representative of the Lansing population in general. Second, although neighborhoods surrounding each school vary in many aspects, methods that foster positive school-community relationships in some schools should be applicable in many other school situations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS The primary purpose of this study is to describe and examine the Citizen's Involvement Committee as it operates in the Lansing Public Schools. It is intended that it should play an increasingly more important role in school-community life. An evaluation of its effectiveness in light of its goals could prove highly useful in planning for the future.

The following three questions represent the primary thrust of this research project.

1. Does the Community Involvement Committee as it now operates in the Lansing Public Schools represent a cross-section of its neighborhood?
2. Is the CIC achieving its objectives to an acceptable degree? What are the identifiable strengths and weaknesses?
3. What specific measures could be taken to make the Community Involvement Committee a more effective group?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES Tied closely to the research questions are objectives of the CIC. These objectives were examined and investigated carefully within the context of the research questions and the hypotheses.

Objective 1. To be the primary communication link between the school and the community

Hypothesis: The Community Involvement Committee is the primary communication link between the school and the community.

Objective 2. To reflect a cross-section of the neighborhood in its composition.

Hypothesis: The CIC reflects a cross-section of the neighborhood it represents.

Objective 3. To involve the school and the community in the process of planning school programs

Hypothesis: The CIC represents the school and the community in planning school programs.

Objective 4. To involve the school and the community in the process of decision-making

Hypothesis: The CIC represents the school and the community in making decisions concerning school operations.

Objective 5. To reflect the school and the community in the process of needs assessment

Hypothesis: The CIC represents the school and the community in the process of needs assessment.

Objective 6. To bring to the table to discuss and seek solutions to community and/or school problems

Hypothesis: The CIC represents the school and the community in seeking solutions to community and/or school problems.

An examination of these objectives and hypotheses provided information essential to answering the stated research questions concerning the degree of effectiveness of the Community Involvement Committee Model.

DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT TERMS Definitions for key terms used in this study are included to provide a common basis for understanding.

1. Community - The attendance area of any individual school
2. CIC - Community Involvement Committee
3. Cross-section - Representation from all sections of the neighborhood (e.g. race, economic, occupational and social)
4. Cyclic flow - the moving of information in a circular pattern from one group to another as opposed to a linear movement
5. Decentralization - The diffusing and sharing of power once held by the central administration with teachers, principals and members of the community
6. Decision-making - Making a choice reflecting a majority opinion
7. General population - All of the Lansing School District's forty-seven elementary schools and their attendance areas
8. Needs Assessment - A method of looking at the school and the community to identify factors necessary to the carrying out of their objectives
9. Neighborhood - The attendance area of any given

school (Used interchangeably with community)

10. Strategy - A plan of action (Used interchangeably with method in this research project)
11. Volunteer personnel - Individuals who offer their services to the school on an unpaid basis

SUMMARY The education of this generation's youth is a difficult and challenging responsibility. Children growing up in the present society need more sophisticated tools to cope with every day living than did their parents and grandparents. A world that is rapidly becoming computerized, automated and mechanized is much different from that of the past.

The challenge of guiding today's children in their development is greater than the school with its professional staff and central administration support can meet. The day, if not already here, is fast approaching when the school will need to invite the community to assist and participate more intimately in the educational process. Lansing has taken a step in this direction by developing and implementing the Community Involvement Committee in its schools. Although it is not the ultimate; and will undoubtedly be added to, changed and revised periodically; it is presently meeting a need. The goal of this study is to determine the degree to which it is meeting its objectives and, hopefully, to make recommendations that should serve as a basis for improving it.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The primary focus of chapter two is to review the related literature. Although this study is not a replication there have been research projects and papers written on subjects closely related that provide a theoretical basis for the project. It is believed that a review of related literature will not only help one to see the need for this study but will also show its importance to the field of education.

This review of literature has been divided into six categories. First, some studies are cited pertaining to the changes that have taken place in society during the last few decades. The broad scope of this field makes a brief review difficult. For the purposes of this study only a few specific and representative societal changes having a direct relationship to the topic under consideration are reviewed. Second, the subject of school decentralization is examined. A brief survey of its history and operations is made to assist the reader in further understanding the rationale for a study of this type. Third, the reader's attention is directed toward the

subject of community involvement in the educational process. Although the primary focus of this paper is the study of a specific community involvement model there is presently a national trend by school districts to involve communities in school affairs on a wider scale. Fourth, the present trend by schools to involve citizens in needs assessment programs is reviewed. Fifth, attempts to gain parental participation in the processes of school planning and decision-making are surveyed. Finally studies are examined relating to the much misunderstood and controversial topic of accountability.

CHANGING SOCIAL CONDITIONS The past several decades have brought almost unbelievable changes to American society. The development of technology affecting business and industry coupled with the advances of science in communication and transportation fields have had a far reaching impact on social conditions in America. The social changes brought about at least in part by these developments have greatly affected institutions in the United States and particularly schools.

Kliebard addressing this phenomenon states;

American schools, once the most placid of institutions, have been torn by internal strife and subjected to continuing attack. Civil rights struggles, rising expectations, spreading affluence, automobile ownership by the young and the pervasiveness of television and other distractions crowd out school as a focus of

teen-age interest.¹

One change in society that is having an impact of major proportions on school systems is the dramatic rise in the crime rate. From small villages to large metropolitan areas vandalism and crime are affecting citizens in all walks of life and are causing major concern for institutions such as schools. Kiernan contends that:

Violence and vandalism have moved, in just one decade, from being an occasional problem in the life of educators to a position of oppressive and ever present dominance. Each year hundreds of thousands of students are assaulted and the property damage exceeds one half billion dollars.²

Recently, in an article written for a Chicago newspaper, an educator stated that it would be surprising to find even one elementary school in that city that hadn't been affected to some degree by drugs. Concerned people in many areas of the country are trying to determine the cause of this rise in violence and lack of respect for human life and property. Public schools along with appropriate government agencies are searching for ways to deal with this most distressing social condition. Kiernan, in several places in his article, suggests

¹Herbert M. Kliebard, The School in the Social Order, International Textbook Company, Scranton, Pa., 1970, p. 203.

²Owen B. Kiernan, "School Violence and Vandalism", National Association of Secondary School Principals, Washington, D.C., April 16, 1975, p. 1.

several reasons for this increase in crime.

. . . . breakdown of family control, glamorization of violence on television, drugs, street crime, anonymity of schools and neighborhoods, contempt for the value of personal and public property, lethargic courts, emphasis on students' rights, teacher apathy and parental indifference.³

Della-Dora and House shed light from a different angle on the subject of the breakdown of school authority when they cite the effects of the historic Brown versus the Board of Education Supreme Court decision. They contend that it laid the grounds for the massive resistance movements of the 1960's. They go on to say that a large segment of the violence and disruption during the past decade, in schools and society, has been caused by those who wanted a piece of the action, a larger share of the power and decision-making. In recent years we have heard from groups who heretofore have been silent, namely; blacks, women, students and teachers.⁴

Vast changes in school structure and policy have been made as a direct result of the influences of these groups. Teachers have become highly organized and in some cases, extremely militant and have at times engaged

³Ibid., pp. 1-5.

⁴Delmo Della-Dora and James E. House, Education for an Open Society, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Washington, D.C., 1974, pp. 13, 97.

in illegal strikes. Della-Dora and House, in attempting to account for this change from passivity to militancy in teachers, contend that the rise in teacher power is a response to deteriorating conditions in schools and society at large.⁵

As one of the many groups concerned about the urban crisis the National Education Association appointed a task force to study the situation. This study group was headed by Mrs. Irvamae Applegate, Dean of the School of Education, St. Cloud State College at St. Cloud, Minnesota. The main concern of the study was to survey the schools and their problems as they functioned within the urban setting. The motivating force behind the project was a desire to determine the reasons for crime, vandalism and attacks which were made on schools by various groups and individuals. One recommendation made by the task force based on the findings of its study was that school staffs, students and parents should participate in the definition of the goals and objectives of schools and review current programs offered to accomplish these goals.⁶ It was believed that if more segments of the community would become involved in school operations some of the pressures on schools would be minimized or

⁵Ibid., p. 149.

⁶"Schools of the Urban Crisis", A Study by the National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1969, p. 27.

perhaps even eliminated altogether.

Another recommendation made by this group was that:

. . . persons within each community who are not involved in the formal educational process but who have special skills as mothers, businessmen, industrialists, retired people, electricians, plumbers and others should be included in the on-going educational program.⁷

Kliebard sums up the philosophy of many educators and laymen as well when he states:

Schools which are responsive to the needs, aspirations and cultural style of the communities they serve stand a greater chance of harnessing the energies of professionals, students, parents and community residents in building a more viable urban social institution.⁸

Television is another force that is causing far reaching changes in society and whose impact both positive and negative has not yet been adequately measured. There is a rising concern on the part of educators, clergymen and other civic groups about the possible negative effects television viewing is having on the minds of children and young people.

Rosenblatt and Cunningham made a study of sixty-four families in Minneapolis, Minnesota to determine the effects of television viewing. Listed below are some of their findings that are related to the topic under

⁷Ibid., p. 27.

⁸Kliebard, op. cit., p. 311.

consideration in this paper.

1. The average American family had its television set on from six to seven hours each day.
2. There is a positive correlation between the amount of time spent watching television and family tension.
3. The amount of television watching seems to be a valid indicator of family tension.⁹

This study focused mainly on the relationship between the amount of time a family spent watching television and family tension. Many educators are concerned about the physical and mental condition of children as they come to school. The watching of late night television programs affects a child's sleeping habits and sometimes renders him ineffective as a learner. Often, too, when children experience tension at home it also affects their relationships with other children both in the neighborhood and at school.

Another aspect of television viewing that needs more research is the impact of the content of programs on the minds of the viewers. Gattegno states:

We are clearly concerned with what people see on the screen how they see it and the way it

⁹Paul C. Rosenblatt and Michael P. Cunningham, "Television Watching and Family Tension", University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minn., 1975, pp. 1-13.

affects them physiologically, psychologically, socially and spiritually."¹⁰

Out of America's fermenting society comes another shift which has greatly affected institutions including the schools, namely, the increasing number of women who are joining the work force. There are, undoubtedly, many reasons for this development, some of which are changing values, the current emphasis on individual rights, rising inflation, the desire for self-fulfillment through pursuing a career and necessity caused by divorce or death.

Della-Dora and House, in referring to this situation in relation to its impact on schools, stated that women represent 43 percent of the full time labor force and three fourths are employed because they either have no support or help to support their family.¹¹

In many instances schools become intimately involved in these situations as children of working mothers sometimes come to school early and meet on the school playground, creating a need for supervision. Then, too, some of these mothers, because of working schedules are not available for parent-teacher conferences. Many educators are seeking ways to accomodate children and mothers who find themselves in this type of situation.

¹⁰Caleb Gattegno, Towards A Visual Culture, Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, New York, N.Y., 1969, pp. 9-10.

¹¹Della-Dora and House, op. cit., p. 180.

Looking to the future schools must plan in the light of the fact that according to statistics published by the U.S. Department of Labor nine out of ten women will work at some time in their lives.¹²

School boards and educators presently are searching for solutions to problems resulting from changes in the nature of the population. The mobility of America's population has presented problems for schools. Other subtle changes are taking place however, that have far reaching implications for those involved in school operations. Hostrop writes, "In 1930 less than six percent of the population of the United States was over age 65; ten percent now is and the figure is going up."¹³ As the birth rate continues to decline and the percentage of people who are older rises some of the implications for schools are quite clear. Already school districts faced with declining enrollments are searching for solutions to the problem of having too many tenured staff members.

Another problem closely related to this is the attitude of many senior citizens toward school millages. As the number of retired persons continues to increase a concern of many in government and education is the

¹²Ibid., p. 175.

¹³Richard W. Hostrop, Foundations of Futurology in Education, ETC Publication, Homewood, Illinois, 1973, p. 96.

decreasing prospect of passing school millages. Hostrop, when commenting on this problem, discusses the fact that many local millage increases for school financing have, in recent times been defeated. This has happened in wealthy, middle income and poor communities.

We have failed to realize that now we have a larger proportion of older persons on fixed incomes. More and more these senior citizens, when confronted with a vote on an increase in property tax on their home, realize that they are voting for a reduction in their standard of living.¹⁴

In today's society the extent and rapidity of change is almost frightening. Our institutions are constantly feeling the pressures being exerted on them by individuals and groups. Hostrop summarizes this very succinctly when he writes:

. . . so many changes have been taking place in education and society recently that it is not possible to portray comprehensively what these changes are, or what their effect will be upon the participants in the system, much less to identify, with precision, the implications for the future.¹⁵

ACCOUNTABILITY Although it is nearly impossible to trace the concept of accountability back to its roots the call for it has come much clearer and louder in recent years. Various individuals and groups in society, who have been demanding changes in social institutions,

¹⁴Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 94.

have turned their attention toward the schools and have been asking for some type of accountability. Individual parents, groups of parents, civic groups along with others have joined in the quest for accountability. Decreasing test scores, lack of writing skills, low achievement in reading and math have given impetus to this call.

Undoubtedly, this is one of the most controversial issues to surface in the field of education in recent years. As tax payers demand that an accounting be made of monies spent for education, as well as the progress in skills development of their children, teachers, in many cases, have begun to feel threatened. So the ball of accountability is presently being bounced around and where it will finally stop is a question that concerns many today.

The lack of consensus on issues involving many phases of accountability is expressed quite clearly by Grady when she states that much of the controversy over accountability stems from the lack of a widely accepted definition of what it is and who it is that is accountable.¹⁶ This seems to be the common thread woven into much of the literature. Educators, parents and various

¹⁶Roslyn M. Grady, "Accountability — A Personal Point of View", Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, (DHEW), Washington, D.C., 1974, p. 1.

community groups are presently wrestling with these questions, seeking for answers that might work to the improving of the educational environment for children. Grady continues to suggest at least a partial solution to the dilemma of who is accountable. Following is an outline of her proposal:

1. Students are accountable to attend school on a regular basis. They also are expected to display acceptable behavior and to perform certain educational tasks.
2. Parents are accountable as well. They should cooperate with the school staff in an effort to help their child. They also should make their opinions and priorities known to the school.
3. Teachers, to a certain degree, have always been accountable to their students, parents, administration and the board of education. But now teachers are being involved in a new thrust of accountability — namely, to determine where a student is educationally and to help him from that point.
4. Administrators and instructional support personnel are accountable to students, parents, teachers, board of education and the public. They should work cooperatively with others

who have a vital interest in schools.

5. The board of education is ultimately accountable to the public.¹⁷

One can readily see the attempt Grady makes to spread responsibility around to just about everyone who is involved in any way in the educational process. Some writers tend to focus more on the teacher phase of responsibility when discussing accountability. Pinero contends that accountability links student performance with teacher performance. It means, he continues, that schools will be judged by how they perform and not by what they promise.¹⁸

Several other writers also focus primarily on the quality of teacher performance when dealing with this subject. Green suggests:

Accountability for educational outcomes infers that favorable changes in professional performance will occur resulting in higher pupil academic achievement and improvement of pupil attitude.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 2 - 4.

¹⁸Europa Gonzales de Pinero, Accountability and Change in Education, The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., Danville, Illinois, 1972, p. 11.

¹⁹Gordon G. Green, Accountability in the School Curriculum, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa, 1973, p. 3.

Green becomes even more specific when he states that the burden of responsibility rests on the shoulders of the individual elementary teacher.²⁰

Some researchers inquiring into this subject seem deeply concerned with the attitude of youngsters as they come into the classroom. They contend that teachers are hindered in their efforts to help children who come to school with negative and defiant attitudes caused by conflicts in the home. Although it is not the design of this paper to discuss emotional and psychological disturbances affecting children the subject does emerge periodically when reading literature on accountability.

Sciara and Jantz, when commenting on this, say:

Although it may not represent the majority of parents a growing number send their children to school and hope for the best. Some of these children have serious personal problems, therefore teacher time is often taken up playing the role of doctor, counselor or psychologist in trying to rebuild personalities of children with wounded egos—the result of parental neglect.²¹

In perusing the literature one gets the idea that few people are neutral when considering the subject of accountability. Most interested and involved persons whether they are teachers, parents, administrators or

²⁰Ibid., p. 6.

²¹Frank J. Sciara and Richard K. Jantz, Accountability in American Education, Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, Mass., 1972, p. 27.

others have opinions and emphases and will readily discuss them in writing or orally. Pinero presents a different aspect when he writes, ". . . low productivity and mounting problems such as costs have increased astronomically while performance levels have remained the same or declined."²² Problems as widespread as these that affect practically every American family either directly or indirectly need to be studied carefully and accountability usually comes to the surface as a part of the solution. The more that different researchers study the problem the greater becomes the variety of possible approaches to deal with it. Pinero continues in his discussion to suggest that educational accountability can be implemented successfully only if educational objectives are clearly stated.²³

This particular statement opens up a whole new area of accountability, namely the basing of teaching, testing and evaluation on performance objectives. This, too, has gendered much controversy. Educators in school districts throughout the country are struggling to develop lessons based on objectives that are educationally sound and will meet the desired community standards and expectations. Many school districts in attempting to develop

²²Pinero, op. cit., p. 5.

²³Ibid., p. 7.

a system of performance objectives that meets these standards are finding it difficult to get a consensus from teachers as to what should be included and what, if any, sequence is important. In addressing this subject Cox states that ". . . in classrooms today we are witnessing ideological warfare, for consensus no longer exists about the purpose of education."²⁴

Even though deciding on what to teach and how to teach it presents an almost insurmountable obstacle the educational process goes on. As the press for accountability continues school staffs across the nation are searching for techniques that will be workable in the classroom and will still meet federal, state and community demands for accountability. Coping with this problem has been disturbing to many administrators and teachers.

Sciara addresses this subject when he writes:

By claiming that the teacher much be held accountable to the public the teacher is being placed in the impossible situation where his method of discipline, assigning homework, recommending outside reading and school assignments may be approved by some individuals and groups in the community but disapproved by others.²⁵

In summarizing the literature on accountability

²⁴C. B. Cox, The Accountability of Schools, Churchill Press Limited, Middlesex, England, 1973, p. 8.

²⁵Sciara, op. cit., p. 27.

there are several crucial issues that seem evident. Even in the maize of conflicting theories and philosophies these concepts can be identified. Following is a summary of these concepts which is by no means complete or exhaustive but should assist the reader in getting a clearer picture of the subject.

1. Accountability is an issue that will not fade away with time like some educational fads, but is here to stay.
2. The task of school districts to develop an acceptable program will not be easy.
3. A growing majority of people believe that school staffs should be accountable for the large sums of money spent on education.
4. Communities are much more inclined to accept a system they had a part in developing.
5. Federal and state educational agencies will continue to mandate some form of accountability when making funds available.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT Although historically citizens have participated, to some degree, in school affairs; not until recently has there been an urgent and widespread effort made to increase involvement. Community leaders and school staffs are recognizing the

importance and perhaps even the necessity of securing the participation and cooperation of parents and other citizens if the schools are to function productively.

Out of a churning and fermenting society along with a call for some system of accountability comes a realization of the need for more citizen cooperation and participation in the educational process. Some researchers contend that when parents become more intimately involved in school operations they also become more interested in their children's educational development. Chadwick, in a study of this nature, found that those teachers who responded stated that because of community involvement in the instructional aspect of school curriculum parents were much more interested in school and in their youngsters' learning.²⁶

The Flint Public Schools have done considerable work in this area and have published a handbook describing the operations and responsibilities of their Community Advisory Council. A study made by this council revealed several significant, though not too surprising findings which are listed below.

1. People attend meetings and work on projects if,

²⁶Evelyn H. Chadwick, "Improved Education: Total Commitment of All Concerned People in Communities of Greensboro, Woodbury and Hardwick, Vermont," U.S. Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C., June 1975, p. 29.

and only if, they see a need for the meeting or project.

2. People are interested in and will join organizations thich deal with community needs.
3. People will only involve themselves in community and school activities if they feel responsible, important and needed by that community and school.²⁷

Resulting from this study as well as many other individual group efforts the Flint schools have made important progress in constructively involving the community in the educational process. In the Flint model described above the school district believes that helping citizens to identify and understand specific needs is a top priority. According to their philosophy, it follows that when people become aware of and understand community needs they will be much more willing to become personally involved in the process of seeking answers and finding solutions.

The Lansing School District in its Community Involvement Committee Handbook also recommends group discussion of needs as a means of initiating citizen

²⁷"Community Advisory Council Handbook", Flint Community Schools, Board of Education, Flint, Mich., 1975.

interest and involvement.²⁸ The issue dealt with in this section of the handbook focuses on the difficulty some groups had experienced in getting the more reticent and reluctant members to actively participate in discussion. It was found that although these people had much to contribute they often hesitated to participate in committee deliberations. When this occurred they would lose interest. Lansing found, just as Flint had discovered, that when people became aware of a need and participated actively in seeking solutions they often made significant contributions.

One is impressed with the consensus among most researchers and writers on the importance of community participation in school concerns. Although there is a wide diversity of ideas as to how to accomplish this, most educators and community leaders are unified when it comes to the issue of increased citizen involvement.

Barry and Tye liken school-parent cooperation to a partnership when they write:

The school must use its best endeavors to stimulate and to encourage parental response and initiative, in order to establish a genuine partnership; this will involve the deliberate encouragement of parental assessment, particularly of their own child's work and progress,

²⁸Community Involvement Committee Handbook, Research and Planning Dept., Lansing School District, Lansing, Mich., August 1974, p. 27.

but also more widely, of the school's successes and failures.²⁹

Like many of the writers who discuss community involvement in the educational process, Barry and Tye voice some concern with the communication aspect of it. Meeting in groups as such is not enough: to be effective the group must establish lines of communication that flow two ways. They express this concept by stating that the relationship between schools and parents must achieve a genuine two-way communication.³⁰

In many school districts there is a move toward more community control of the public schools. The transition from a bureaucratic system to a more democratic community involvement organization is not easy in many cases. Regardless, however, of the problems encountered in changing the power structure of school systems so that the community shares it; the present trend is toward increased local control. It appears that the public call for more of a share in control outweighs the many difficulties experienced by school districts when they restructure their system to allow for it.

Fantini contends that community frustration with the public educational system has manifested itself in

²⁹C. H. Barry and F. Tye, Running a School, Schocken Books, Inc., New York, N.Y., 1972, p. 213.

³⁰Ibid., p. 213.

the movement toward the community school and this movement, of course, fits in well with a general effort to achieve a redistribution of power to allow the public a greater voice in the development of educational policy.³¹

Some writers in this field expressed concern that a redistribution of power, in many cases, would be more political than real and would not produce the desired effect of more local participation. Many educators and community leaders believe that a change in administrative structure or a shift in power that does not result in more local involvement has fallen far short of its intended goal. Fantini, in discussing this subject says:

Community school boards should establish procedures and channels to facilitate the closest possible consultation at the individual school level with parents, community residents, teachers and supervisory personnel.³²

A primary concern of many persons who are interested and involved in this problem is to not merely change school districts but to establish a system that will result in increased neighborhood participation in school affairs. As Fantini has indicated, a change in patterns of control which opens the door for more sharing of power should be coupled with some procedure or strategy to

³¹Mario Fantini, Community Control and the Urban School, Praeger Publishers, New York, N.Y., 1970, p. 16.

³²Ibid., p. 111.

encourage individuals to become more involved.

In summarizing the literature on community involvement a statement by Maguire is noteworthy: "The future seems to hold more community control for individual schools; several states have already legislated provisions for community boards."³³ Many persons who have done research in this area or have written articles for publication believe that definite advantages result from increased community involvement in the affairs of public schools. Dobson and Dobson summarize the advantages and suggest the following as significant:

1. More citizens will participate in school elections.
2. There is an increased sense of racial pride.
3. There is usually a decline in truancy.
4. Often there is a rise in student achievement levels.³⁴

NEEDS ASSESSMENT As the spotlight of public attention continued to focus on the schools it became

³³John W. Maguire, "School Principals and Community Power Structure", Intellect, Society for the Advancement of Education, N.Y., Vol. 102, No. 2356, Summer 1974, p. 511.

³⁴Russell Dobson and Judith S. Dobson, Parental and Community Involvement in Education and Teacher Education, ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, Washington, D.C., Feb., 1975, p. 14.

painfully evident that the needs of many students were not being adequately met. In many instances schools had made little or no attempt to diagnose the child's particular needs and to set up a program of instruction designed to remedy them. People began to question the goals and effectiveness of their schools. At first this criticism came primarily from individuals and groups who tended to be militant and were questioning many aspects of American social and political institutions. Eventually, however, many leaders in the community along with other citizens who had a history of loyalty and participation in school affairs also began to question the effectiveness of the schools in meeting the needs of the students. Educators then began to recognize the wisdom of involving community members in study groups designed to explore the needs of students and how the school could best meet them.

One cannot help but notice in reviewing the literature how interrelated needs assessment is with the element of community involvement. In an article published by the California Department of Education reference is made to this relationship. The writer contends that one of the most important ingredients essential to the success of the needs assessment process is parental and community

involvement.³⁵ The writer continues in his discussion to point out that in any needs assessment program a top priority should be to bring together as many segments of the community as possible to join in this effort. He says, "A cooperative grass roots effort on the part of the staff, parents and community ensures the determination of real problems and needs of the community."³⁶

It seems that many researchers in this area believe that it is essential for parents and other citizens to be involved in developing and implementing any needs assessment program. Educators across the nation are realizing more than ever the wisdom of encouraging parental participation. Not only is it good as a public relations strategy but it has also been found that many community members possess expertise in areas that enable them to make valuable contributions to the school program.

Huyser, in discussing the Michigan Assessment Program states:

Citizens, educators, students and Michigan Department of Education staff members were all involved in determining specifically what skills children should attain in Michigan schools. He continues that the ultimate goal of the Michigan Assessment program is to help assure that all of Michigan's pupils will

³⁵"Focus on Promising Practices of Needs Assessment" California Department of Education, Sacramento, California, 1974, p. 10.

³⁶Ibid., p. 10.

attain the basic skills.³⁷

Bringing people together to work on common problems is the philosophy being adopted by many of today's community leaders and educators. Like many other school districts, Lansing has expended much effort in the attempt to involve community members in its needs assessment program. It has established groups or committees in each school area to meet whenever necessary to discuss and determine needs and to set educational priorities. The basic philosophy that guides the operation of these groups is stated in the needs assessment bulletin published by the Lansing School District.

1. The needs assessment identifies problem areas or educational needs that are present in the ongoing school program.
2. The entire school community should be involved in the identification of school needs.
3. All members of the community are to be encouraged to join in and assist with the development of the needs assessment.
4. This needs assessment model is designed to reduce the discrepancy between where we are and where we would like to be.

³⁷Robert J. Huyser, "Educational Assessment: the Michigan Plan", Michigan Department of Education, Lansing, Michigan, 1975, pp. 6-19.

5. It should be kept in mind that to make a valid determination of the current status of the ongoing program as much information as possible should be made available to needs assessment groups.³⁸

In most needs assessment models there seems to be four primary tasks. Rooky in describing the East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania model lists these four as:

1. Definition of goals
2. Assessment of the current program
3. Identification of needs
4. Decision-making in setting priorities³⁹

Although there is not a long history of research in the area of needs assessment from which to draw information school districts nationwide are developing and launching programs.

One major reason for the rapid increase in interest in this area is the requirements of federal and state governments in funding special educational projects. Most school districts, like other institutions and individuals have been feeling the tremendous impact of

³⁸"Needs Assessment", Lansing School District, Lansing, Michigan, July, 1975, pp. 1-3.

³⁹Jerome T. Rookey, "Needs Assessment—Model: East Stroudsburg", Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, Washington, D.C., May 1975.

inflation. The search for monies to supplement revenue recieved from property tax and state aid goes on relentlessly. In recent years the federal government has allocated huge sums of money for education to be used for a variety of special projects. The competition for this money by school districts is fierce. To recieve these federal grants certain stipulated requirements must be met. In some instances a needs assessment program that includes parents is a requirement. In discussing this particular problem Wilkins declares that the scramble for tax dollars is such that schools wishing to apply for grants under certain state and federal programs, such as Title III and ESEA, must justify their requests with comprehensive needs assessment data.⁴⁰ Wilkins continuing to elaborate on this point writes:

In the last decade state legislature and local communities have demanded that school districts document their needs and provide a rationale for the way that they spend their funds.⁴¹

A review of the literature in this area seems to indicate that there will be a continued emphasis on needs assessment programs by school districts in American public education. The models developed by school systems such as

⁴⁰Belle Ruth Wilkins, An Analysis of Needs Assessment Techniques for Educational Planning at State, Intermediate and District Levels, National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C., May, 1975, p. 6.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 16.

Lansing and Flint will undoubtedly be evaluated periodically and altered to meet new standards and conditions. As long as the reasons that gave rise to the emphasis on developing these programs remain schools probably will continue to develop and implement them. Wilkins, in her article, summarizes the reasons why schools are being influenced to develop and to implement needs assessment programs. They are as follows:

1. For improved curriculum planning
2. Accountability
3. For evaluation purposes
4. To support application for federal funds for competitive programs⁴²

SCHOOL PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING Historically the American public has had an interest in education and in the development of the public school system. More specifically, parents have always been concerned with the educational progress of their children. Their participation, however until recently, has been on a limited basis. Interested and willing parents have worked on committees, provided transportation for field trips, brought refreshments for school socials and assisted in whatever area the teacher requested. Presently, however, there is a trend toward involving citizens in the main flow of the

⁴²Ibid.

educational process. They are being encouraged and invited to participate not only in an advisory capacity, but in the planning of projects and in the decision-making phase.

Stanwick made a study of the attitude of citizens toward more participation by the public in school operations. Her findings which are listed below are rather interesting and perhaps quite significant.

1. More than 78 percent of the respondents predict an increase in participation. Only 15 percent predict a decrease and 7 percent were uncertain of the future level of activity.
2. About 69 percent of the 1,489 respondents to opinion questions believe there is too little citizen participation in schools, less than 2 percent believe there is too much.
3. Although the actual percentage was not given Stanwick reports that a high percentage of the respondents believe that the results of increased citizen participation will be positive in terms of improved pupil achievement in basic skills, increased community support for schools, higher teacher morale, better teacher performance and innovations in curriculum and

teaching.⁴³

It is quite evident from this study that citizen participation is not only desirable but is considered to be highly important in the productive operation of public schools.

Some concern has been expressed by a few educators that many citizens are not well enough informed in the wide range of school problems to plan important programs and to make crucial decisions relating to them. This, undoubtedly is true in some cases, consequently school districts conduct workshops and have developed communication systems to supply parents and teachers with vital information that is necessary for them to make wise and informed decisions. Even under these conditions faulty decisions are sometimes made. In a paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Moore suggested:

Greater decision-making authority is being transferred to local schools and the evidence regarding the success of more localized school decision-making seems to far outweigh any reports of its failure.⁴⁴

⁴³Mary Ellen Stanwick, "Patterns of Participation", A Report of a National Survey of Citizen Participation in Educational Decision-Making, Institute for Responsive Education, Boston, Mass., April, 1975, p. 14.

⁴⁴Mary T. Moore, "Local School Program Planning Organizational Implications", A paper presented to the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., April, 1975, pp. 9, 11.

Another problem that leaders in this field sometimes face is that citizen participation can degenerate to the rubber stamp variety. There are instances where citizen groups have been asked to participate only to find that the planning phase was already underway and that some important decisions had been unofficially made. Getting community endorsement for a project that is dependent for funding on federal or state grants is one reason for this situation. According to educators who are making sincere efforts to involve citizens in every phase of a project, it is vitally important to secure input and feedback at every step in the process. Jongeward expresses this concern when he advises school personnel who are attempting to involve parents to be certain the school-community group assists with the planning phase, helps install the new program, participates in the monitoring task and after a few months also helps with assessing the progress it has made.⁴⁵

Jongeward comments further on this problem when he writes, ". . . try to involve the entire community, students, staff, custodians, secretaries, bus drivers and other community people so all voices can be heard."⁴⁶

⁴⁵Ray E. Jongeward, "How to Expand Learning Opportunities in Small School Districts", A paper presented at the National School Board Association Convention, Miami Beach, Florida, April, 1975, p. 9.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 8.

As America has grown so has the size and complexity of most of its social, political and educational institutions. Individuals within this society often tend to feel isolated and sometimes quite helpless when it comes to affecting any degree of change in these institutions. Nonetheless, their daily lives are being greatly influenced and affected by them. Many educators contend that by involving citizens in all phases of school operations from planning to final evaluation a lessening of the feeling of isolation occurs as citizens realize their voice can be heard and their judgment is important. Moore, in addressing this problem declares:

Localizing greater decision-making power in the local school unit provides an effective means for coping with problems presented by organizational structures which transcends the scale at which human beings can deal with them.⁴⁷

In summarizing the literature in the area of planning and decision-making one thing seems quite certain — the trend toward citizen participation will continue in the future, if for no other reason than meeting state and federal requirements for funding. This, however, is not the only reason schools will continue this practice. Society, too, will continue to demand some type of accountability and, hopefully, there will be an ever increasing

⁴⁷Moore, op. cit., p. 18.

participation in all phases of school operations, including planning and decision-making. Then, too, many pleasant surprises and positive results have occurred from citizen involvement in school affairs. Those educators who were skeptical and felt threatened have begun to realize that parents often make invaluable contributions in every area of school life.

DECENTRALIZATION OF SCHOOLS In the beginning of the American public school system most districts were small and many were rural or were located in villages. The school, like the church, was an integral part of the community. It was a building that could be used for community social functions as well as for educational purposes. Under these conditions it was easier for citizens to identify with their schools.

As long as America remained mainly rural this situation continued. Then, in the middle and late 19th century far reaching changes began to take place on the American industrial scene. Developing technology resulted in the establishing of small shops and factories, especially in the eastern part of the country. Industrialization spread west to the population centers like Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee. As this occurred more people moved to the larger cities in order to find employment in the rapidly expanding factory system.

America was changing — it would never be the same again! As people began to move to the cities in large numbers the impact was felt in the social and political institutions and specifically by the public schools. Staples says in regard to this:

Decentralization is an important subject because it represents a reaction to centralization which began in the 1890's and continued on into the twentieth century. Up to this time the schools of our nation were part of more than 100,000 independent school districts, each having power to appoint its own board members and raise its own taxes.⁴⁸

It was at this time and under these conditions that centralization of schools began to take place. Large city school systems particularly found it difficult to function and to cope with all of the new problems created by such 'bigness'. Power began to shift from neighborhood schools to the central administration and board of education.

Staple continues, in discussing this problem, to say:

As the population began to grow individual school districts found it difficult to provide equal education so state governments began to assert their authority and to change the system.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Ezra I. Staples, "Impact of Decentralization on Curriculum", Published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Washington, D.C., 1975, p. 1.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 1.

Large school districts that were highly centralized, along with increasing state and federal regulations, caused the educational process to become far removed from the individual citizen. This situation continued into the 1950's and the 1960's when citizens began to express disillusionment with the system. This feeling of discontent grew until the call for change was clear and firm. Here and there in school districts and universities across the nation alert educators began to discern the mood of the times. They began to sense a need for changes that would result in bringing the school and the people closer together. The process of decentralization was designed to help accomplish this.

Decentralization has many definitions and lends itself to administrative variations. As individual school districts move toward decentralization it would be wise for them to consider the advice found in the Task Force on Urban Education Report which says, "The National Education Association or any other national group cannot develop one decentralization plan that will be applicable to all of America's major cities."⁵⁰

Although the program for decentralization may vary from city to city there are some commonalities.

⁵⁰Task Force on Urban Education Report, Schools of the Urban Crisis, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1969, p. 14.

An examination of these common elements should help one to better understand its structure and goals. Following is a listing and discussion of some of these elements.

1. Community Involvement - Regardless of the nature or scope of the school district's administrative structure, if it is moving toward decentralization some definite plan to involve citizens is a must. To many educators and community leaders this should be the core of any plan. For too many years citizens have played a relatively passive role in the educational process. Now the trend is toward active participation in every phase of school operations from grass roots planning to final evaluation. The Task Force on Urban Education Report makes several comments on this problem.

One of the major purposes of decentralization is to develop adequate ways of involving parents and citizens in school decision-making. All those involved in developing decentralization plans will have to pay particular attention to developing patterns of participation which will allow the schools to respond effectively to parents of individual children and citizens of particular children.⁵¹

2. Sharing of Power - Under the highly centralized system power was invested primarily at the top. The school board, superintendent and central office staff did most of the planning, decision-making and evaluating. Anyone who taught under this administrative system is

⁵¹Ibid.

mindful of the constant flow of directives explaining policies that had been forged at the top. On occasion some of these policies were even sent home with children so that parents could be 'informed' concerning programs and plans which the school had decided on implementing.

One aspect, then of decentralization of schools is the diffusing of power so that the total community could be represented in every phase of the school program. Candoli and Leu suggest that:

. . . decentralization is a sharing of power once held at the central level with a broader level of shareholders in the educational enterprise. It becomes necessary to expand the participant groups from two (administration and teachers) to three (administration, staff and community) or even to four (administration, staff, community and students).⁵²

3. Sharing of Responsibility - The sharing of power brought with it the need for the sharing of responsibility. As administrators, teaching staffs and community members participate in the planning, decision-making and evaluation of the school program each, at some level, will be responsible for its success or failure. Candoli and Leu contend that if the schools truly belong to the neighborhoods they serve, then that community must help to make decisions that affect their school.⁵³

⁵²I. C. Candoli and Donald J. Leu, Decentralizing the Future Planning of Public Education, Santa Clara County Office of Education, San Jose, California.

⁵³Ibid., p. 14.

4. Redefining of Roles - The roles of all participants in a decentralized school district will be altered in varying degrees. The change may not be radical but in the process of diffusing power some alteration of roles is usually necessary. Again, Candoli and Leu say that "Traditional central office functions such as educational facility planning will become much different in scope and fact."⁵⁴

In summarizing this section it should be stated that the present trend in American public education is toward decentralization in some form. This does not imply that all school districts will adopt and implement this philosophy. The findings of Ornstein's study are indicative of the trend. He found that 15 out of 26 large school districts (250,000 and above) were decentralized within the last five years.⁵⁵

SUMMARY It is believed that this review of literature relating to community involvement in public education should enable the reader to better appreciate its importance in today's education. The schools of today and tomorrow will no longer function in remoteness,

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁵Allen C. Ornstein, "Administrative/Community Organization of Metropolitan Schools", Phi Delta Kappan, June 1973, p. 54.

fostering the sense of helplessness heretofore experienced by many citizens. As citizens participate on an increasing level in school operations it is the belief of many that the quality of the educational environment will be greatly enhanced.

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION - WHAT IS THE CIC?

INTRODUCTION A discussion of the major features of the CIC is contained in this thesis to acquaint the reader with them and to assist in the understanding of its basic philosophy. The material used in this description was gathered from several sources which include the Community Involvement Committee Handbook, the Needs Assessment, Lansing Model and the Final Evaluation Report, Emergency Aid Act — all published by the Lansing School District. Also very helpful were interviews with Dr. Robert Chamberlain and Dr. Grace Iverson of the Lansing School District and several elementary school principals. The slide presentation developed to introduce the CIC to community groups provided significant data as well.

HISTORY Traditionally in the American system of education parents have often played a passive, 'come, see and listen' role. As public education developed and became mandatory throughout the United States parental interest also increased but the role of the

parent remained basically that of an observer rather than a participator. This does not infer that citizens historically played no part in the formal educating of their children. They did, but their efforts were somewhat limited.

Teachers, too, until recently played a lesser role in the total educational program beyond the perimeter of the individual classroom or school. The administrative hierarchy along with the local school board, operating within guidelines set by the Federal Government and the state board of education, was responsible for making policies and decisions that guided the everyday operation of the local school system. Teachers were invited to work on various committees but involvement in the wide range of school operations was limited. Even though participation under these conditions was limited it was a move in a new direction. Whether or not teachers were prepared for it, the door was being opened for them to participate on a wider scale in the planning and decision-making phases of school operations.

In commenting on this issue in the preface of the Community Involvement Committee Handbook the writer states:

This is not to condemn our historical practices, but rather to suggest that today's social milieu requires a reappraisal of the role of the community and the teachers in a given school attendance

area.¹

A further comment is especially enlightening as the writer continues:

It is to suggest that there should be a participatory role of the decision-making level for the principal, the teachers, community members and at least in the case of secondary schools, students as well.²

Citizens in the past, realizing the need to participate to some degree in school affairs developed an organization commonly and widely known as the Parent-Teachers Organization, or the PTA. The PTA is a broadly-based organization with a structure that embraces not only the local community but extends to the state and national levels as well. Over the years it has achieved an enviable record and has had a great impact on education. Through coordinated organizational efforts it has affected changes in childhood legislation, safety and health programs, school finance and home-school relationships, just to name a few.

Several years ago the Lansing School District recognized the need to develop an organization that would function with the PTA whose primary focus would

¹Community Involvement Committee Handbook, Research and Planning Dept., Lansing School District, Lansing, Mich., August 1974, Preface.

²Ibid., Preface.

be to link the local school more closely with the attendance neighborhood. After considerable research and planning the Community Involvement Committee model described in this thesis was hammered out and piloted in several schools and then in 1973 was introduced in all forty-seven elementary schools comprising the Lansing School District.

OBJECTIVES Following is a listing of the broad general goals of the CIC. Later in this study under the heading of functions some of the more specific sub goals are discussed.

1. To be the primary communication link between school and community
2. To reflect a cross-section of the neighborhood in its composition
3. To involve the school and the community in the the process of planning school programs
4. To involve the school and the community in the process of decision-making
5. To reflect the school and the community in the process of needs assessment
6. To bring to the table to discuss and seek solutions to community and/or school problems

It should be noted at this stage in the report that there is an overlapping of some CIC and PTA goals. When this occurs the Lansing School District has suggested that a cooperative effort be made to investigate and find solutions to these problems.

STRUCTURE The size of any CIC will vary considerably depending on many factors such as size of school, level of interest, range and magnitude of issues being considered and size-goal of the committee itself. When any given committee becomes so large that individual participation is hampered breaking into small discussion groups is recommended. Input from all members is greatly desired and is freely encouraged.

More important than size, however, is representation. The Lansing School District recommends and encourages the recruitment of members from all sectors of the community. Although, theoretically, any person living in the school attendance area can become a member, during attendance drives consideration is given to the balancing of such factors as ethnic origin, socio-economic status, educational levels and occupation. Much emphasis is placed on the representation factor. Securing neighborhood representative input and consensus on many issues is considered to be of prime importance. It is believed that to function as a viable organization in school-community concerns the CIC must represent the entire

neighborhood as closely as possible.

Membership is made up of principals, teachers, parents and any other persons residing within the school attendance area. Methods used in securing members are volunteers, appointments and active recruitment. Each committee decides on when and how often it should meet. Notification of meetings is given by letters, phone calls, carry-home sheets by students and personal invitation. Each committee elects its own officers.

FUNCTIONS In keeping with its objectives the CIC has been an active participant in sundry activities relating to the school and community. The following discussion, though by no means exhaustive, deals with some of these major topics and areas.

Planning In an evaluation report of the ESAA program in the Lansing Public Schools the following statement is made:

Parent input at the building level is solicited through the Community Involvement Committee. Ideally these committees are involved in setting goals, planning, monitoring and evaluating programs.³

This planning, of course, covers a wide range of problems and issues. Following is a brief discussion of these

³Final Evaluation Report, Emergency School Aid Act, ESAA, Board of Education, Lansing School District, Lansing, Michigan, Summer, 1975, p. 12.

general areas where the CIC has significant input in the planning operation.

1. Curriculum - Historically many educators believed that citizens could assist the schools in limited areas only; but the real planning and implementing of curriculum matters should remain in the hands of professional educators. This philosophy may have had some merit in the past but it no longer is subscribed to by most educators. School staffs are finding that many persons in their communities possess talents and expertise which can be used to greatly enrich the school program. The collect views and ideas of the school neighborhood are held in high esteem by the Lansing School District. To provide a background for planning committees have found that parents often need to be given information relating to curriculum matters. Sometimes teachers and administrators, too, lack specific information. When this occurs a workshop may be planned and a specialist invited to come and speak to the group. As the sharing of ideas takes place those participating gain a deeper insight into the problems and are better prepared to plan and to make decisions.

The significance of community planning in curriculum areas cannot be overemphasized. For the last two decades many items have been added to elementary school programs, while at the same time there have been few

deletions. The school day in many instances is so filled with specific program requirements that there is little time for electives and special interest projects. Because of this, now and in the future, prioritizing will be a vital function of the planning committees. Critical decisions regarding additions, deletions and changes in the curriculum will be challenging to these committees. The CIC is designed to play an increasingly important role in assisting with the planning and setting of curriculum priorities.

2. Budgeting - One of the major concerns today among citizens is the burden of increasing taxation and how these moneys are being spent. People have expressed this concern in many ways including voting negatively on school millages.

The Lansing School District has adopted and implemented the administrative plan of building autonomy. This means that monies from state aid allotments, local school taxes, county taxes and federally and state funded special projects are funneled into each building on a per pupil basis in most instances. After a staff committee has drawn up a tentative budget it is sent to the CIC for their consideration. It is believed that by using this system for setting budget priorities the community has more of a voice in determining how their monies are being spent. After the budget has been studied and

revised it must have final approval of all groups including the CIC. It is worthy to note that solicitation of CIC input and feedback is made when consideration is being given to long range budget planning. "As we project our needs, programs, budget and facility uses for the next five years, such planning at each school must involve the Community Involvement Committee."⁴

3. Use of School Facilities - The day is rapidly disappearing when buildings are used only during school hours and occasionally for a community social function. Community leaders and educators realize that it is not economically sound nor wise to let school buildings stand idle during hours that they could be used beyond the normal school day. In Lansing there is a trend toward more neighborhood use of the school building, consequently this has given rise to scheduling and supervision problems. Varied activities including recreational, sports, educational and religious are scheduled by different groups either after school, evenings, Saturdays and even on Sundays. Citizens of all age levels are looking more to the school as a center of community activity. This trend in Lansing, in some instances, has resulted in an almost continuous use by the community of the school

⁴Comprehensive Planning Report of the Lansing School District, Board of Education, Lansing School District, Lansing, Michigan, Summer, 1975, p. 12.

building. I has necessitated a close monitoring of the entire program in order to accomodate as much of the neighborhood as possible. The School District, through its central administration, has commented regarding this problem:

As greater involvement in the total school program becomes prevalent, so will the demand for facilities. We are witnessing the extension of community school coordinators on an area or school basis for the further development of programs for students, adults and families. We predict that this trend will continue, probably at an accelerated rate, as we continue the philosophy that the school exists for community use.⁵

Although the CIC does not have the responsibility to plan and schedule all after-school and weekend activities it has provided much assistance and support in this area.

Decision-making As the program of decentralization of schools took place within the Lansing School District it necessitated a restructuring of the process of decision-making. Previously this was mainly an administrative function. With the diffusing and sharing of control some organized effort had to be made by the community to exercise this new power in a constructive and productive manner. Regarding this problem Candoli writes, "We must develop a mechanism for direct

⁵Ibid., p. 109.

participation of the community in order to have appropriate information on which to base programmatic decisions."⁶

Several models of community involvement were field tested in the Lansing schools. It was acknowledged during this developmental and field testing process that because of the heterogeneous composition of individual schools and their attendance neighborhoods it would be a difficult task to decide on a model. Emerging from this effort, however, was a community involvement model described in this report, that when implemented would result in a sharing of the decision-making responsibility. This power no longer would be centered in the administrative hierarchy but would be shared with teachers and interested citizens residing in the local attendance area.

As with many new concepts and programs resistance was met in several community groups. Some believed and strongly supported the idea that important curriculum, program and budgeting decisions could be made much more efficiently and quickly by professional educators. Others contended that to make intelligent decisions concerning educational matters required some degree of training and that most persons outside the field of

⁶Carl I. Candoli, Responsible Autonomy and Community Involvement, Bulletin, Lansing School District, Lansing, Michigan, Feb. 1973.

education lacked the expertise necessary to function in this capacity. Those searching for a model to meet Lansing's needs and educational philosophy were cognizant of this fact and consequently made provision for it. The author of the Community Involvement Committee handbook writes, "Teachers and community members need to be furnished some vital facts concerning their school."⁷ This statement is indicative of their awareness of the need to disseminate relevant information to committee members so that intelligent decisions can be made.

Consequently, the Lansing School District after much ground work accepted and implemented a community involvement model that would bring into the decision-making area citizens from all sectors of society. In commenting on this in the Lansing School District Comprehensive Planning Report one writer states, "The CIC process provides a forum for citizen expression at the local school level and decisions within a school are to be made on a consensus basis."⁸

During informal discussions with CIC leaders and individual members the prevailing attitude seemed to be that schools would benefit significantly as local citizens shared this responsibility. Thus, deeply embedded in the

⁷Community Involvement Committee Handbook, op. cit.

⁸Comprehensive Planning Report of the Lansing School District, op. cit., p. 12.

Lansing School District's philosophy of education and built into their community involvement model is the concept of shared responsibility regarding decision-making.

Coupled with this philosophy, too, is the belief that each local school community holds vast resources which, if tapped, can appreciably enrich the school program. To draw from this source would necessitate a level of cooperation that previously did not exist in most cases. This kind of cooperation would involve an investigation of these resources and a comprehensive planning program often leading to making critical decisions. The responsibility for this would now be shared by administrators, teachers and interested citizens.

Needs Assessment Linked closely to the CIC functions already discussed is the plan to involve citizens in a broad comprehensive plan of needs assessment. For decades parents and citizens had been informed by school administrators and staffs about the needs of their children; they had little to say however, in determining the nature of these needs. This is not meant to imply that citizens never voiced their opinion in school matters. It could be shown that historically many did make substantial contributions in different ways but there were few instances where provision was made to include them in a continuous and systematic appraisal of school needs.

The Lansing School District, recognizing that high

priority must be given to involve representation from the total community in assessing school needs began a search for a model that would provide for this kind of involvement. After reviewing and studying needs assessment models from several school systems it was decided that one should be planned and constructed by Lansing people so that it could be tailored to fit the community as closely as possible.

In keeping with this goal and operating within the guidelines of the Lansing Board of Education study groups were formed at several schools to investigate the problem. The outcome of these study groups was the needs assessment model described in this paper. The recommendations of these committees were edited and summarized in a bulletin entitled Needs Assessment: Lansing Model. In the preface of this bulletin it says; "The needs assessment program you read about here can truly be called a Lansing Needs Assessment as the entire procedure was devised, constructed, reviewed and revised by Lansing personnel."⁹ The discussion of this model was divided into three parts namely; what is needs assessment, Lansing's needs assessment model and the rationale for it.

What is Needs Assessment? It should be noted

⁹Needs Assessment: Lansing Model, Lansing School District, Lansing, Michigan, July 1975, Preface.

that this concept is given varying definitions, most of which seem to complement one another. In their handbook the Flint schools define it as:

. . . a method of looking at your community, comparing what you learn about it with what you want the community to be and then making decisions for future action based on this comparison.¹⁰

The Lansing model defines needs assessment in a somewhat different manner, though it is not unrelated.

Needs assessment is a child-oriented systematic approach to educational planning that allows teachers to select which objectives are sufficiently important so as to be included in their classroom planning.¹¹

The primary function of the Lansing model is to involve parents, teachers, administrators and other interested citizens in identifying problem areas and educational needs that are present in the ongoing school program. It has been found that arriving at a consensus regarding school problems and needs is not an easy task. Often suggestions are conflicting and the resolving of these conflicts is a delicate operation. Notwithstanding, the Lansing School District firmly believes that the educating of children will be greatly enhanced as citizens become involved in determining the needs and setting priorities regarding school operations.

¹⁰Taking A Look At Your Community Advisory Council, A Planning Handbook, Flint Community Schools, Flint Mich., 1975, p. 6.

¹¹Needs Assessment: Lansing Model, op. cit., p. 1.

Lansing's Needs Assessment Model This model, as outlined below, is rather simple. In developing it care was taken to build in flexibility so that it could be adaptable to different schools and neighborhoods.

1. Develop needs assessment interest groups
 - a. Parents
 - b. Teachers
 - c. Administrators
 - d. Students
2. A presentation is made to the needs assessment group of all pertinent information regarding the status of the ongoing school program.
3. Each group ranks and orders goals to determine priorities.
4. On a check list, needs assessment group members determine current status of the school program in relation to each of the competencies. This determines the school needs.
5. Teachers and administrators then determine an educational action plan based on the formula stage 2 - stage 3.
6. Each building then develops school and class-room strategies to reduce above to zero.
7. Each teacher develops room plan for the year to determine supplies, materials and resources

necessary. These room plans should not be confused with lesson plans. Rather they should state briefly how the teacher anticipates handling the school needs within her classroom.

8. Presentation of all suggestions in steps 5 and 6 are submitted to the Community Involvement Committee for information.
9. Copies of school and classroom plans are sent to Planning Department for approval.¹²

The Lansing School District believes that the model it has developed has greatly facilitated school planning and operations in all phases of school endeavor. Persons of diverse backgrounds and many with extensive experience in their field worked together to develop this needs assessment program. Although it has some common principles that would meet requirements of all Lansing schools it has enough flexibility to be adaptable to unique and different situations.

Undoubtedly, this model developed by Lansing has some shortcomings that will be identified and altered, especially as the school district gains more experience using it. They do, however, believe that it does allow for a number of advantages for the schools now using it.

¹²Ibid., p. 1.

Below is a listing of these advantages.

1. It offers a more unified approach to handling school-wide planning. With the utilization of a needs assessment all teachers and staff members are made aware of those needs which are most important to the school community as a whole and provides for all teachers and staff to work together on these needs.
2. It encourages more communication between teachers. With all teachers working together on certain needs, communication in the form of sharing materials, ideas and resources is greatly enhanced.
3. It encourages increased community involvement and awareness. Needs assessment encourages all segments of the school community to become involved in the determination of the priorities of their school.
4. It allows for more efficient budgeting. Once the school needs are identified, budget allocations can be established toward reducing these needs; therefore a more structured and educationally justified budget can be prepared. This will cause the budget to reflect expenditures consistent with the

needs of the school.¹³

This needs assessment program has been operating in the Lansing schools for about three years. Many of those who participate in its operations believe it to be of considerable value in producing information helpful to staff members in planning school programs.

Evaluation The evaluation process of the CIC is a highly important function and falls into three primary categories. First, it constantly monitors its own operations. It carefully examines the agenda for each meeting with the view of dealing with items according to priority. It also examines its attendance records so as to determine the character of neighborhood representation.

Second, the CIC plays a significant role in assisting the school in evaluating its total operations. Workshops are held to acquaint parents with different segments of the school program so that they will be better qualified to make intelligent observations and recommendations. Parent interest, cooperation and input relating to any phase of school operations is not only highly valued by the Lansing School District but is sincerely encouraged. It is believed that schools become much better learning centers for children when parents participate in all areas of school life. The Community

¹³Ibid., p. 2.

Involvement Committee therefore stands ready to assist its school in evaluating programs, materials, budgets, strategies or any other item the school may be considering.

Third, the CIC has been especially helpful in assisting schools and communities as they study and evaluate programs or problems of mutual concern. The philosophy that the school and community do not function independently or in isolation but are closely related is accepted by the Lansing schools; therefore, community problems are of great concern to the school for school problems do concern and affect its neighborhood.

Defining Problems and Issues Sometimes communities find it difficult to define a problem or to determine the seriousness of it. When an undesirable situation occurs a decision must be made as to whether it is a temporary condition or one that could develop into a serious neighborhood problem. In many instances they dissolve or disappear without requiring any special community action while some persist and become increasingly aggravating. It is not uncommon for schools to receive calls from concerned citizens relating to incidents that occur either regularly or periodically. When a situation like this develops the Community Involvement Committee can be of great assistance, not only in defining the problem but also in seeking and recommending a solution.

One such incident happened recently in a suburban neighborhood in Lansing that may serve to illustrate this

point. The school involved is located on several acres of land adjoining a small park owned by the city of Lansing but used almost continuously by the school as a playground during the school year. Near one end of the park basketball courts were installed by the Parks and Recreation Department. Soon after the installation was completed young people from other areas of the city began to assemble there in the late afternoon to use these facilities. Each evening cars lined both sides of the street making it extremely difficult for motorists to pass through the area. Reports of rowdiness, vandalism and young people standing in the street and disrupting traffic were being circulated. The situation was becoming explosive! What had been a calm and peaceful neighborhood was now noisy and potentially violent. Many people within the neighborhood became disturbed. Although the school itself was not directly involved it gave assistance by calling a meeting of the Community Involvement Committee. Needless to say, a large group of concerned citizens met at the school to discuss the problem and to explore possible solutions. Several members of the city government along with representatives from the Lansing Police Department met with the group. After a lengthy discussion with suggestions from many different individuals a course of action was decided upon. The city posted 'no parking' signs on one side of the street by

the park and near the basketball courts. Along with this the police patrolled the area for several nights to make certain that no parking violations occurred. Through a united effort the solution was found to an extremely aggravating condition.

It is true that all problems are not solved so simply and easily but when a community works together the probability of defining problems and finding solutions is much greater. The CIC in Lansing is designed to function in this manner.

Developing A School Discipline Code Schools across the nation have been plagued with numerous discipline problems. They occur with greater frequency and often defy solution. Principals, teachers and community leaders have searched for methods to use that would be fair to all concerned and would also make schools a safe place for all students.

The recent court emphasis on individual rights has had far reaching implications in this area. All too often there appears to be a clash among students' rights, parents' rights and teachers' rights. This, in many instances, has left the school in the unenviable position of trying to function in a situation where some important roles were not clearly defined.

Citizen Involvement Committees have been called in to help define roles and establish a discipline code

that is workable and fair. Working within the guidelines set by the board of education and state laws the CIC has assisted individual schools in developing this kind of a discipline code. Should the situation change requiring alterations in the present code, undoubtedly the CIC will be called upon to assist with the study and revision process.

Specially Funded Projects With increasing frequency federal and state governments are mandating citizen participation in the planning and decision-making phases that involve specially funded educational projects.

The Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) is an illustration of this type of project requiring community input. In the final evaluation report submitted by the evaluation office of the Lansing Schools the following remark is made:

The role of the Community Involvement Committee needs to be strengthened via more recruitment of a cross-section of community members. This has been a concern of principals, ESAA Advisory Committee members, H.E.W. program officers, etc. In-service for CIC members is also recommended, since in order to give adequate input, parents must understand budgeting, test score interpretation and evaluation criteria.¹⁴

In order to have their individual ESAA budgets approved each school is required to file a sign-off form. This would indicate to ESAA authorities that citizens did participate in the planning phase of budgeting for the

¹⁴Final Evaluation Report, ESAA, op. cit., p. 5.

project.

Each school in Lansing that had the ESAA funding for special programs did have a Community Involvement Committee and each school did provide documentation as to the CIC review of the budget.¹⁵

The Chapter III program of the State Compensatory Education Act also mandates citizen input as a requirement for continued funding. Chapter III can be defined as a multi-year performance contract between the school district and the Michigan Department of Education in which the district can earn \$200.00 per pupil for student growth in reading and math.¹⁶ Individual schools within a district can elect to participate in this program if they meet the requirements. The degree and type of citizen involvement in this program may vary considerably among schools. Parents and senior citizen volunteers, in many instances, became intimately involved in tutoring pupils in math and reading and made substantial contributions. In some cases citizen input was minimal and appeared to be designed to meet requirements rather than to actually contribute to the effectiveness of the program.

In summarizing this section on functions of the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁶Final Evaluation Report, Chapter III, Lansing School District, Lansing, Mich., August 1, 1975, p. 11.

Community Involvement Committee it might be important and enlightening to say that each committee is tailored to meet the needs of individual neighborhoods. Although there are some commonalities in both structure and function, flexibility is the key descriptive work. The CIC handbook lists some examples of individual activities engaged in by these committees.

1. Involvement in planning each school budget
2. Worked with senior citizens
3. Arranged for assisting in patrolling school area
4. Organized hobby projects for Friday evenings—parents and teachers taught—carpenter shop, knitting, basketball, etc.
5. CIC visited Academic Center
6. Produced Christmas booklet
7. Helped with decisions on departmental study
8. Assisted with Bucket Brigade
9. Assisted with school site study
10. Assisted with resource people for Multi-ethnic — Awareness
11. Participated with community newsletter
12. Involvement in community school evening program
13. Scheduled discussion sessions on school safety
14. Worked on discipline code
15. Met with some school board members

16. Assisted with reading concerns¹⁷

RATIONALE FOR THE CIC What gave rise to the development of the CIC in Lansing as well as similar organizations in school districts across the nation is a highly important and interesting question. The answers discussed below are not intended to be exhaustive but rather illustrative. Some of these reasons are alluded to in the chapter on the review of related literature.

Societal Demand for Involvement In the last two decades Americans have become disenchanted with many of their institutions. This feeling of disenchantment has been expressed by individuals and groups and has taken many forms ranging from passive withdrawal from society to destructive rioting in the streets. The complexity and size of many institutions such as government, industry, business, education and even religion has created a feeling of remoteness in many people. As these institutions daily and intimately affected the lives of citizens, many began to feel helpless in exercising control over their own destiny.

For a while there was a smoldering of discontent quite discernable in different groups throughout the country. Out of this fermenting came several different

¹⁷Community Involvement Committee Handbook,
op. cit.

forms of attack on established institutions, civil disobedience being one of them. Civil rights marches challenging segregated public facilities became a common and almost daily occurrence. At the other extreme were militant groups which demanded that many changes be made. Resistance to military service also became a method of expressing dissatisfaction with government which to them symbolized an external authority exerting control over their lives.

The sixties especially were traumatic as pressures were being applied to many different sectors of American society. Often these demands for changes were conflicting and sometimes impossible to affect.

As events continued, justly or unjustly, the focus of many individuals and groups turned toward the public school. It seemed as though they were being made the scapegoats of public resentment. Nationwide many phases of school operations came under attack. The curriculum was judged to be archaic, the orientation was middle class, minority and poor children were neglected, hiring procedures favored whites and the distribution of monies was unequal. Schools which, prior to this attack were relatively calm and their operations routinized, were not prepared to deal effectively with these problems. Confrontations and clashes of ideologies were frequent which often created problems with new dimensions for many school boards and educators. A careful

and objective evaluation of these conditions undoubtedly would reveal both positive and negative aspects. It did, however, present a new series of real problems that seemed to demand the immediate attention of community and educational leaders.

Reactions by these leaders varied tremendously from stubborn defensiveness to objective evaluation. Forward looking men and women sensed that the winds of change were beginning to blow. No longer would people be satisfied with dictatorial policies of large institutions. Now they were asking for a voice in deciding critical issues. Some educators began to recognize and acknowledge the need to involve citizens more intimately in the educational process. Some even contended that by doing so, parents would more likely support the school in constructive ways.

In the late 1960's the Lansing School District began to lay the foundation for developing and implementing a community involvement group in its schools. After considerable searching, planning and field testing they adopted the model described in this paper called the Community Involvement Committee.

Weaknesses of the PTA The PTA has been operating in American public schools for many decades and has made some significant contributions. It has been responsible for developing and implementing many worthwhile programs at the local level while influencing legislation beneficial

to schools at the city and state levels. Although statistics were not available to the writer, interest and attendance in PTA functions have declined in recent years. Perhaps this decline is reflected in problems experienced by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers in relation to the publishing of their periodical, The PTA Magazine. Publication of this magazine ceased with the November 1974 issue. An article written by Mrs. Lillie E. Herndon, printed on the inside cover page of this issue, suggests some idea of the magnitude of the problems they encountered before discontinuing production of the periodical.

Sometimes what must be said can't be said without difficulty. This, I am sorry to say, is such an occasion. The National PTA Board of Managers, at its meeting on September 13, 1974, acted upon the joint recommendation of the PTA Magazine Committee and the Executive Committee and voted to discontinue publication of the PTA Magazine effective with the November 1974 issue. Obviously this decision was made with mixed emotions. The spiraling costs of producing a quality periodical; the decline in subscriptions from 162,000 to 50,007 during the last five years; and the impact the projected loss of \$133,000 for this fiscal year alone would have on the PTA's ability to proceed with its other necessary programs were reasons given by the Board of Managers for taking this action.¹⁸

Many school districts are searching for strong citizens' organizations capable of assisting them in a

¹⁸Lillie E. Herndon, "Dear Subscriber", The PTA Magazine, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, Chicago, Illinois, November 1974.

variety of ways. The PTA as it exists structurally, that is, local, state and national in organization, has some weaknesses that hinder it from operating in the manner described.

First, the situation calls for a community group whose primary concern is to deal with problems relating to the local school and its neighborhood. Its major focus should be on neighborhood-school problems. Parents, senior citizens and others who live in a school neighborhood should be provided the opportunity and encouraged to participate in planning and deciding issues. The PTA would have some difficulty in meeting this requirement in that its focus is not only local but state and national as well. The CIC handbook makes reference to this problem; "The PTA functions as a broadly-based organization affiliated in both program and purpose with a structure that is community-wide, state and national in scope."¹⁹ Concerns that range from local to nationwide, then are dealt with by the PTA.

Second, the PTA seems to lack sufficient flexibility to operate effectively in many of today's situations. This does not imply that it has not changed over the years; but as it exists presently, the potentiality for broad change seems limited. Major revisions and adjustments would need to be made in its structure,

¹⁹Ibid.

goals and mode of operation if it were to become effective in meeting today's school-neighborhood needs. Consequently, when crisis situations transpired in schools, some educators and community leaders began to realize that the PTA could provide only limited assistance. As a result many sought help from other organizations such as the CIC. On previous occasions some PTA's had appointed special committees to deal mainly with specific local problems, which resulted in a measure of success. In many instances, however, as in the Lansing School District, a new community involvement organization needed to be developed that would operate unhindered by city, state and national regulations.

Although rivalry between the PTA and the CIC is discouraged it does sometimes occur. Even though each has its separate objectives and functions there are many areas in which they overlap. The Lansing School District encourages both organizations and seeks to help them to cooperate when the situation calls for it.

Third, the PTA's operations traditionally have not been in areas that would attract persons from all segments of the neighborhood. Its membership drives and call for participation have often fallen short of the desired goal. All too often, just a few interested parents have formed the core of the organization while others attended meetings only when some event of particular interest was on the program. The Flint Community

Schools found that people will attend meetings primarily when events of interest are to be presented and when community needs and their solutions are to be discussed.²⁰

Today's communities call for an organization that can focus primarily on problems affecting their immediate area. It should be borne in mind, however, that no community exists in isolation but there is a relatedness among them. Also, neighborhoods have many common needs and problems and should seek ways to cooperate in finding solutions. Often, however, individual neighborhoods have a unique combination of characteristics that give rise to specific needs and problems. It is here that an organization such as the CIC can serve its community by focusing its attention on these needs and problems with the view in mind of finding answers and solutions.

Fourth, the PTA might have taken action that would have rendered unnecessary the creation of another community involvement organization. As demands for new kinds of involvement were heard in communities across the nation the local PTA groups could have organized new committees and commissioned them with the responsibility of meeting these particular needs. As has already been mentioned, the PTA as an organization lacks the flexibility to function in this capacity. It also is not designed to

²⁰Taking a Look at Your School-Community Advisory Council, op. cit., p. 1.

limit its focus for extended periods of time to local situations only.

It is possible that some PTA's have found ways to cope with this problem. In the Lansing School District provision has been made for the CIC to function either as a totally independent organization or as a PTA committee. Most of them, however, do function as separate organizations.

Decentralization of Schools As the process of decentralization of schools took place the need arose for some type of community-school organization that could share this power. Up to this point most planning, decision-making and evaluation responsibilities rested in the hands of administrators from the central office. The superintendent, along with his staff, made most of the strategic decisions and bulletins and directives were sent to teachers and other staff members explaining them. As decentralization became the policy the need for a viable school-community organization created and designed to function in this capacity was beginning to be evident.

Under the traditional and highly centralized system information usually flowed one way. Decisions made at the top began their downward flow and filtered through various persons and groups until all were informed. These decisions would eventually reach teachers, custodial personnel or other staff members who were to

implement them. Sometimes, in order to give a semblance of democracy to the situation, committees were appointed to discuss and make recommendations; but most major decisions were made at the top. In the fifties and early sixties this was typified by discussions in college classes on school administration. Many of these discussions centered around the advantages and disadvantages of democratic versus autocratic school administrations. Now, however, the situation called for a constant and smoother flowing of information in more of a cyclic fashion. It would be highly important that individuals, committees and groups be given relevant information so they could evaluate and offer suggestions before decisions were made or a consensus reached.

Sensing the need for an organization that could operate in this fashion many school districts discovered that none existed. The situation was unique—it had never existed exactly like that before. Some schools that were already experiencing crisis situations began to search for one that would fill the need.

Unique Characteristics of Individual School Neighborhoods Although America's population over the years has tended to be mobile people who moved often took up residence among persons of similar ethnic, cultural and socio-economic background. The complexion of these neighborhoods changed very little through the years. In

recent times, however, conditions have been greatly altered. Federal legislation and court interpretations have laid the groundwork for extensive changes in many phases of community life. Some are discussed below but no attempt is made to list them in any particular order of importance.

First, the courts ordered the desegregation of public facilities. In many areas of the country the impact of this was traumatic. It brought together persons of diverse backgrounds into situations that previously had rarely existed. This small beginning crescendoed into gigantic civil rights marches whose impact is still being felt. The desegregating of public facilities created new problems and needs for neighborhoods, consequently new methods were sought to cope with them.

Second, court ordered desegregation of public schools became the law of the land even though total compliance has not yet been affected in many parts of the country. As black, white and chicano children climbed on buses and rode to schools outside of their own neighborhoods many problems were created that demanded immediate attention. Tempers flared, emotions were aroused and people became incensed over the situation. Schools groped for ways to handle the unique set of problems heretofore not encountered. Parents of all children were deeply concerned about the turn of events

and wondered what could be done to alleviate the situation.

Concerned community leaders and educators came to the realization that it would take a cooperative effort to find solutions to these problems. No longer could decisions be made by one or two persons acting unilaterally. The opinions of all people whose lives were being affected would need to be considered. This called for a new type of cooperative participation, a kind that would make it possible for every person involved to discuss, plan, decide and evaluate the problems and to arrive at a consensus regarding actions to be taken.

Third, open housing laws resulted in changes in neighborhoods that also created a new set of problems communities had to face. It should be noted here that these laws not only involved ethnic groups but also made it possible for people of any culture or race in the lower socio-economic level to secure housing in areas previously closed to them because of the lack of sufficient income.

As people began to take advantage of the opportunities these new laws afforded them, the complexion of neighborhoods began to change. Many of these neighborhoods experienced an influx of peoples of diverse backgrounds, different ethnic origins and varying socio-economic levels. Each of these persons, unique in themselves, brought to their new community problems and needs that,

when pooled with those already present, created a new combination of challenges for the community to deal with.

Needless to say, educators in many cases were unprepared to effectively meet these challenges. Not only were school staffs unprepared to deal with this new set of problems but the curriculum and school programs often were not geared to meet the needs of this new combination of students.

Need For Better School and Neighborhood Communication As communities and schools began to experience the impact of these changes it became evident to leaders and educators that to effectively meet these challenges a different approach would be necessary—an approach that would involve all segments of the neighborhood seemed to be essential. Many communities found that existing organizations which had served in a satisfactory manner up until this time were unable to meet the demands of these new conditions. School districts in all parts of the country began to seek measures to cope with these problems. Research projects, pilot programs and various kinds of experimentation led to the development of many different models of community involvement, each of which was designed to meet local needs.

Summary Hopefully this discussion of the rationale for developing the CIC will assist the reader in gaining a clearer understanding of the need for an

organization such as this.

Many educators and leaders believe that as people from different backgrounds move into a neighborhood they not only bring new needs and problems but also the potentiality to meet these challenges. They have talents, expertise and resources which, if harnessed and utilized, will enable them to find workable solutions.

One of the greater challenges was to find or develop an organizational framework within which these diverse human elements could work. The Lansing School District believes they have taken a big step in this direction by developing and implementing in their schools the CIC model described in this thesis. Although it is highly regarded by many school and community leaders in Lansing it should not be considered as the ultimate. Its operations should be carefully monitored and revisions and alterations will need to be made from time to time to meet new demands and new situations.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The procedure used in collecting and treating data in a study of this nature is indeed crucial. It is believed that the following discussion of the research design and procedures employed will assist the reader in gaining a deeper understanding of the entire project. This discussion has been divided into the following

categories: population, sample, survey instrument, data collection and data analysis.

POPULATION Within the Lansing School District there are forty seven elementary schools. Each of these schools has been required by the Lansing School District to establish a Community Involvement Committee which should be composed of citizens, principal and teachers. In recruiting members the CIC is encouraged by the central administration to strive for cross-section neighborhood representation. These committees have been operating in Lansing schools for a relatively short period of time—about three years. The population for this study did include all forty seven elementary schools within the Lansing School District. Theoretically, any adult with legal residence in the city of Lansing can become a member of a Community Involvement Committee. The only requirement is that they attend a meeting being held in their school attendance area. When the CIC committees were first established there was little busing of children from their neighborhood schools, therefore most parents had little difficulty in attending a meeting. Now that the cluster system has been adopted and implemented in the Lansing schools parents of bused children sometimes find it necessary to travel a longer distance to the school where their children attend, for a meeting. Some parents also are members of more than one CIC committee,

particularly if they have children in the elementary, junior high and senior high schools.

SAMPLE The choosing of a sample posed a problem of some magnitude for the researcher. This problem was two-pronged. First, which of the forty seven elementary schools should be chosen to comprise the sample and what should be the basis for choosing? Second, after the buildings were chosen what method should be used to select the committee members who were to be included in the sample? Finding a solution to these two problems required considerable time, effort and consultation with others who were interested in this research project.

The answer to the first came out of a conference with Dr. Robert Chamberlain. He suggested using data collected by the Lansing School District and categorizing the schools in the following way: socio-economic, black, white, cluster, non-cluster, inner city and suburban. After calssifying the schools under these headings the next step was to randomly select one building from each category.

One major problem in selecting buildings for the sample was to secure the cooperation of the principals. They were not required to participate in this project, and could decline should that be their desire. The researcher was very fortunate in that only two principals asked not to be included and their reasons for doing so

seemed to be justified. Out of the first eight interviewed, six were willing to take part in the study. Some expressed a keen interest in the project and requested a copy of the findings to help them in the effort to improve their CIC committee. A copy of the findings along with recommendations and conclusions will be sent to each participating administrator.

After the buildings were chosen, deciding which committee members should be surveyed was the next problem encountered. Complicating this situation is the fact that presently the CIC committees do not compile a formal membership list as do many other organizations. Living in the school neighborhood and attendance at meetings constitutes membership. As with many organizations, attendance fluctuates; some meetings are well attended while others are rather poorly attended. In light of this it was decided that all persons who attended meetings during the 1975-76 school year would be included in the sample.

It is CIC policy to keep attendance lists of each meeting along with the minutes. Each principal was asked to send the researcher a list of all persons who attended meetings during the designated school year. A survey questionnaire was sent to each person on the list.

One important factor regarding the sample is that teachers, principals and parents be represented in the

sample in a similar proportion as they would be in a given CIC meeting. Because of the design of the organization it was difficult to determine the exact proportion but the researcher was careful to include persons from each category.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT A survey instrument was constructed which was designed to yield information vital to the study. The questionnaire was piloted on a group of twelve persons, including one principal, three teachers and eight parents. After conferring with some of those who participated in the pilot survey and with others who are knowledgeable in the field of testing, the instrument was revised. When the process of revision was completed the questionnaire was again piloted on a small group of people.

The instrument, a copy of which is included in the appendix, was comprised of eleven questions designed to yield information necessary to determine the degree to which the CIC was achieving its objectives. Questions 1 through 6 were constructed after the pattern of the Likert scale and correlate with CIC objectives 1 through 6. Items 7 through 11 also were designed to yield information relating to the six objectives and hypotheses.

DATA COLLECTION The survey instrument described above was administered to 6 principals, 22 teachers and 73 parents. Most of the questionnaires were sent through

the mail; however, some were delivered to principals and teachers by courier service. After waiting several days for the responses a telephone call was made to those who had not returned completed forms. This resulted in a total return of 95, or 94%. Out of the 6 that failed to respond, 2 had separated from their spouses, 2 could not be located and 2 failed to send back the questionnaire after several contacts.

DATA ANALYSIS Questions 1 to 6 were analyzed to determine whether or not the hypotheses were supported. Following is a discussion of how this analysis was made. Although a stratified method of sampling was used, that is; parents, teachers and principals; their responses on each item were combined and were related to each of the six objectives and their hypotheses. Each survey question was analyzed separately. First, the mean was figured by using the computer at Michigan State University; then the z test was used to estimate the confidence interval of the population mean. A scale of 1 to 7 was used for these survey items, with 7 being strongly supportive and 1 being strongly not supportive. If any confidence interval included 4.0, it was considered to be a neutral support. A confidence interval that ranged from 1.0 to 3.9 was considered a negative support; and if it fell within the range of 4.1 to 7.0 it was considered to be a positive support. Each test was considered significant

at the .05 level.

A brief discussion of the rationale for the 4.0 cut off is included here to assist the reader in understanding the statistical theory. For the purposes of this study 4.0 was designated as neutral in support because when using a scale of 1 to 7, 4.0 is the central point where neither negative or positive support can be predicated. Theoretically, if the confidence interval included 4.0, any other sample drawn from the population could have a mean of 4.0; which would indicate neutral support.

Question 8 was ranked by the computer and the results are shown in chart form.

The responses for questions 7, 9, 10 and 11 were tallied and the results have been reported in the form of frequency charts.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the research. Each of the six hypotheses has been restated, followed by a table of statistics and a brief discussion. The following information, which is briefly stated in Chapter III in the analysis of the data section, should assist the reader in interpreting the statistics.

If the range of the confidence interval was 1.0 to 3.9 it was considered as a negative support.

If the confidence interval included 4.0 it was regarded as a neutral support.

If the range of the confidence interval was 4.1 to 7.0 it was considered as a positive support.

HYPOTHESIS 1 The Community Involvement Committee is the primary communication link between the school and

the community.

Table 1-A --- Data Relating to the CIC as the Primary Communication Link Between the School and the Community.

No.	Mean	S.D.	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Confidence Interval
95	4.2	1.9	7	1	3.8 to 4.6

As indicated in this table the confidence interval includes the 4.0 therefore hypothesis 1 is not supported. Relating specifically to this objective was another survey question in which the respondents were asked to rank in order of importance seven groups involved in school-neighborhood communication. Following is a chart showing the results of this ranking.

Table 1-B --- Ranking of Groups Involved in School-Neighborhood Communication.

Group	Rank
School Bulletins Sent Home With Children	1
Parent Teacher Conference	2
School Newsletter	3
Community Involvement Committee	4
Informal Student Conversation	5
Parent Teachers' Association	6
State Journal	7

HYPOTHESIS 2 The Community Involvement Committee reflects a cross-section of the neighborhood it represents.

Table 2 --- Data Relating to Cross-section Neighborhood Representation of CIC Committees.

No.	Mean	S.D.	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Confidence Interval
95	4.1	2.0	7	1	3.7 to 4.5

Hypothesis 2 which predicts a cross-section representation of the neighborhood on Community Involvement Committees was not supported as the confidence interval includes the 4.0 value.

HYPOTHESIS 3 The CIC represents the school and community in planning school programs.

Table 3-A --- Data Relating to Neighborhood Representation in the Area of Planning School Programs.

No.	Mean	S.D.	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Confidence Interval
95	4.3	1.8	7	1	3.9 to 4.7

An analysis of this data indicates that the confidence interval includes the 4.0 value, therefore hypothesis 3 was not supported. A question closely

related to this CIC objective was also included in the questionnaire. On this item the respondents were given a list of areas where the committees often assisted with the planning and were asked to check the ones in which they had participated. Following is a table showing these areas and the ones in which committee members worked most frequently.

Table 3-B --- Frequency Showing of School Activities in Which CIC Members Participated in Planning.

Activity	Frequency	Percent
Volunteer Programs	61	64.2
School Budget	60	63.2
After School Activities	49	51.6
Curriculum Concerns	46	48.4
Work on Discipline Code	37	38.9
School-Community Newsletter	27	28.4
Other (PTA, Carnival, CIC, Safety, Community Needs)	14	15.1

HYPOTHESIS 4 The CIC represents the school and community in making decisions concerning school operations.

Table 4-A --- Data Relating to CIC Member Participation in the Decision-making Phase of School-Community Activities.

No.	Mean	S.D.	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Confidence Interval
95	4.6	1.8	7	1	4.2 to 5.0

The confidence interval range of 4.2 to 5.0 indicates that hypothesis 4 was supported. The respondents were also given a list of activities that the CIC often assisted with and were asked to check the ones in which they had participated in making decisions. Following is a chart on which these activities are listed along with a frequency showing.

Table 4-B --- Areas and Frequency Count of CIC Participation in Decision-making.

Activity	Frequency	Percent
Budget Problems	47	49.5
Determining School Priorities	47	49.5
Extra-curricular Activities	42	44.2
Discipline Code	39	41.1
Curriculum Programs	37	38.9
Other (Traffic, Community Problems, Social Activities)	4	4.2

HYPOTHESIS 5 The CIC represents the school and the community in the process of needs assessment.

Table 5-A --- Data Relating to the CIC Involvement in the Area of Needs Assessment.

No.	Mean	S.D.	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Confidence Interval
95	4.7	1.7	7	1	4.3 to 5.0

The confidence interval range of 4.3 to 5.0 indicates that hypothesis 5 was supported. A question was also included in the survey which would help to determine the quality of CIC participation in the area of needs assessment. The following table gives the results.

Table 5-B --- A List of Areas of Needs Assessment and a Frequency Showing of CIC Participation.

Area	Frequency	Percent
Identifying Problem Areas	53	55.8
Determining Need Priorities	50	52.6
Finances	48	50.5
Curriculum Evaluation	34	35.8
Examining Test Scores	18	18.9
Other (Community Problems, Testing, Social Activities, Millage)	6	6.3

HYPOTHESIS 6 The CIC represents the school and community in seeking solutions to community and/or school problems.

Table 6-A --- Data Relating to CIC Member Participation in the Area of Solving Community Problems.

No.	Mean	S.D.	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Confidence Interval
95	5.0	1.7	7 7	1	4.7 to 5.3

In analyzing this data the confidence interval

range of 4.7 to 5.3 indicates that hypothesis 6 was supported. The sample group was also asked to list school-community problems for which their committees sought solutions. These were categorized and the results are shown below.

Table 6-B --- A Listing of School-Neighborhood Problems that CIC Committees Sought Solutions for and a Frequency Count.

Problem	Frequency	Percent
Traffic	42	44.2
Discipline	39	41.1
Recreation	28	29.4
Budget	20	21.1
Curriculum	11	11.6
Building Improvement	10	10.5
Parental Apathy	8	8.5

SUMMARY Although it is the design of this study to analyze each hypothesis and objective individually a global view has some merit and does prove interesting. The mean of all six hypotheses is 4.5 with a confidence interval of 4.1 to 4.9. In general terms this would suggest that the Community Involvement Committee is operating at a minimal level of acceptance.

Because a small number of principals and teachers were included in the sample a statistical analysis by categories is unjustified; however an examination by

categories of respondents would support the conclusion that the responses of the three groups were not dissimilar.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V contains a brief summary of the study, a discussion and interpretation of the findings and recommendations for strengthening the Community Involvement Committee.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the CIC to determine the degree to which it was achieving its primary objectives. All of the six objectives were translated into hypotheses so that they could be quantitatively studied and tested. The population consisted of the forty-seven elementary schools of the Lansing School District and out of these six were chosen to make up the sample. All parents, teachers and principals of these six schools and neighborhoods who attended meetings during the 1975 to 1976 school year comprised the sample. A questionnaire was designed and sent to each member of the sample to

gather information critical to the study.

Each hypothesis was analyzed individually to determine if the objective was being achieved. The results of the investigation showed that objectives 4, 5 and 6 were supported while objectives 1, 2 and 3 were not supported.

CONCLUSIONS

Statistical treatment of the data provides evidence that leads to several major conclusions. These conclusions are stated below along with a brief discussion and interpretation.

1. The Community Involvement Committee was not adequately shown to be the primary communication link between the school and the community. A clarification however, should be made of the term 'primary'. It should be noted in table 1-B that the school bulletin sent home with students was considered the most important communication medium while the CIC ranked fourth. If the word primary involves frequency of contact, then the objective would be difficult to achieve because most CIC's meet once a month or less. If dealing with high priority issues is the intended meaning of primary then the

objective can more realistically be achieved. At present the CIC is a communication link but its relative importance is a question that needs further investigation.

2. It was shown that the Community Involvement Committee does not adequately represent a cross-section of its neighborhood. This finding correlates positively with the results of an informal survey made by the Lansing School District in 1973. That survey revealed a need for more balanced neighborhood representation. A special significance may have been attached to this objective due to the current emphasis on rights; namely, individual, minority, students, teachers and parents.
3. It was shown that the Community Involvement Committee does not adequately represent the neighborhood in the planning phase of programs. It is interesting to note that the hypotheses relating to decision-making, needs assessment and problem solving are supported but the one on planning is not. The significance of this should not be underestimated. In many cases, citizens are invited to participate

in school programs after the initial planning has been done; thus they would have been involved, to some extent, in problem solving and decision-making but would have had only a limited degree of participation in the planning phase.

4. The Community Involvement Committee does represent the neighborhood in the decision-making process.
5. The Community Involvement Committee does represent the neighborhood in the process of needs assessment. The support level for this hypothesis was second highest, being exceeded only by that for problem solving. Perhaps this is due to the recent emphasis in the Lansing School District on developing a needs assessment model for use by its schools. Many parents, teachers, students and administrators participated in the development of this model.
6. The Community Involvement Committee does represent the neighborhood in seeking solutions for neighborhood-school problems. Support level for this hypothesis was the highest. Perhaps the higher support level was due partly to the dramatic results that sometimes occur when solutions are found for school-neighborhood

problems. Often special CIC committee meetings are called into session when some critical problem has transpired that demands immediate attention. People tend to remember these situations.

7. Presently the Community Involvement Committees are not meeting their objectives as well as they might. Their potential undoubtedly is much greater. To reach a higher level, however, a few changes would need to be made. Some of the changes are discussed in the next section under recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As has already been indicated the Community Involvement Committees in the Lansing schools are functioning, but not at a satisfactory level. Significantly, none of the hypotheses were rejected although the support factor was lower than desired in some cases. Upgrading and strengthening the weak areas would undoubtedly result in more effective and productive operation by the individual committees. Following is a listing of these recommendations.

1. Each committee should develop a program designed to involve all elements of the neighborhood. It is imperative that a cross-section of the community be represented on the committees.
2. Attending a meeting is not sufficient; a

deliberate effort should be made to solicit input from everyone present. When people attend a meeting and do not become involved in the proceedings they often fail to return.

3. It is highly important that the CIC become involved initially in programs. Usually interest and participation can be maintained at a higher level when people assist with a project from the beginning and continue on through the final phase.
4. Every individual, regardless of his social, educational, ethnic or occupational background, should be made to sense his importance to the committee. Even though some of his proposals may not be adopted he should be made to realize that his contributions are important and that he, as a person, is accepted and valued by the group.
5. Committee meetings should be carefully planned so that items relating to expressed needs are on the agenda. People consider it a waste of time to attend meetings that have little or no purpose. When this occurs they usually cease to attend and support the organization.

6. Meetings should be held regularly whether weekly, monthly or twice a year and the community should be informed well in advance. It might be beneficial to publish a schedule of meetings for the entire school year. Shortly before each meeting another announcement should be made and a copy of the agenda sent home with the students. Along with the regularly scheduled meetings special sessions can be called as the occasion demands.
7. Although the CIC has been introduced to all schools in the Lansing School District many people in the neighborhoods have not become familiar with its operations. Its major purpose, along with its objectives and mode of operation, should be communicated more widely to parents and other citizens within the community. Each CIC committee should develop a plan designed to achieve this goal.

Other Recommendations During the process of administering the survey questionnaire the researcher had the opportunity to visit about 20 individual homes. Informal discussions that occurred after the questionnaire was completed resulted in information important to the study. Some of this data is listed below in the form of recommendations.

1. Everyone present at a given committee meeting should be encouraged to participate in the deliberations. Some who have much to contribute fail to do so because of being quiet by nature and reluctant to speak in public. Unless these people are brought into the discussions they probably will lose interest and fail to attend meetings. With the exercising of patience and the offering of encouragement many of them will become loyal supporters and will make valuable contributions.
2. The selection of a chairman is most critical to the productive operation of CIC meetings. In some cases it may not be wise for the principal to function as the chairman even though he attends regularly.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Are the CIC objectives in proper focus or do they need adjustment?
2. Should the CIC Committee:
 - a. Replace the PTA
 - b. Operate concurrently with the PTA
 - c. Operate as a sub-committee of the PTA
3. Should its structure be altered to allow for:
 - a. Formal membership

- b. Development of a constitution and bylaws
- c. Election of officers

4. What effect will busing have on CIC operations?

SUMMARY The results of this study would indicate that the Community Involvement Committee, as it now functions in the Lansing School District, is achieving some of its objectives. The information in chapters 4 and 5 suggest that if specific improvements are made, its value to the School District would be enhanced. Hopefully, resulting from this study, changes will be made that will strengthen the CIC and make it a more effective community operation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
LETTERS

Wainright School
June 4, 1976

James Kaiser
Averill School

Dear Jim:

I am working with Dr. Chamberlain, as a part of my doctoral dissertation, to make a study of the Community Involvement Committee.

In accordance with our phone conversation we would appreciate your help with the following:

1. Fill out a survey questionnaire.
2. Ask teachers who attended any meetings during the 1975-1976 school year to complete one.
3. Send the name of the chairman along with a list of all persons who attended meetings this school year. Include address and phone number.

I will pick up the envelope Thursday afternoon, June 10th. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Ford

(The above letter was sent to the six cooperating principals along with enough survey instruments for their staffs.)

3814 Wedgewood Drive
Lansing, Mich. 48910

Flint Public Schools
Flint, Michigan

Dear Sir:

In cooperation with the Lansing Public Schools I am making a study of community involvement groups; especially those concerned with public education.

If you have any bulletins or other materials with information relating to this subject would you send us samples? We would be most happy to pay any expenses you may incur with duplicating, handling or postage.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Ford

(The school systems listed below received a copy of this letter)

Jackson, Michigan
Pontiac, Michigan
Muskegon, Michigan
Midland, Michigan

Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan
Kalamazoo, Michigan
Grand Rapids, Michigan

June 10, 1976

Dear CIC Member,

With the approval of the Lansing School Board, I am working with Dr. Chamberlain to make a study of the Community Involvement Committee.

Would you kindly complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the self addressed envelope. Your responses are highly valued and will assist us immeasurably in planning for the future.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Ford

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Survey Questionnaire

_____ Teacher
_____ Parent
_____ Principal

1. In my area the CIC serves as the primary communication link between school and neighborhood.
effectively 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ineffectively
2. A cross-section of the school neighborhood is represented on our CIC committee
agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
3. How would you rate CIC participation in the planning phase of school operations?
good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 poor
4. As your CIC discusses issues how would you rate its participation in making final decisions?
good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 poor
5. How would you rate the involvement of your CIC committee in assessing the needs of your school?
active 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 inactive
6. When school-neighborhood problems are referred to your Committee for consideration, satisfactory solutions are usually arrived at.
agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree

7. List some school or community problems for which your CIC Committee has sought solutions.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

8. Listed below are some ways that schools and neighborhoods communicate. How would you rate them in order of importance using 1 for most important to 7 for least important?

_____	The State Journal
_____	School bulletins sent home with children
_____	Parent Teacher Association
_____	School newsletter
_____	Parent teacher conferences
_____	Community Involvement Committee
_____	Informal student conversation about school and home
_____	Other _____

9. In the list below check the activities in which you have been involved with the planning.

_____	School Budget
_____	Curriculum concerns
_____	School community newsletter
_____	Work on discipline code
_____	After school activities
_____	Volunteer programs
_____	Others _____

10. Below is a list of CIC activities. Check the ones in which you have participated in making decisions.

☐ Extra curricular activities
☐ Budget problems
☐ Curriculum programs
☐ Discipline code
☐ Determining school priorities
☐ Others _____

11. In determining school needs check the areas in which you have participated.

☐ Examining test scores
☐ Determining needs priorities
☐ Identifying problem areas
☐ Finances
☐ Curriculum
☐ Others _____

APPENDIX C

COMPOSITE STATISTICAL CHART

COMPOSITE STATISTICAL CHART

	No.	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.	C.I.L.	C.I.U.
Hypothesis 1	95	4.2	1.9	7	1	3.8	4.6
Hypothesis 2	95	4.1	2.0	7	1	3.7	4.6
Hypothesis 3	95	4.3	1.8	7	1	3.9	4.7
Hypothesis 4	95	4.6	1.8	7	1	4.2	5.0
Hypothesis 5	95	4.7	1.7	7	1	4.3	5.0
Hypothesis 6	95	5.0	1.7	7	1	4.7	5.3

Key

No. - Number in Sample
 Mean - Average
 S.D. - Standard Deviation
 Max. - Maximum Limit of Score
 Min. - Minimum Limit of Score
 C.I.L. - Confidence Interval Lower Limit
 C.I.U. - Confidence Interval Lower Limit

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