

R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 016 718

UD 004 723

BIG CITY SCHOOL DESEGREGATION--TRENDS AND METHODS.

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PUB DATE NOV 67

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.25 HC-\$0.88 20P.

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THE CONCERNS OF THIS SPEECH ARE THE EXTENT OF SCHOOL SEGREGATION IN THE NATION'S 20 LARGEST CITIES, THE STEPS WHICH HAVE BEEN AND MIGHT BE TAKEN TO DESEGREGATE THEIR SCHOOL SYSTEMS, AND THE STRATEGIES NECESSARY TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT SCHOOL DESEGREGATION PLANS. THERE IS ALMOST TOTAL RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION IN 13 OF THESE CITIES. SEVENTY PERCENT OF ALL NEGRO PUPILS IN THESE CITIES ATTEND SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE A 90 TO 100 PERCENT NEGRO SCHOOL POPULATION, AND THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SCHOOL SEGREGATION CONTINUES TO INCREASE. IN EACH OF THE CITIES THERE ARE BETWEEN ONE AND THREE LIMITED REMEDIES IN OPERATION, INCLUDING SUCH PLANS AS FREE CHOICE TRANSFER, OPEN ENROLLMENT, AND CHANGES IN ATTENDANCE ZONES, BUT FEW COMPREHENSIVE REMEDIES ARE IN ACTUAL OPERATION. POSSIBLE COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS INCLUDE (1) MAGNET SCHOOLS, (2) EDUCATIONAL COMPLEXES OR CLUSTERS, WHICH INVOLVE A POOLING OF TEACHERS, SERVICES, AND STUDENTS WITHIN A GEOGRAPHICALLY LIMITED NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, (3) ADMINISTRATIVE DECENTRALIZATION, AND (4) A POTENTIAL REAFFIRMATION OF EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD SEGREGATION. EDUCATIONAL PARKS OFFER A VARIETY OF BENEFITS, BUT TO BE EFFECTIVE THEY MUST INTEGRATE STUDENTS FROM URBAN AND SUBURBAN DISTRICTS AND BE FINANCED UNDER A FEDERAL URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. THE INTERDISTRICT, URBAN-SUBURBAN COOPERATION INTRINSIC TO SUCH A PLAN IS ONE OF THE MOST FEASIBLE METHODS OF SCHOOL DESEGREGATION. TO IMPLEMENT DESEGREGATION STRATEGIES, ADMINISTRATORS MUST STRESS THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF DESEGREGATION FOR ALL CITIZENS, AND NEW FEDERAL POLICIES MUST LEGALLY REQUIRE COMPREHENSIVE EFFORTS. THIS PAPER WAS PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA'S CITIES, SPONSORED BY THE U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS, WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 16-18, 1967. (LB)

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BIG CITY SCHOOL DESEGREGATION: TRENDS AND METHODS

Prepared by  
Robert A. Dentler and James Elsbery  
for the  
National Conference on Equal Educational Opportunity  
in America's Cities  
sponsored by the  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C.  
November 16-18, 1967

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

This paper asks and attempts to answer four questions:

(1) What is the current situation with respect to school segregation in the largest central cities of the United States?

(2) What steps have been taken, or at least have been formally proposed and received the serious attention of school policy makers?

(3) What are the least and the most promising techniques for achieving school desegregation in these cities?

(4) What are the most promising strategies to implement these techniques?

The first question was approached through data on record with the Bureau of the Census and the Civil Rights Commission. The second was answered by collating evidence from published reports, field visits, correspondence and phone calls with school officials and informed persons within the twenty cities selected for analysis.

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We note in advance that few programs are in operation. In addition, it is impossible to identify all of the plans and proposals that have been generated within the twenty cities; we can provide only estimates. These estimates have been drawn in the interest of avoiding false optimism.

We have focused upon the 20 largest central cities in the United States, for the racial, ethnic, and class minorities are heavily concentrated in these communities, and it is here that school segregation is most intractable in extent and depth. We also have concentrated upon the racial isolation of Negroes in the schools. There are other groups affected, and the effects of isolation may be greater at present among Puerto Ricans than among Negroes in the metropolitan northeast. Nevertheless, the scale of Negro isolation combined with the greater absolute size of the urban Negro population makes us believe that highest technical and political priority must be given to the elimination of segregated educational facilities and services for Negroes; pursuit of this priority offers greatest promise for reducing the isolation of other groups.

#### The Current Situation

Of the twenty U.S. cities with populations in excess of 500,000, 13 approach the Tauber Index score of 100 which signifies total residential segregation\* Except for Washington, the few less segregated cities are located in the West, but the rate of Negro in-migration there will soon bring the West into line with the South and the Northeast. What is more, Houston and Dallas are only now moving from de jure into de facto school segregation.

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\* See Table I, at end.

Barring new policies, we expect that by 1975 the twenty largest cities of the nation, which together account for nearly half of the nation's Negro population, will be uniformly characterized by extreme residential, and hence extreme de facto school segregation. This effect is magnified by the fact that roughly six out of ten white pupils are enrolled in public schools, contrasted with nine out of ten Negro pupils. According to present findings, this disproportion is increasing. The evidence suggests that 70 percent of all Negro pupils attend schools that are composed of 90 to 100 percent Negro pupils. By 1975, barring new policies, we estimate that 80 percent of all Negro pupils in these cities will be attending 90 to 100 percent Negro schools.

Each of the 20 cities, as Table III shows, has operating or planned one, two, or three limited remedies. But only a few cities have in operation comprehensive programs. One of these involves a single "supplementary center" in Cleveland. There, pupils are being brought together for part of the day for enriched and remedial instruction that goes beyond what is available in isolated neighborhood schools. An informed source in Cleveland indicates, however, that classes are kept along home school lines, thus producing segregated groupings in a desegregated setting.

Another potentially comprehensive program is located in Baltimore, where some elementary schools have been clustered. In Boston, more than 250 Negro children are being bussed from the city into the schools of six cooperating suburban school districts. Although this program, conducted by the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO), is very small, it represents the most significant program mechanism operating in the largest cities.

There is a great difference between a big city school desegregation program that is in operation and one that has been proposed or planned. The only programs in general operation are those involving free choice transfers of pupils, limited open enrollment, or changes in attendance zones. For the most part, the open enrollment schemes now in operation are without significance; as Table III reveals they are unsupported by bussing and thus depend upon the initiative and private funds of parents.

Exclusive of New York City, then, other types of programs have merely been proposed. There is little reason to expect any implementation of desegregation proposals -- again barring changes in state or federal legal requirements -- in the next several years. In New York City, grade structure revisions have been mandated but will take a decade or more to implement; pairing has involved no more than ten schools; and the bulk of new school construction continues to be sited in extremely segregated subcommunities, although some selections have been made recently with a view to preventing further segregation.

But Table III and the qualitative data from which it was derived oblige us to conclude that applied research and planning toward school desegregation programs are increasing in extent and quality among the big cities. Some of this trend has resulted from federal expenditures for planning. At the same time, however, big city school segregation continues its annual increase and is nowhere being reduced or prevented.

An impressive, potentially influential "talking game" is going on in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, New Orleans, Seattle, and Buffalo. Successive waves of planning toward comprehensive desegregation in each may seem in the short term to do little more than deter action. Yet each wave is also an educative force, and it may be that in one or two of these cities the tide of decision will turn. Planners, government officials, and academics should be cautioned, however, against assuming that "talking games" signify decisions. Thirteen years of inaction and inadequate implementation since the Brown decision suggest the intractability of this problem, barring new policies at the federal level.

#### Feasible Techniques

None of the limited techniques, alone or in combination, can prevent, let alone eliminate, segregated education for Negroes in the largest central cities. But each is of educational value if well planned and carried out. Indeed, we have evidence that open enrollment programs can provide more immediate and positive educational benefits than programs of compensatory education carried out in segregated Negro schools.<sup>2</sup> We also have evidence that limited pairing programs, when executed mechanically and with little concern for instructional improvements, can redound to the disadvantage of the students who are sent, the students who are left behind, and the students in the receiving schools.<sup>3</sup>

The limited techniques should be continued and extended in all of the largest cities. They can be designed to improve educational opportunity, and they stimulate progressively greater commitment to com-

prehensive school desegregation programs. It is unlikely that federal, state, or local agencies will take giant steps to remedy a problem unless there has been experience in the small interim steps. Limited programs of free choice, grade structure revision, pairing and bussing, also serve to thaw an otherwise frozen complex of local school customs and mores. Quite apart from the challenge of school desegregation, big city school systems face such a host of social changes and rising public expectations that established procedures must be modified in countless ways if alternatives to failure are to be discovered. Well planned, well implemented, yet limited desegregation schemes should be encouraged. Hasty mechanical experiments should be avoided; they harm some students, and they depress confidence in the desirability of comprehensive school integration.

Magnet Schools - The magnet school offers specialized courses or educational services in a number of carefully located public schools in an effort to provide attractive, desegregated schooling to all those enrolled. Ideally, some minority group pupils are released from racial isolation and are also enriched by the curriculum, while majority pupils are "held in" the system by the special advantages of attendance or the prospect of future admission.

The magnet school concept is attractive politically but regressive educationally. Boston and New York City demonstrated fifty years ago that public school systems could create and operate exceptionally distinguished elite or specialized institutions. The price of most of these has been a reduction in the quality of education at other in-

stitutions within the same system, as both staff and students are skimmed off for special benefits. We agree with the Allen Committee's report on New York City which stated, "While some special-purpose schools may well be justified, the policy should be to eliminate those in which attendance seems to imply a stigma, which show a trend toward increasing racial homogeneity".<sup>4</sup>

Magnet schools pose new stresses for big city systems. These include public claims of unfair admission practices; disenchantment with non-magnet school offerings; and new strains in the personnel policies on recruitment, assignment, and salary. Some versions of the magnet school are also purely additive. Far from contributing to the effective integration of the system, they are tacked on as extra "academies" or supplements which are duplicative or redundant.

None of these reservations is meant to be absolute or dogmatic; feasible magnet schools can be created.

#### Clusters or Complexes

The educational complex is an administratively and geographically bounded network of public schools whose chief officer has the authority and the means to increase integration among staff and students in the member schools, and to make the best local adaptation of schools to student needs and to the reduction of ethnic isolation.<sup>5</sup> A complex would contain fairly proximate schools. Students would be assigned to Home Schools according to current neighborhood boundaries, but each would be not more than 20 minutes of bus travel time apart from one another or from the headquarters school. In the complex, teachers and services would be pooled, so as to best combine their time and skills

through sharing of common classes and exchanges of students or in other ways. The concept emphasizes the partial desegregation of existing facilities, staffs, and student bodies. It also exploits the concept of administrative decentralization less for purposes of local control and more for the goal of desegregation.

The strength of complexes is that the scheme can be adapted to make room for new school construction, sited to reduce or prevent further segregation. It can operate along with and reinforce the benefits of pairing and free choice transfers. Grade structures can be revised within clusters. Perhaps most important, it offers a concrete way of moving from neighborhood-based systems to larger districts, and paves the way for educational parks.

The weaknesses are equally noteworthy. Apart from one effort to cluster elementary schools in Baltimore, we know of no instance where a large city has attempted the complex. We think this is so because substantial administrative and staff reorganization is essential. Feasibility studies of Queens and Brooklyn in New York City indicated that further segregation could be partially prevented and that slightly less than one third of existing levels of school segregation could be eliminated. But a one third effect may seem too small a gain in return for substantial restructuring of personnel assignments, titles, and responsibilities. In New York City, the bath water of decentralization has been turned on but the baby of desegregation has been lost in the splash.<sup>6</sup> The surge toward local control has occurred along lines that reinforce existing neighborhood patterns of segregation.

## Educational Parks

The feasibility of educational parks in large cities will be tested only when several have been created and operated for some time in more than one city. At present, not a single educational park has been built in any of the twenty largest cities.

An educational park would be a very large consolidated unified school plant, built in a campus-like arrangement and zoned to serve many surrounding neighborhoods, subcommunities, or combinations of communities.

Parks have potential for meeting all criteria for educational desirability and feasibility. Moreover, as a survey of all states and 457 school districts recently indicated, 85 communities have already discovered that in planning educational parks they may promote solutions to a variety of urban problems. The problems that come within range of solution include new school construction economies, inner city redevelopment, metropolitanization, economies and improvements in the pooling and scheduling and distribution of special services, and class and ethnic as well as racial integration. To the imaginations of planners, social scientists, and some professional educators, parks are tremendously attractive and feasible instruments for adapting schools to late twentieth century educational requirements.

Among our 20 cities, educational parks have been proposed and partially planned in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit. Public and professional discussion has begun in at least four other great cities. In New York, where detailed preparation is underway, the two educational parks that will be built in the next several years

are not so located as to reduce or prevent racial segregation in the public schools. The Philadelphia Board of Education, according to reliable sources, is discussing the construction of three educational parks. Unfortunately, according to two reliable sources, if these parks are constructed they would be built in residentially segregated neighborhoods (two in essentially all Negro areas). If such a plan were carried out, at least five segregated elementary schools, two segregated junior high schools, and one desegregated high school would remain or become segregated. In Chicago, only a proposal exists and it asserts that it would take thirty years to create a system of parks.

To prove economically feasible, educational parks in the largest cities would have to be financed as part of a federal urban redevelopment program. Consider the financial magnitude of the New York City task, for example. If grades five through twelve were included, and if each park were to serve about 10,000 students, about 80 educational parks would have to be built. If a 1,000 pupil school with modest facilities now costs a minimum of two million dollars, each park would cost at least 25 million dollars. The total cost would be at least two billion dollars; it should be pointed out that considerable physical and social rehabilitation of residentially and commercially deteriorated areas could be built into the development process.

The history of resegregation of Washington and Baltimore schools demonstrates, finally, that educational parks, even if painstakingly sited, could not achieve the aim of desegregation in most of the twenty largest cities unless urban-suburban district consolidation

were involved. This fact is acknowledged in the Hobson v. Hansen  
9  
decision in Washington, and it is proven in a recent analysis of the  
10  
Baltimore school system.

Even in New York City, where desegregation policies of a sort are being practiced and where a margin for effective action continues to exist, educational parks would not desegregate the schools unless they were constructed on an inter-district basis and involved participation by predominantly white suburbs. If New York City began tomorrow to erect educational parks and succeeded in establishing ten of them by 1980, its public school pupil enrollment would still exceed 70 percent Negro and Puerto Rican.

#### Suburban-Urban Cooperation

Among the 20 cities, only Boston operates a program that involves suburban schools. Similar programs exist in several smaller cities, but we assumed at the opening of this paper that a variety of alternatives exist for smaller cities, making the experience of Hartford and Rochester interesting but less than critical.

Boston's METCO is private, voluntary, and small. It costs the participating school boards virtually nothing and raises no complex legal questions. No obligations exist within the program concerning continuation for the long term or expansion to include more districts or pupils. Thus it provides no direct empirical basis for assessing the feasibility of suburban-urban cooperation.

Nevertheless, nothing short of the evolution of the METCO concept will achieve big city school desegregation. By evolution, we mean the extension, expansion, and public legitimation of such pro-

grams to a point where public educational services are freed from fiscal restriction, district boundaries, and neighborhood parameters. Legally and politically, metropolitanization is the only viable, durable remedy that exists. Moreover, it is apt to prove most feasible if it is first attempted in those metropolitan areas such as Washington and Baltimore and Chicago, where the suburban districts are few enough in number to make incorporation and unification imaginable to both the public and public authorities.

Our point of view on this matter is demographic and ecological: Suburban white segregation (see Table II) in the metropolitan areas of the twenty largest cities always has been extremely high, and this will persist through 1985. Residential densities, average age of adults, and occupational mixes in central cities are such that the historic trend toward the massing of Negroes and other minorities in the inner city neighborhoods will also persist over the same period.

A very gradual ethnic redistribution across the entire metropolitan field may be seen in the oldest cities of the East. This will gradually erode the foundation of de facto segregated public education. But the pace of change, barring policy intervention, will be such as to create ghettos of miseducated minorities inside every suburban community, producing little more than an areal multiplication of the present big city situation.

#### Strategies for Implementation

In our judgment the recommendations advanced in the final section of the United States Civil Rights Commission report, Racial Isolation in the Public Schools, represent essential but not complete

elements of a strategy for achieving urban school desegregation. A Congressional uniform standard; firm assignment of state responsibility; sizeable federal fiscal assistance; adequate time, or controlled pacing; and the controls recommended over private and public housing and urban renewal, constitute the elements which must be present if the grave problem of school segregation is to be remedied.

To these steps we would add the elements of a local strategy and those of federal legislative and administrative integration. A necessary local strategy is consistent emphasis upon the ways in which the reconstruction of educational services will benefit all citizens and their children. We mean that an emphasis upon the moral principle of integration is an emphasis most likely to defeat the achievement of the objective; where an emphasis upon improved services for clients can capture and harness rising public expectations and serve the moral principle quietly and more effectively at the same time.

Educational park planning illustrates this vividly. In several cities, citizens from a variety of interest groups have endorsed the practical educational potential of the park because the park can be shown to offer a host of related improvements. Desegregation is perceived as obtainable incidentally or en route. A moral and legal approach to school integration can be achieved in smaller communities, but in the largest cities this approach is confounded and fragmented by political cross-pressures that cannot be managed or channelled.

We believe that local moral pressures on behalf of limited solutions should be maintained. Without these, ground is lost to extremists on both sides. Moreover, comprehensive urban programs fail

unless they evolve out of small experiments and demonstrations of what is desirable and possible. But the local strategy of greatest importance -- and the one that is now beginning to come into focus in a few cities -- is one of visualizing and persuading educators and the public of the great instructional and service gains and economies to be enjoyed through resource pooling and inter-district cooperation.

This local approach, even in concert with the recommendations of the Civil Rights Commission, will fail, we believe, unless there comes into being a legislative obligation for the progressive integration of federal programs. Currently, the gaps between Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Economic Opportunity Act, and the housing and renewal programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development are the moral equivalent of distance in inter-stellar space. They will not be closed through the occasional formation of task forces, but when direct cooperation is obligatory if programs are to be continued or enlarged from year to year. Some of the elements of this strategy are embodied in the original Model Cities plan, which was partially emasculated in the process of enactment.

We are arguing, in conclusion, that a federal legal and legislative basis for solution is essential but that this basis must include an integrative restructuring of federal programs aimed at solving urban problems.

A closing note concerning strategy: the limited desegregation devices we have cited and taken seriously will not evolve into comprehensive remedies if left free of new incentives or legal requirement.

Open enrollment and zoning changes have merit as first steps, but they offer few impacts upon the status quo. Changes in racial composition and changes in quality of educational services will occur only when and if new forces and new resources are introduced into local systems from above. Our ecological view buttresses this strongly; it shows that only giant steps will reach the goal. The best analogy is the history of school district consolidation from 1940 to 1967. Rarely did districts merge as a result of local discussion and campaigns. Rather, they merged because of state pressure and financial incentives. If this was true for consolidation, how true will it be for the much more fundamental change involved in metro-area school desegregation.

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TABLE II. REGIONAL AVERAGES FOR 20 CITIES  
ON SEGREGATION, RACIAL COMPOSITION, AND SIZE

	NORTH	SOUTH	MID-WEST	WEST	TOTAL
1960 City Pop.	2,063,790	753,699	1,769,481	1,087,411	1,404,625
1960 City Non-White Pop.	389,776	195,246	410,923	161,090	289,910
1960 City Non-White %	22.8	25.2	22.7	12.9	21.4
1964 Est. SMSA Pop.	4,177,000	1,453,000	3,431,000	2,969,000	2,969,000
1960-64 Est. Change in Migration	13,000	36,000	45,000	105,000	27,000
1960 City Res. Seg. Index	83.5	90.8	89.1	78.0	85.7
1950-60 Change in Seg. Pattern	-2.6	1.3	-1.9	-4.8	-1.7
1960 Sub. Res. Seg. Index	79.1	85.6	88.2	81.7	82.4

TABLE III AND SCHEME OF OPERATING PROGRAMS  
AND PLANS FOR SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IN  
20 LARGEST CITIES

City	TYPE OF PROGRAM										
	Open Enrollment or Free Choice	Zoning Changes	Bussing Provisions	Grade Changes	Site Selection	Pairing	Magnet Schools	Educational Parks	Urban Interchange	Suburban	Metro-politan Region District
1 New York	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	P	P	P	P
2 Chicago	0	0	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
3 Los Angeles	0	0					P				
4 Philadelphia	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			P	
5 Detroit	0	0									
6 Baltimore	0	0	0	P	P	P	P	0	P	P	
7 Houston	0										
8 Cleveland											0*
9 Washington		0									
10 St. Louis		0									
11 Milwaukee		P								P	
12 San Francisco		0								0**	
13 Boston		0								0	0
14 Dallas		0								0	

This Table schematizes our findings about steps that have been taken or authoritatively proposed to remedy racial isolation within each of the 20 cities. In completing this table, we identified plans or proposals with P only in those instances where a public agency commissioned, contracted for, or gave some formal reception to a plan or recommendations. If the suggestions of interest groups were added, the number of plans shown would increase. Categories along the horizontal axis run from the least costly, least comprehensive remedy - free choice transfer or open enrollment schemes - to the most far reaching proposal made public to date - full scale metropolitanization. For reasons discussed above, we distinguish between limited and comprehensive solutions at a point that falls roughly between the provision of bussing and the establishment of magnet schools.