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THE SCHOOL PARK.

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TO ASSIST IN DESEGREGATION, VARIOUS MODELS FOR THE SCHOOL PARK ARE PROPOSED--(1) ASSEMBLING ALL STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS OF A SMALL OR MEDIUM-SIZED COMMUNITY ON A SINGLE CAMPUS, (2) SERVING ONE SECTION OF A LARGE CITY, (3) CENTERING ALL SCHOOL FACILITIES FOR A SINGLE LEVEL OF EDUCATION ON A SINGLE SITE, AND (4) ESTABLISHING RINGS OF SCHOOL PARKS ABOUT EACH SEGREGATED CENTRAL CITY. BECAUSE OF THE SIZE OF AN EDUCATIONAL PARK, LIBRARIES, FULL-TIME SPECIALISTS, CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION, AND STAFF AND STUDENT ORGANIZATION COULD BE USED MORE EFFICIENTLY. THE PRESENCE ON A SINGLE CAMPUS OF ALL SCHOOL LEVELS AND OF A WIDE RANGE OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND AUXILIARY SERVICES WOULD GIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT NOT POSSIBLE IN A SINGLE SCHOOL. PLANNING OF A SCHOOL PARK WILL BE A FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IN CITY PLANNING, AND FINANCING OF EDUCATIONAL PARKS WILL REQUIRE LARGE-SCALE FEDERAL SUPPORT. AS A STEP TOWARD FULL COMMITMENT, SCHOOLS CAN BE GROUPED INTO COOPERATIVE COMPLEXES. THIS REPORT WAS PREPARED FOR THE U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS. (HM)

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Of all the plans that have been put forward for integrating urban schools the boldest is the school park. This is a scheme under which several thousand ghetto children and a larger number from middle-class white neighborhoods would be assembled in a group of schools sharing a single campus. Placing two or more schools on one site is not a new idea, but two other aspects of the school park are novel. It would be the largest educational institution ever established below the collegiate level and the first planned explicitly to cultivate racial integration as an element of good education.

A small community might house its entire school system in one such complex. A large city with one or more large ghettos would require several. In the most imaginative and difficult form of the proposal a central city and its neighboring suburban districts would jointly sponsor a ring of metropolitan school parks on the periphery of the city.¹

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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The characteristic features of the school park—comprehensive coverage and unprecedented size—are its main advantages and at the same time the chief targets of its critics. Is the park a defensible modern version of the common school, perhaps the only form in which that traditionally American institution can be maintained in an urban society? Or is it a monstrous device that can lead only to the mass mistreatment of children? Whatever else it is or may in time turn out to be, it is neither a modest proposal nor a panacea.

Since even one such project would require a substantial commitment of policy and money, it is obvious that the validity of the concept should be closely examined and the costs and potential benefits associated with it carefully appraised.

The purpose of this paper is to assist that process by considering the relevance of the school park to present problems in urban education and by analyzing, although in a necessarily limited way, its potentiality.

THE PROBLEM

Twelve years of effort, some ingeniously pro forma and some laboriously genuine, have proved that desegregating schools—to say nothing of integrating them—is much more difficult than it first appeared. Attendance area boundaries have been redrawn; new schools have been built in border areas; parents have been permitted, even encouraged, to choose more desirable schools for their children; pupils from crowded slum schools have been bused to outlying schools; Negro and white schools have been paired and their student bodies merged; but in few cases have the results been wholly satisfactory. Despite some initial success and a few stable solutions, the consequences, for the most part, have proved disappointing. Steady increases in urban Negro population, continuing shifts in the racial character of neighborhoods, actual or supposed decline in student achievement, unhappiness over cultural differences and unpleasant personal relations have combined to produce new problems faster than old ones could be solved.²

Underlying the whole situation are basic facts that have too seldom been given the attention they merit. Some of these facts bear on the behavior of individuals. Few parents of either race, for example, are willing to accept inconvenience or to make new adjustments in family routines if the only discernible result is to improve the opportunities of other people's children. A still smaller minority will actually forego advantages to which

their children have become accustomed merely to benefit other children. Most parents, liberal or conservative, hesitate to accept any substantial change in school procedures unless they are convinced that their own children will have a better than even chance of profiting from them. While prejudice and bigotry are not to be minimized as obstacles to racial integration, resistance attributed to them is often due rather to the reluctance of parents to risk a reduction in their own children's opportunities.

Nor, in some cases, have community characteristics and population movement been well enough considered. The steady and continuing expansion of ghettos is clearly evident in almost every central city, yet one desegregation plan after another proposed to build new schools on the obviously temporary borders between white and Negro communities or to pair adjacent existing schools in the vain hope of retaining well-balanced student bodies. Even the most superficial glance at occupancy patterns would reveal that only massive changes in housing, migration, or birth rates could possibly prevent early re-segregation of the schools involved.

The controversy over what constitutes viable racial balance in schools or neighborhoods remains unsettled, for the data are far from complete. There is abundant evidence, however, that few middle-class families, Negro or white, will choose schools enrolling a majority of Negro children if any alternative is available. Additional complications arise from social class and cultural relationships. Although borderline sites or school pairing on the periphery of a ghetto may produce temporary racial desegregation, these devices rarely bring together children of different social classes. As a consequence, the predict-

able antagonisms between lower class white and Negro groups increase the school's burden of adjustment problems and diminish the benefits of cultural interchange.

If the main shortcoming of these efforts were that they produced temporary rather than permanent solutions, the consequences would at least be tolerable. The first short-term program might give way to another, even if it, too, proved to be of only passing usefulness. But these failures not only retard progress; they undermine it. Each time a desegregated school becomes re-segregated, the ensuing disappointment and bitterness exacerbate the original condition. Whatever the cause of the reversion, the fact of failure is clear. The discouraging sense that desegregation "won't work" leads to the conclusion that the ghetto child's only hope lies in improving his segregated school. For the immediate future this may, indeed, be the only course open in some situations. But for the long run, neither school management nor public policy can be based on any assumption so completely contrary to the principles of an open society.

The moral and legal grounds for desegregating schools are clear and well-established. The factual evidence that integration can improve the effectiveness of education is steadily accumulating.³ For the purposes of this paper there is no need to review either. But it will be useful to examine what is now known about the conditions that must be met if schools are to be well integrated and effective.

The first requirement is that the proportion of each race in the school be acceptable and educationally beneficial to both groups.⁴ This means that the proportion of white students must be high enough to keep them and, more importantly, their parents from feeling over-

whelmed and to assure the Negro student the advantage of a genuinely integrated environment. On the other hand, the number of Negro students must be large enough to prevent their becoming an odd and isolated minority in a nominally desegregated school. Their percentage should enable them to appear as a matter of course in all phases of school life. No Negro student should have to "represent his race" in any different sense than his white classmates represent theirs.

Many efforts have been made to define a racially balanced school, but no "balance," however logical it may be statistically, is likely to remain stable and workable if it results in either a majority of Negroes, or so few that they are individually conspicuous. This suggests in practice a Negro component ranging from a minimum of 15 to 20 percent to a maximum of 40 to 45 percent.

School districts with small Negro minorities, even though they may be concentrated in ghettos, can ordinarily devise plans to meet these conditions without large scale changes in the character of their school systems. Central cities with sizeable ghettos and smaller cities with larger proportions of Negroes will usually be required to make substantial changes in order to attain integrated schools.

But even when such acceptable racial proportions have been established, an effectively integrated school can be maintained only if a second condition is met: The school must respond to the educational needs of all its students better than the schools they might otherwise attend. The school must possess the capacity, the physical facilities, the staff strength, the leadership, and the flexibility required not only to offer a wide range of programs and services, but also adapt them to the special circumstances of individual students.

THE PARK AS A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

In school districts where redistricting, pairing, open enrollment, and busing offer little hope of producing lasting integration and high quality school programs, the school park may well offer a satisfactory solution. School parks (called also educational parks, plazas, or centers) have been proposed in a number of communities and are being planned in several. The schemes so far advanced fall into several categories. The simplest, which is appropriate for a small or medium-sized town, assembles on a single campus all the schools and all the students of an entire community. As a result the racial character of a particular neighborhood no longer determines the character of any one school. All the children of the community come to the central campus where they can be assigned to schools and classes according to whatever criteria will

produce the greatest educational benefits. The School Board of East Orange, N.J., has recently announced a 15-year construction program to consolidate its school system of some 10,000 pupils in such an educational plaza.⁵

Another variant of the park is a similarly comprehensive organization serving one section of a large city as the single park might serve an entire smaller town. Where this plan is adopted the capacity of the park must be so calculated that its attendance area will be sufficiently large and diversified to yield a racially balanced student body for the foreseeable future. Merely to assemble two or three elementary units, a junior high school and a senior high school would in many cities produce no more integration than constructing the same buildings on the customary separate sites.

Less comprehensive schemes can also be called school parks. One, applicable to smaller communities, would center all school facilities for a single level of education—e.g., all elementary schools, or middle schools, or high schools, on a single site. Single-level complexes serving less than a whole community are also possible in large cities. The 1964 Allen Report for New York City proposed middle school parks to enroll 15,000 pupils each and to be located where they would assure as many children as possible experience in well-integrated schools.⁶

In its 1966 study of the Pittsburgh schools, the Harvard Graduate School of Education proposed that all high school programs be housed in five new education centers, each to be located where it will serve a racially balanced student body for the foreseeable future.⁷

A fourth, and the most comprehensive, type of park would require a number of

changes in school planning and administration. This is the metropolitan school park designed to meet the increasingly serious problems posed by the growing Negro population of the central cities and the almost wholly white suburbs that surround them. The proposal, briefly stated, is to ring the city with school parks that would enroll the full range of pupils from the kindergarten to the high school and possibly including a community college. Each park would be placed in a "neutral" area near the periphery of the city. Each attendance area would approximate a segment of the metropolitan circle with its apex at the center of the city and its base in the suburbs. Since many students would arrive by school bus or public carrier, each site would be adjacent to a main transport route.⁸

The potentialities of school parks in general can be explored by projecting what might be done in such a metropolitan center. We can begin with certain assumptions about size and character. In order to encompass an attendance area large enough to assure for the long term an enrollment more than 50 percent white and still include a significant number of Negro students from the inner-city ghetto, the typical park, in most metropolitan areas, would require a total student body (kindergarten to Grade 12) of not less than 15,000. It would thus provide all the school facilities for a part of the metropolitan area with a total population of 80,000 to 120,000. The exact optimum size of a particular park might be as high as 30,000, depending upon the density of urban and suburban population, the prevalence of nonpublic schools, the pattern of industrial, business, and residential zoning, the character of the housing, and the availability of transport.

The site, ideally, would consist of 50 to 100 acres but a workable park could be designed on a much smaller area or, under suitable circumstances, deep within the central city by using high-rise structures.⁹ Within these buildings individual school units of varying sizes would be dispersed horizontally and vertically. On a more generous plot each unit could be housed separately, with suitable provision for communication through tunnels or covered passages.

The sheer size of the establishment would present obvious opportunities to economize through centralized functions and facilities, but the hazards of over-centralization are formidable. To proceed too quickly or too far down that path would be to sacrifice many of the park's most valuable opportunities for better education.

Because of its size the park would make possible degrees of specialization, concentration, and flexibility that are obtainable only at exorbitant cost in smaller schools. A center enrolling 16,000 students in a kindergarten-4-4-4 organization, with 1,000-1,300 pupils at each grade level, could efficiently support and staff not only a wide variety of programs for children at every ordinary level of ability, but also highly specialized offerings for those with unusual talents or handicaps.

Superior libraries could be maintained, with strong centralized and decentralized collections of books, tapes, discs, films, and a rich combination of services for every unit in the park.

Such an institution could operate its own closed circuit television system more effectively, and with lower cable costs than a community-wide system, and with greater attention to the individual teacher's requirements.

A central bank of films and tapes could be available for transmission to any classroom, and the whole system controlled by a dialing mechanism that would enable every teacher to "order" at any time whatever item he wished his class to see. Other forms of information storage and retrieval could readily be provided for instruction, administration, or teacher education.

The pupil population would be large enough to justify full-time staffs of specialists and the necessary physical facilities to furnish medical, psychological, and counseling services at a level of quality that is now rarely possible. Food service could be provided through central kitchens, short distance delivery, and decentralized dining rooms for the separate schools.

The most important educational consequences of the park's unprecedented size would be the real opportunities it would offer for organizing teachers, auxiliary staff, and students. In the hypothetical K-4-4-4 park of 16,000, for example, there would be about 5,000 pupils each in the primary and middle school age groups, or enough at each level for 10 separate schools of 500 pupils.

Each primary or middle school of that size could be housed in its own building, or its own section of a larger structure with its own faculty of perhaps 25. Such a unit, directed by its own principal, with its own complement of master teachers, "regular" teachers, interns, assistants, and volunteers, would be the school "home" of each of its pupils for the 3, 4, or 5 years he would spend in it before moving on to the next level of the park. A permanent organization of children and adults of that size employing flexible grouping procedures would make possible working relationships far superior to those now found in

most schools. Moreover, since a child whose family moved from one home to another within the large area served by the park would not be required to change schools, one of the principal present handicaps to effective learning in the city schools would be largely eliminated.

While not every school within the park could offer every specialized curriculum or service, such facilities could be provided in as many units as necessary and children assigned to them temporarily or permanently. Each child and each teacher would "belong" to his own unit, but access to others would be readily possible at any time.

The presence on a single campus of all school levels and a wide range of administrative and auxiliary services would present the professional staff with opportunities for personal development and advancement which no single school now affords. The ease of communication, for example, among the guidance specialists or mathematics teachers would exceed anything now possible. It would become feasible to organize for each subject or professional specialty a department in which teachers in all parts of the park could hold memberships, in much the way that a university department includes professors from a number of colleges.

For the first time, a field unit could justify its own research and development branch, a thing not only unheard of but almost unimaginable in most schools today. With such help "in residence" the faculty of the park could participate in studies of teaching problems and conduct experiments that now are wholly impracticable for even the most competent teachers.

Much would depend, of course, on the imagination with which the park was organized

and administered and how its policies were formed. Since the metropolitan park, by definition, would serve both a central city and one or more suburban districts, its very establishment would be impossible without new forms of intergovernmental cooperation. At least two local school boards would have to share authority, staffs, and funds. The State educational authority and perhaps the legislature would be required to sanction the scheme and might have to authorize it in advance. Public opinion and political interests would be deeply involved as would the industrial and real estate establishments of the sponsoring communities.

The planning of a metropolitan park would have to be viewed as a concern not merely of school people, parents, and legislative or executive officials. It would have to be approached from the outset as a fundamental problem in metropolitan planning. Its dependence on quantitative projections of population and housing data is obvious, but equally important is its relation to the character of the housing, occupancy policies, and ethnic concentrations. To build a park only to have it engulfed in a few years by an enlarged ghetto would be a sorry waste of both money and opportunity. No good purpose, educational or social, would be served by creating what might become a huge segregated school enclave. A school park can be undertaken responsibly only as part of a comprehensive metropolitan development plan. Where such planning is not feasible, the establishment of a metropolitan school park would be a questionable venture.

It may be reasonable in some circumstances to project a park within the limits of a single school district. Where the analysis of population trends and projected develop-

ment justify a single district park, the inter-governmental problems disappear, but agreements within the municipal structure will still be important and may be quite difficult to negotiate. The need for comprehensive community planning to assure the future viability of the park is certainly no less necessary within the city than in the metropolitan area.

Once the park is authorized, the question of operating responsibility must be addressed. In a sense that no individual school or geographic subdivision possibly can, the school park permits decentralized policy development and administration. Because of the natural coherence of the park's components and their relative separation from the rest of the district—or districts—to which it is related, the park might very well be organized as a largely self-contained system. The argument for placing the park under a board with considerable autonomy is strong whether it is a metropolitan institution or a one-city enterprise. For the first time it could thus become possible for the citizens in a section of a large community to have a direct, effective voice in the affairs of a school serving their area. Such details as the size of the board, length of terms, and method of selection would best be determined in each case according to local needs, but with full readiness to devise new statutes in order to take maximum advantage of the new opportunity.

Citizen participation would have to occur at points other than the board, however. If the park is to be strongly related to its communities, and integrated in fact as well as in principle, parents and other citizens would have to be involved, formally and informally, in many of its activities. These might range from parent-teacher conferences to service on major curriculum advisory groups. They could

include routine volunteer chores and service as special consultants or part-time teachers. The specific possibilities are unlimited but the tone of the relationships will critically affect the park's success.

Because of its size, diversity, and compactness the park will present possibilities—and problems—in internal organization and administration that have not been encountered before. If the management of these new institutions only replicates the forms, procedures, and errors of present school bureaucracies the battle for a fresh approach to universal education could be lost before it began. Plans can and should be designed to make the most productive use of the central resources of the park as a whole while at the same time taking maximum advantage of the diversity among its component units. Any community or metropolitan area contemplating a park would do well not only to select its administrative and supervisory staff with great care but to assemble it a semester or even a full year before students are admitted in order to plan the working arrangements.

Obtaining the necessary cooperation to build a metropolitan park will not be easy but the financial problems will be equally severe. A park accommodating 16,000 pupils can be expected to cost in the neighborhood of \$50 million. The financial pressures on cities and suburban districts make it clear that Federal support on a very large scale will be required if school parks are to be built. But it is precisely the possibility of Federal funding that could provide the incentive to bring the suburbs and the central city together.

While categorical support through Federal funds will continue to be needed, effective leverage on the massive problems of urban education, including, particularly, integra-

tion, can be obtained only through broadly focused programs of general aid, with special attention given to new construction. Little can be done toward equalizing opportunities without a sizeable program of school building expansion and replacement. Such aid, moreover, must be available for both the neglected child and the relatively advantaged.

If much of this new assistance were expressly channeled into creating metropolitan parks, on a formula of 90 percent Federal and 10 percent State and local funding, it would envision equalized, integrated schools of high quality in most cities within a period of 10 to 15 years.

Would such a program mean abandoning usable existing school buildings? Not at all, since most school districts desperately need more space for their present and predictable enrollment, to say nothing of the other uses that school systems and other government agencies could readily find for buildings that might be relinquished. The impending expansion of nursery school programs and adult education are only two of the more obvious alternate uses for in-city structures.

Is the school park an all-or-nothing question? Is it necessary to abandon all existing programs before the benefits of the park can be tested? Short of full commitment, there are steps that can be taken in the direction of establishing parks and to achieve some of their values. The "educational complex" put forward in the Allen Report for New York City is one such step. As described in that report, the complex is a group of two to five primary schools and one or two middle schools near enough to each other to form a cooperating cluster and serving sufficiently diversified neighborhoods to promote good biracial contact.

An educational complex should be administered by a *senior administrator*, who should be given authority and autonomy to develop a program which meets appropriate citywide standards but is also directly relevant to the needs of the locality. Primary schools within the complex should share among themselves facilities, faculties, and special staff, and should be coordinated to encourage frequent association among students and parents from the several units. Within the education complex teachers will be better able to help children from diverse ethnic backgrounds to become acquainted with one another. Parent-teacher and parent-school relations should be built on the bases of both the individual school and the complex. The children—and their parents—will thus gain the dual benefits of a school close to home and of membership in a larger, more diverse educational and social community. The concept of the educational complex arises in part from the view that the means of education and much of their control should be centered locally.

Although it may not be possible to desegregate all primary schools, ultimately most of them should be integrated educationally. This will aid the better preparation of students for life and study in the middle school; it will more nearly equalize resources; and it will give the staff in the primary schools new opportunities for innovation and originality in their work.¹⁰

Experimental projects on a limited scale might also be set up between city and suburban districts to deal with common problems. The Hartford and Irondequoit projects trans-

porting Negro students to suburban schools are examples of what can be done.

Additional efforts could include exchanging staff members; involving students, particularly at the secondary level, in joint curricular or extracurricular activities; setting up "miniature school parks" during the summer in schools on the city-suburban border; conducting work sessions in which board and staff members from metropolitan school systems examine population changes, common curriculum problems, and opportunities for joint action.

Establishing school parks would mean a substantial shift in educational policy. In addition, as has been pointed out, the metropolitan park would require concerted action among governmental units. New forms of State and Federal financial support and sharply increased appropriations would be essential. In some cases teacher certification procedures would have to be altered and administrative routines adapted to tasks never before attempted. New forms of school architecture would have to be devised and more extensive transportation services instituted. In brief, a number of quite sweeping reforms would have to be accomplished. Parents and other citizens, school leaders, public officials and legislators will be justified in asking for persuasive factual and logical support for such radical proposals.

The response must be that critically important educational, social, and economic needs of a large part of urban America are not being met by our present policies and practices and that there is no reason to think that they will be met by minor adjustments of the present arrangements. The evidence is irresistible that the consequences of racial segregation are so costly and so damaging to

all our people that they should no longer be tolerated. Through bitter experience we are learning that the isolation of any race is demeaning when it is deliberate and that it is counterproductive in human and economic terms, no matter how it is caused or explained. The elimination of this debilitating and degrading aspect of American life must now be ranked among the most important and urgent goals of our society. The task cannot be done without concerted action among many forces and agencies. Participation by private agencies and by government at every level will be needed. But central to every other effort will be the influence and the power of the public schools. Those schools, which have served the nation so well in achieving other high purposes, can serve equally well in performing their part of this new undertaking—if the magnitude of the task is fully appreciated and action undertaken on a scale appropriate to a major national purpose.

The steps that have heretofore been taken to cope with segregation have been of no more than tactical dimensions. Most of them have been relatively minor adaptations and accommodations requiring minimal changes in the status quo. It should by now be clear that we cannot integrate our schools or assure all our children access to the best education unless we accept these twin goals as prime strategic objectives.

Responding to commitments of comparable significance at other stages in our history as a nation, we built tens of thousands of common schools; spanned the continent with a network of agricultural and mechanical colleges; devised systems of vocational education in every state; and, most recently, set in motion a spectacular expansion of scientific research and development.

Establishing rings of school parks about each of our segregated central cities would, to be sure, require decisions to invest large sums of money in these projects. The prior and more important commitment, however, must be to the purpose to which the money will be dedicated: effective equality of educational opportunity at a new high level for millions of our young people.

The school park is no panacea. In itself it will guarantee no more than a setting for new accomplishment. But the setting is essential. If we fail to provide it or to invent an equally promising alternative, we shall continue to deny a high proportion of our citizens the indispensable means to a decent and productive life.

¹Thomas B. Pettigrew, "School Desegregation in Urban America," unpublished paper prepared for NAACP Legal Conference on School Desegregation, October 1966, pp. 25-33.

²Jeanette Hopkins, "Self Portrait of School Desegregation in Northern Cities," unpublished paper prepared for NAACP Legal Conference, October 1966, pp. 1-3.

³James S. Coleman, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, p. 332.

⁴Pettigrew, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵"Desegregation. Ten Blueprints for Action," *School Management*, Vol. 10, No. 10, October 1966, pp. 103-105.

⁶State Education Commission's Advisory Committee on Human Relations and Community Tensions, *Desegregating the Public Schools of New York City*, 1964, New York State Department of Education, p. 18.

⁷Center for Field Studies, Harvard Graduate School of Education, *Education for Pittsburgh*, Cambridge, 1966, p. 25.

⁸Pettigrew, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-33.

⁹Harold B. Gores, "Education Park; Physical and Fiscal Aspects," in Milton Jacobson (Ed.) *An Exploration of the Educational Park Concept*, New York, New York Board of Education, 1964, pp. 2-7.

¹⁰State Education Commission's Advisory Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 18.