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IDENTIFIERS \*National Project on Ethnic America; \*New Jersey

## ABSTRACT

This consultation was structured to provide a forum for participants to grapple with issues surrounding ethnic group identity, ethnic studies, intergroup conflict, and essential new roles for schools, colleges and community groups; and to chart new courses of action for New Jersey. The document includes a brief summary of the program. The morning sessions were devoted to an exploration of issues surrounding ethnicity in education. Following the keynote address, the participants divided into 12 groups for small round table discussions where immediate concerns and problems relating to the broad agenda of ethnic factors in education were addressed. A series of questions revolving around the key areas of (1) generating attitudes in teachers and school personnel conducive to fostering racial and ethnic group understanding; (2) outlining specific educational goals and designing methods to implement the new pluralism in the curriculum and in the school environment; and, (3) recognizing the legitimate demands of diverse ethnic groups while avoiding fragmentation, were raised and later answered by a multiethnic response panel. The afternoon session was devoted to programmatic workshops in which the participants defined the issues with even greater precision and proposed recommendations to meet many of the pressing needs. The recommendations which appear in the second part of this document were given as responses to the major questions posed in each workshop. (Author/AM)

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THE NEW JERSEY CONSULTATION  
ON  
ETHNIC FACTORS IN EDUCATION

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PROGRAM SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:  
A Preliminary Guide for Action in the 50 States

Edited by Nancy Seifer  
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May 9, 1973  
Newark State College  
Union, New Jersey

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## THE NEW JERSEY CONSULTATION ON ETHNIC FACTORS IN EDUCATION

New Jersey educators, students, parents and community relations experts pooled their knowledge and experience at Newark State College on May 9, 1973 at an event which was designed to help forge a vital new coalition and to pave the way for innovation and reform in the State's educational system.

The New Jersey Consultation on Ethnic Factors in Education was jointly sponsored by the College; the Office of Essex County Superintendent of Schools, Simeon Moss; and the New Jersey Regional Office of the American Jewish Committee, with the support and technical aid of the Committee's National Project on Ethnic America. It was structured to provide a forum for participants to grapple with some of the toughest problems of our times -- issues surrounding ethnic group identity, ethnic studies, intergroup conflict, and essential new roles for schools, colleges and community groups -- and to chart new courses of action for New Jersey.

Consultation participants included over 150 teachers, guidance and curriculum specialists, school administrators, school board and P.T.A. members, high school and college students, university professors and community relations specialists.

### The Program

The morning sessions of the Consultation were devoted to an exploration of issues surrounding ethnicity in education.

The keynote address was made by Irving M. Levine, Director of the American Jewish Committee's National Project on Ethnic America. Mr. Levine spoke to the need for the schools to become a major force in forging a "new pluralism" in America, which he defined as a social process which "accepts individual and group uniqueness, which allows for balance between identification with a small group and commitment to the society as a whole, and in which individuals who do not wish to identify with any group are also fully accepted."

Following the keynote address, the Consultation's format took a unique turn. Divided into 12 groups for small roundtable discussions, participants expressed their immediate concerns and problems relating to the broad agenda of ethnic factors in education, and posed a series of questions which were later answered by a multi-ethnic response panel. The panelists, representing New Jersey and national Black, Puerto Rican, Polish, Italian and Jewish leadership in education and community relations, included: Marcellus Smith, Field Consultant, Office of Equal Education, New Jersey Department of Education; Marie De Castro Blake, Extension Associate, Bureau of Community Services, Rutgers University; Dr. Thaddeus Gromada, Department of History, Jersey City State College; Stephen Adubato, Director, North Ward Cultural and Education Center, Newark; and Irving M. Levine. The panel was moderated by Dr. Fred Hahn, Dean, School of Education, Upsala College.

fragmentation.

The afternoon of the Consultation was devoted to programmatic workshops, in which the participants defined the issues with even greater precision and proposed recommendations to meet many of the most pressing needs. While there were more questions raised than there are answers currently available, the workshops enhanced the conceptualization of those questions, and provided new directions for future experimentation and action in five major areas. The recommendations, which appear below as responses to the major questions posed in each workshop, form the core of a crucially important program for weaving the "new pluralism" into New Jersey's educational system. It is a program which has the potential of serving as a model for the nation.

## Recommendations

Workshop I. Community Relations --- Does ethnic group assertiveness divide and alienate the community? How can an ethnic studies approach reduce intergroup tensions in the school?

1. There is a need for conflict resolution training amongst school personnel and the personnel of community agencies which relate to the schools. Ethnic group factors must be given major attention in the development of such training programs, which would serve to defuse conflicts before they degenerate into hopelessly polarized situations.
2. There is a need to develop local "bridge people," to serve as communicators between diverse ethnic groups in a given school community. Such leadership training, which would involve school personnel, should focus on long-term coalition-building.
3. There is a parallel need for school and community leadership to conceptualize "bridge issues," to bring about an understanding amongst poorer minority groups and lower middle class white ethnic groups of the commonality of many of their needs. Shared economic concerns, in particular, are often overlooked when resources are scarce and groups become pitted against one

- another in a struggle to meet their own needs.
4. Teachers and school administrators should work towards generating attitude change, by re-defining intergroup issues in terms of multi-ethnicity and pluralism and helping to defuse the polarizing "black-white" dichotomy.
  5. The schools must recognize the extra-curricular cultural needs of all constituent ethnic groups if they are to avoid polarizing situations.

Workshop II. Curriculum --- How should the curriculum reflect the "new pluralism?" How can we update the existing curriculum?

1. Educators should give immediate and concerted attention to: expanding existing minority studies programs and courses to embrace a multi-ethnic approach; integrating the "new pluralism" in all curriculum areas; dealing effectively with the growing multiplicity of demands for ethnic studies programs; and to such conflict-ridden issues as the relationship of a teacher's ethnic background to his or her qualifications for teaching a particular ethnic studies course.
2. New guidelines should be established for teaching multi-ethnic studies in a culturally pluralistic setting. Both pre-service and in-service teacher training should require personal introspection in regard to a teacher's own ethnic identity and life

experiences; sensitization to all the dimensions of ethnic factors in education; the use of guidance resources to enhance the student's sense of identity; and an historical overview of intergroup relations in an area and the contributions of all indigenous groups to the city, town or region.

3. New learning experiences should be designed to communicate the "new pluralism," such as program exchanges between classes of schools with students of different ethnic backgrounds involving sports, camping, assembly programs, or more informal gatherings.
4. A fundamental goal of education -- diminishing racial and ethnic conflict in human communities -- should be paramount in the design of new curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Workshop III. Teaching Aids --- Teaching the "new pluralism": What resources are available to the teacher? What textbooks and teaching aids?

1. A central resource list of existing teaching aids and materials should be made available to all teachers. No single textbook can be designed to be satisfactory for all classrooms. Furthermore, students should have a variety of materials at their disposal to examine and pursue their own interests.

2. Educators should make active approaches to publishers, outlining the kinds of materials they need, particularly in light of the fact that the textbook market is increasingly becoming a "buyers market."
3. Students, parents, grandparents, and ethnic community members should be utilized as resources in the educational process. Especially if it is ethnically diverse, the student body itself can be an excellent resource for broad discussion and human relations experiences in this area. (Assigning students to record oral histories of their grandparents is a project which has been extremely successful, in terms of its own educational value, and the opportunity to open up inter-generational communication.)
4. Schools should create opportunities for students, teachers, guidance personnel and administrators to examine their own values and to open up new areas of communication.

Workshop IV. Teacher Training ---- How do we prepare teachers to teach about ethnicity? What models are available for in-service training programs?

1. It is recommended that the State establish minimum qualifications for teacher certification which would include:
  - a. Extending student teaching sessions from the current 8 weeks to one full school year.

- b. Providing student teachers with greater exposure to both urban and suburban settings, and with opportunities to directly experience the life styles of the different ethnic communities their students come from.
  - c. Requiring student teachers to have a background in multi-ethnic studies and in the history of group life in America and in New Jersey.
  - d. Sensitizing student teachers to non-verbal communications patterns, to the effect of ethnic identity upon the self-image and behavior of their students (especially younger children), and to similarities as well as differences between children of diverse ethnic backgrounds.
  - e. Sensitizing student teachers to the stereotypes, biases, and values they may unconsciously hold, and preparing them for "risk taking" in encouraging classroom discussion around ethnic identity and group conflict.
- 2. In-service teacher and guidance personnel training programs, as developed by local school boards, should contain the appropriate elements in the above list for teacher certification.
  - 3. All elements of the school community should be involved in training for attitudinal change --- administrators, school board members, and even

parents, in addition to faculty.

4. Faculty and administrators should encourage parents to see themselves as both participants and resources in the schools.

Workshop V. New Research ---- What does social science research tell us about ethnicity in present day American society? What new research is needed?

1. There is a need for more research to bring about an understanding of group conflict in historical terms -- research which would serve to explode myths, establish parallels, and specifically delineate new and unique elements (for example: the genocide of the American Indian, the slavery of the American Black, the exclusion of the Chinese, the rites of immigrant passage for Europeans and the differential ethnic development on the frontier and in our urban centers.)
2. Greater dissemination of the research findings already available is badly needed, as well as the development of new applications of those findings to make them useful to educators and community leaders.
3. Research in the social sciences should become more behaviorally and action-oriented. It should intensively examine culture clashes, conflicts in values, attitudes and goals, and focus on designing group conflict problem-solving techniques.

4. Researchers and academicians must bear in mind that in applying an understanding of the ethnic factor to the resolution of group conflict, the related social class factor must be given equal consideration.
5. Greater funding for research into ethnic group identity, intergroup relations and group conflict should be made available by foundations, universities and government.

#### FOLLOW-UP TO THE CONSULTATION

The most valuable outgrowth of the Consultation was the formation of a diverse coalition of people vitally interested in improving both the content and the climate of education in New Jersey schools. In addition to members of the Consultation Planning Committee (a list of members is attached), a large number of participants at the Consultation volunteered to commit their energies to follow-up efforts.

The future course of action will be based upon the workshop recommendations. Implementation of those recommendations will, of course, ultimately depend upon the educational institutions in question. However, in order to lay the groundwork for such far-reaching changes to take place, an organized advocacy mechanism is essential.

Funding is currently being sought to establish a permanent structure and small staff to coordinate efforts in this area. In the meantime, support for follow-up activities is being provided by the

New Jersey Regional Office of the American Jewish Committee.  
The follow-up committee will meet on June 28th to evaluate the  
Consultation and to outline specific next steps.

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