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ABSTRACT

The general improvement of educational relevance and quality for minority groups in the Fresno City Unified School District is considered as part of PROJECT DESIGN, funded under ESEA Title III. Selected schools were visited and conferences held with students, teachers, administrators, citizens, and Negro community leaders and parents. The recommendation accorded the highest priority is that educational developments, proposals, and achievements be communicated to the citizenry in general and to its minority population in particular. Other recommendations call for (1) the inclusion of curriculum content of minority cultural and practical contributions to American society, (2) a rapid increase in the number of minority persons in teaching and administrative positions, (3) an expansion of the human relations staff and program, and (4) a program of instruction for parents of minority group children. Related documents are EA 002 841, EA 002 844, and EA 002 845. (MF)

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EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

26. RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES

FRESNO, 1968

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER
FRESNO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FRESNO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

1968

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F O R E W O R D

PROJECT DESIGN (Inter-Agency Planning for Urban Educational Needs) was organized as a two-year project to develop a comprehensive long-range master plan of education for the Fresno City Unified School District in California.

This project was conceived by school leadership to bring under one umbrella current major problems of the schools, the relationship of the schools to the broader community, the impact of educational change now occurring throughout the nation, and a fresh view of the educational needs, goals and aspirations of our youth and adults. The ultimate purpose of the project is to weld into an integrated plan the best use of available resources to meet the totality of current and projected needs according to their rational priorities.

The United States Office of Education funded the proposal as an exemplary Title III project, recognizing the urgency for developing better planning processes for urban school systems. The first year of this project was organized to assess current and projected educational needs in the urban area served by the Fresno City Schools. Planning procedures will be carried out in the second project year.

A major dimension of the Needs Assessment is an analysis of educational and urban factors by a Task Force of specialists. This report is one of the Task Force Needs Assessment publication series. See the next page for the complete list of project Needs Assessment publications.

PROJECT DESIGN
NEEDS ASSESSMENT PUBLICATIONS

1. Brainstorm - Needs Perceived by School Staff
2. Speak-Up - Needs Perceived by Community
3. Student Speak-Up - Needs Perceived by Secondary Students
4. School Staffing
5. Analysis of Achievement
6. Problems Perceived by Educational Leadership

County Schools Survey

7. Vocational Occupational Needs Survey (published by County Regional Planning and Evaluation Center - EDICT)
8. >
9. > Other County School Needs Survey Reports (by EDICT)

TASK FORCE

| <u>Educational Content Fields</u> | <u>Other Educational Areas</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 10. Reading | 18. Teaching/Learning Process |
| 11. Language | 19. Special Education |
| 12. Mathematics | 20. Guidance |
| 13. Science | 21. Health |
| 14. Foreign Language | 22. Student Personnel |
| 15. Cultural Arts | 23. Adult Education |
| 16. Social Science | 24. Vocational Education |
| 17. Physical Education | |
| <u>Urban Physical Factors</u> | |
| 25. Urban Physical Factors | |
| <u>Urban Social and Human Factors</u> | |
| 26. Relevance and Quality of Education for Minorities | |
| 27. Special Needs of Mexican-Americans | |
| 28. Special Needs of Negroes | |

29. Conclusions from Needs Assessment Publications
30. Summary - Fresno Educational Needs Assessment
31. The Process of Educational Planning

26. RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES

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INITIAL CHARGE

The assignment of this investigator to this project grew out of an extended conversation between the writer and the project director. In the course of the dialogue, the investigator expressed serious concern over the "Relevancy and Quality of Education for Minority Groups" in the Fresno schools. The investigator accepted the invitation to look into the matters despite the fact that most aspects of the minority-education problem were being studied in one form or another by specialists selected earlier. Fortunately, the assignment was a loosely conceived one, giving the investigator considerable leeway in approach.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

In connection with the assignment seven days were spent in Fresno. Selected schools were visited and conferences held with students, teachers, and administrators. An open conference period was held with Negro community leaders and parents. The investigator spent one entire Saturday in the West Fresno area conferring informally with the rank and file of the Negro population and a Sunday talking with Sunday School students and teachers as well as with the regular church attendants. The inquiry eventually focused on the Negro minority.

As a result of observations and conversations the focus of this report has shifted from the matter of relevancy and quality, even though these be very important, to concerns which the investigator feels are basic to the general improvement of the relevancy and quality of education for minority groups in the Fresno situation. Further, the investigator feels that the recommendations contained herein are applicable to the entire minority population.

NARRATIVE

The Common Interest

The investigator was most highly impressed by the interest expressed by leadership as well as by the rank and file in the nature and quality of education available to minority group members. The faith in education typical of favored segments of American society is also characteristic of members of the minority groups. There is, however, less clarity regarding the nature and purpose of education or understanding concerning the role of the home and family in the support and the supplementing of the formal education process.

While the faith in education remains rather strong and firm, there is evidence of a kind of disillusion growing out of a belief that the available education has not been as rewarding as it should have

been. In many persons this produces a feeling or spirit of futility that reflects itself in lack of parental support of the child in school, disciplinary problems, and the almost certain drop-out. Disillusionment is rarely attributed to the school itself; rather it is considered a product of community attitudes toward the minority group members - a complex of attitudes that results in the denial of employment opportunities and of advancement within a chosen occupation.

As regards the general education program, complaints are not over-whelming. Little desire appears to exist for programs especially tailored for minority group members, but there is sincere interest in the integration of knowledge of minority group culture and history in the general curriculum.

Diversity of Opinion

It is rather noteworthy that among the Fresno Negro citizens there is not a uniformity of opinion regarding the best course of educational development. Opposing opinions, of course, reflect the ideas of proponents regarding the best education situation for the youth of the city. There are those who very strongly favor the elimination of Edison High School and the transfer of its enrollment to other high schools in the city; there are also those who reverse Edison High School and its grounds as a community symbol that should be preserved as an encouragement to Negro youth and as a school situation most likely to give the students vital human understanding and concern. It appears to be unlikely that these differing concepts will soon change or be modified. This means that the administrators will have to make some basic decisions with clear understanding that the decision will be opposed by some vocal element of the minority community.

The above kind of diversity of opinion seems to be typical on all current matters of interest to the education world. The investigator has talked to parents who do not wish their children to be exposed to all Negro teachers and to others who feel that only Negro teachers can relate adequately to the Negro pupils in the classroom. Some favor the bussing of pupils to elementary and secondary schools that are predominantly white in enrollment as an insurance against a poor quality of education; others prefer that their children remain in neighborhood schools where there is likely to be more teacher-parent contact. Many feel that there are really no major education problems, but that there is a real and serious "parent delinquency problem" in which parents do not provide sufficient motivation for the child and permit the child to take his education exposure too lightly; others feel that it is the total role of the school to stimulate, excite, and manage to make the child remain in school and gain maximum benefits from the school experience.

A General Agreement

There appears to be, within the Fresno Negro community, one significant general agreement: the Fresno city school system is concerned about the education of minorities and is concerned enough to pay

more than mere lip-service to the situation. The degree of awareness ranges from the very very vague in most cases to reasonably sophisticated understanding in very very few instances. This notice of a general agreement is not to be construed a statement of approval by the minority group of all actions taken; questions are raised about many policies and practices. The important matter, however, is that the awareness of concern deters the growth of feelings of futility and sponsors the vision of a ray of hope. The investigator views this circumstance as a most valuable asset in any program of educational improvement, particularly one directed towards minority group school populations and adult communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As may be generally known, the investigator operating as a stimulator and listener with a reasonable rapport will receive a barrage of complaints and gripes and suggestions to be conveyed to the "power structure" at the earliest possible moment. This investigator experienced the full treatment. No listing of complaints, gripes, and suggestions uttered by conferees is presented, however. They could be classified as of major, minor, and no significance. On reflection they appear in many instances to overlap or to be related to others and become part of a whole. Looking at the whole, the investigator can make recommendations for the future. These recommendations do grow out of both the concerns of the citizenry and the general observations of the investigator. The first recommendation is considered by the investigator to be of highest priority; others are not presented in any order of priority.

1. Communication of educational developments, proposals, and achievements must be made to the citizenry in general and to the minority population in particular. Too little appears to be known of the nature, scope, depth, variety, and achievement of educational programs. Too little appears to be known of the problems involved in making education decisions. Too little information reaches the masses - information of the type that will encourage minority parents to support and spur their children on to greater achievement within the school framework.

It would be ideal if in cooperation with local radio and television facilities daily programs pertaining to the schools could be presented to the public. The programs should be considerably varied in content or subject matter and be designed to give information as well as to stimulate and provoke. Particularly should they portray programs and progress in schools attended primarily by minority group members. In such cases non-supportive minority group parents are likely to increase the encouragement of their children and majority group parents will grow in the appreciation of the potential of this important segment of the population.

An abundance of material for such programs exists. During seven days in Fresno this fact became clear to the investigator who was surprised at the favorable reactions of rank-and-file Negroes when told such ordinary achievements as the selection of a Negro girl for a University of California scholarship. Authorities are encouraged to imagine the long range impact and effect of television presentations of a first grade class activity in reading, a school liaison official talking with a parent in the parent's home, the school patrol in action, the lunchroom scene, the biology experiment, an occupied library, student government in action, a former delinquent repairing an automobile.

In connection with the communication issue, it much be remembered that actual involvement of a vast majority of minority group parents in the education of their children is almost nil. They do not attend meetings of parents or general school programs, nor do they make efforts to confer with school officials and understand what the school is attempting to do. They do have feelings of inadequacy and personal insecurity as regards that "other world" of accomplishment and status. As stated earlier, they do have faith in education, but it is a faith they do not know how to support beyond the minimal level. Through an adequate communication scheme that informs them that their children, too, can achieve they can be led to be more supportive and much more interested in the day-to-day education activities of their children. Pride and the possibility of eventually having something in their life experience of which to be proud can be their great growth element as an outgrowth of vastly improved communications.

This recommendation is not intended to minimize present efforts in the communication direction. It is intended to supplement, expand, strengthen; it is viewed as a reaching out to ALL elements of the community with the information that leads to understanding. It is also viewed as a stimulating and motivational instrument for the "disadvantaged" of the city.

2. The inclusion of curriculum content to foster the appreciation of minority cultural and practical contributions to American society must be most aggressively fostered. Contemporary demands that courses dealing with the history and role of minority groups in the development of the community area, the state, and the nation should be met, but they should be system-wide and not geared to the minority population only. As a temporary measure, such courses will certainly enhance the self-image of minority group members and broaden the appreciation levels of majority group members. They are referred to here as temporary measures, because the investigator is strongly of the opinion that they do not constitute the best long-range approach.

The role of minority groups in American development should be part and parcel of the over-all instruction of students. As regards American development the role of the Negro or the role of the Mexican-American or the role of the Armenian or the role of any

ethnic or national group is indeed interwoven with the role of the majority group and of the American Indian. The histories of the individual groups make up the history of the country. Full and appropriate attention in regular courses should be paid to these groups as part of the total tapestry, not as single threads. Eventually the ethnically oriented courses should be available to those students desiring specific depth instruction in a particular academic area.

It is recognized that most currently employed teachers have not in their academic preparation received the broad knowledge of minority groups to enable them to make the contributions of minority groups a natural and integral part of the curriculum. The social studies framework for the State of California (1961) in its grade level allocations from kindergarten through junior college identifies grade themes and sub-themes that lend themselves readily to the inclusion of material pertaining to minority groups. For the first grade, for example, one of the recommended areas of emphasis is "How people work together to provide needed services." For the eighth grade one recommended theme is "How individuals and groups contributed to developments in the United States and our American Heritage." And, for the twelfth grade one is "How society depends upon effective human relationships." These and many other points of emphases offer unlimited opportunity to foster knowledge and appreciation of minority contributions.

Most teachers, however, are not yet prepared to meet this task and must be assisted. It is suggested that a task force be appointed to develop special supplementary materials that teachers may use from grade one through twelve and that resource personnel to help in the development of this material include members of the minority groups who have known personally the Fresno situation and that these be augmented by persons of assured academic competence who may (or may not) be of the Fresno community.

Further, it is suggested that ALL Fresno teachers be given strong academic instruction covering the history and role of minority groups. Such knowledge should become so much a part of the teachers that they can through their understandings-appreciations-knowledges almost unconsciously let their instruction embrace all segments of the American population which has made American culture and status what it is today. The program of study should be a very serious and demanding one, not one that can be viewed by teachers or the public as a token gesture!

3. A rapid increase in the numbers of minority memberships in teaching and administration positions should be rigorously pursued. There should, however, be no lowering of present standards for teaching and administration positions, nor should there be in response to special demands any compromise of standards for particular situations. Such compromises tend to result in later complaints of the clientele served that it is not being served by the properly qualified personnel.

There is total recognition that in the immediate geographic area few members of minority groups are fully qualified for appointment or promotion to teaching and administrative positions and that the output of higher institutions in the state will not alter the availability of minority members radically in the next few years. The investigator is convinced, however, that through a careful recruiting effort that focuses on institutions outside of the state, a highly significant increase in teachers of the Negro minority group can be effected within one year. All of these need not be "new" or beginning teachers; many teachers with experience are available. Beyond a doubt teachers discovered through a special recruiting program should be of top quality and the advice of someone knowledgeable of the range in quality of the institutions from which they may come should be sought. It is also suggested that such a recruiting program be operative especially during the fall months since the best qualified people are in high demand and are usually committed before winter months are past.

4. The human relations staff and program should be expanded in order to meet more adequately its important responsibilities. A human relations program embraces a multitude of facets and requires a fairly large staff which includes several persons who can devote considerable time to field work in which the staff initiates and maintains close personal contacts with members of the community, strengthening existing connections and allaying existing fears whether real or imagined. Opinions regarding the worth and value of the human relations program are related to the degree to which teachers, parents, and students see a physical evidence of a person concerned primarily with human relations. This function of the office is much too extensive for the director to embrace with any degree of thoroughness. The director's staff should be greatly increased to include personnel which can be regularly present at schools which are predominantly of minority group populations as well as frequently at schools to which minority group members have only recently been going. The energies of the director can then be almost exclusively devoted to the basic community agencies and organizations in need of rather direct contact with a major administrative official.

5. A well-planned but flexible program of instruction for parents of minority group children should be instituted with emphases on building their own self-image, their concepts of their proper role in the education of their children, and their roles as responsible and participating citizens. No more delicate or difficult task could be assigned any person or any agency, but its successful execution is essential to smoother operations and fuller support of education in the future. Negro leadership in Fresno is well aware of what it terms excessive "parent" delinquency in regards to the total rearing of children and believes that parent delinquency must be attacked before poor attendance at school, poor performance in school, and high drop-out rates can be reduced.

A program of parent education will certainly be aided by the communications attack referred to earlier, but any such program should include the participation of many agencies of the community - it cannot be left to the public school authorities alone. Social welfare workers, church groups, philanthropic and service organizations, fraternal groups, and the like have a role to play along with the school system. The program must be concerned with strengthening and broadening the parent's concepts regarding their own potential for further development, their important roles in motivating their children to attend and succeed in school, the economics of purchasing and spending for family and home, the political responsibilities of their community residence in terms of themselves and of their children, and similar matters.

Varied approaches are mandatory and may range from assorted interests (sewing, flower-gardening, reading, Negro history, music, home beautification) groups to occupational groups. Approaches may be to church auxiliaries, lodges, and even the regulars at recreational centers or clusters in closely knit blocks or neighborhoods. The important thing to remember is that these persons must be reached and are most unlikely to be reached through a parent-teacher or room-mother group, but that such groupings may eventuate from more local and intimate activities relative to needs that may not be realized but are real.

Teachers do have a role to play in a parent education program; it is an important role but it must be played away from the school, and it must reflect sincerity on the part of teachers. As indicated earlier, teachers of the "disadvantaged" children rarely get to know the parents and therefore rarely pass on the small bits of information which parents will welcome. There are few chance meetings since areas of residence and commerce tend to be far apart, resulting eventually in the building of an almost impenetrable communication barrier with the multitude of non-leaders. It is suggested that teachers gradually move themselves into the observation of and participation in community activities where some parents are likely to be met preferably along with their children. Further, beginnings in home visits should be initiated with selected parents in selected blocks, with the teacher realizing that the selected visits properly and sensitively conducted will lead to a broader range of families that can be visited in the interest of the child. "So, the teacher heard the child is ill today! What better reason to drop in to wish a speedy recovery, whether ill or not. At least it shows some interest in more than the paycheck," is one statement made by a parent.

TF 26 RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS IDENTIFIED BY PROJECT STAFF

- TF 26- 1. Minority groups show little desire for programs especially tailored for them.
- TF 26- 2. Minority groups want the integration of knowledge of their group culture and history in the general curriculum with emphasis on their contributions to American society.
- TF 26- 3. A dilemma exists in minority areas of the community as to the value of integrating classes by transferring students to other schools or preserving the neighborhood school with the resultant de-facto segregation.. Any decision by the school administration in this area will be strongly opposed by that segment of the minority group which feels the decision was wrong.
- TF 26- 4. Minorities feel that Fresno City Unified School District is concerned enough with their education to pay more than mere lip-service to their specific problems and this depth of concern by the district needs to be maintained.
- TF 26- 5. There is a priority need for the communication of educational developments, proposals, and achievements to the citizenry in general and to the minority population in particular. Personal contact or commercial TV is the best way to reach this latter group.
- TF 26- 6. All Fresno teachers should be given strong academic instruction covering the history, culture and role minorities have played in contributing to American society for teachers are not prepared to incorporate this knowledge as an integral part of their teaching.
- TF 26- 7. There should be a rapid increase in the number of minority members in teaching and administrative positions but no lowering of present standards to accomplish this.
- TF 26- 8. The human relations staff and program should be expanded so that teachers, parents, and students see physical evidence of a person concerned primarily with human relations.
- TF 26- 9. A well-planned but flexible program of instruction for parents of minority group children should be instituted with emphasis on building their own self-image, their concepts of their proper role in the education of their children and their roles as responsible and participating citizens.