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WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE ACADEMIC RETARDATION IN MINORITY GROUP CHILDREN.

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THE BACKGROUND AND GROWTH OF THE NEW YORK CITY HIGHER HORIZONS PROGRAM ARE DESCRIBED. IN 1956, A PILOT PROJECT WAS INITIATED IN ONE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TO IDENTIFY AND STIMULATE ABLE DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN. ITS GOALS WERE TO ENCOURAGE HIGHER ASPIRATION LEVELS, ACHIEVEMENT, AND AN IMAGE OF BEING COLLEGE-BOUND. ACCORDINGLY, THE PROGRAM INCLUDED INTENSIVE INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING, GROUP GUIDANCE LESSONS, STRESS ON COLLEGE AND CAREERS, AND CULTURAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES WHICH USED THE CITY'S RESOURCES. AN ESSENTIAL FACET OF THE PROJECT WAS PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COOPERATION. REMEDIATION IN READING AND ARITHMETIC WAS ALSO PROVIDED. COMPARISONS OF PRE- AND POST-PROJECT STUDENTS SHOWED GAINS IN THE NUMBER OF COURSES PASSED, ACADEMIC AVERAGES, HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS RANKS, I.Q. SCORES, BEHAVIOR, AND ATTENDANCE. THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM LED TO ITS EXTENSION TO 65 NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS TO SCHOOLS IN OTHER CITIES. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN PROCEEDINGS OF THE INVITATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NORTHERN SCHOOL DESEGREGATION--PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS, P.46-56. (NH)

Chairman:

I don't think there is anything that has more forcefully struck the imagination of educators and people who believe in equality and human rights, all over the United States, than the program which was administered for three years by the next speaker. He was the former coordinator of the Higher Horizons Program of the City of New York and he, himself, will tell you about that program. He is now Director of the National Education Association's Project on School Dropouts. I am pleased to present to you Mr. Daniel Schreiber.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE ACADEMIC RETARDATION IN MINORITY GROUP CHILDREN?

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Is it any wonder that Negro parents are infuriated, angry and hostile towards a school system which has told them, "Your child is doing as well as can be expected," or "He's a bright boy; he's on the honor roll," when they later discover that their children cannot read a newspaper; or when their children begin failing after transferring to a high school outside their neighborhood; or when they cannot get a job, although they proudly possess high school diplomas.

In some sections, among some uneducated educators, these statements have an apparent ring of truth, because for them, achievement is correlated with verbal intelligence scores. As far as they are concerned, a child with a verbal intelligance score of 85 who is a year or two retarded behind his normal grade level is "doing as well as can be expected." What they forget, or are unaware of, is that the verbal intelligence scores of culturally disadvantaged children tend to get lower as they grow older.

Let me illustrate this. In New York City, the average pupil, regardless of grade, achieves an IQ score of 100. The score remains constant throughout the grades - give or take a point. However, the average Harlem child follows a

dissimilar path. In grade 3, his score is a little below 100; in grade 6, it is in the low 90's; in grade 8, it is in the low 80's. The Virginia State Board of Education recently published its breakdown of intelligence quotient scores for the year 1959-60, and the comparative pattern is almost identical to that of New York. The score of the average county white child in grades 2 and 8 remains constant at 100; the score of the average county Negro child for these same two grades drops from 92 to 85.

Lest anyone jump to the conclusion that the phenomenon is peculiar to the Negro, let me assure you that this is not so. Other investigators have found this same pattern to exist elsewhere and among different ethnic groups. Dr. E. Grant Youmans found it among the eastern Kentucky mountain children. Dr. Otto Klineberg found it among the canal boat children of Holland; and Dr. Rohr found it among the American Indians. Unlike gold, it can be found wherever poor, culturally different people live.

The shame of it is that this decrement takes place during the time the child is compelled by law to be in school. If one dared be facetious about so serious a problem, one could say that the longer these children remain in school, the dumber they become. Of course, this is bosh and nonsense. The fact is, though, that the longer these children and their parents are kept out of the mainstream of our culture, the greater is their depletion.

A moment ago, I mentioned that even the proud possessors of high school diplomas cannot get jobs. Let me give one other example. In an article that appeared in the March 29, 1962 issue of REPORTER magazine, Mrs. Naomi Barko discusses the plight of <u>the</u> thirty-three Negro young men in a Newark high school's recent graduating class. I emphasize that they were the <u>only</u> Negro male graduates in that class. Five months after graduation, they were all still looking for their first job. Subsequently, they all took the Army general classification test, and not a single one passed - <u>all</u> failed. THEY COULDN'T EVEN READ ON A FOURTH GRADE LEVEL.

Now every parent, regardless of how ignorant or uneducated he is, expects that the school is going to teach his child how to READ. But apparently, in many instances, this isn't being done.

Perhaps it is this high correlation between verbal IQ

and achievement scores that accounts for the fact that the high school dropout rate - or should we call it the squeeze-out rate - among Negroes is twice that among whites, or that the number of Negroes attending colleges in our northern states is approximately one percent of the college population.

To some extent, this was the situation in New York City in March 1956, when the sub-commission on Guidance and Educational Stimulation of the Board of Education's Commission on Integration recommended that a six year demonstration guidance project be instituted in a junior high school to identify and stimulate able students from a culturally deprived area to reach higher educational goals. A committee was chosen to visit several junior high schools, and it was an honor both to the faculty and to me, as principal, that the Manhattanville Junior High School was selected as the pilot school. The charge to us, as I saw it, was to stop the waste of precious human talent by developing a program which would raise levels of aspiration and achievement.

The main financial support came from the Board of Education, with some additional funds from the College Entrance Examination Board and the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students. These extra funds permitted us to provide for an expanded dynamic guidance and counseling program, as well as clerical services, special instructional and remedial help, new parent education approaches, broader cultural contacts and experiences, and financial assistance to students as needed.

Although our efforts have broadened considerably since 1956, so that today the Higher Horizons program in New York City encompasses approximately 45,000 students in 65 schools at an annual cost to the Board of Education of approximately $1,500,000 above normal costs, I think I can give you more of the flavor of what we are about through a description of the pilot project, plus some further developments in the expanded program.

Manhattanville Junior High School, which had a population of approximately 1500 in 1956, is located at 129th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. It is down the hill from two great institutions of higher teaching - Columbia University and City College of New York - so that from Manhattanville, one can go in one direction only, and that is up. The ethnic and racial ratios were approximately 45% Negro, 40% Puerto Rican, 1% Orientals and the remainder - 14% - whites. At least twenty different nationalities were represented in the

white group. In the case of about 50 per cent of the total population, there were no fathers present in the homes and the mothers were working, so that the teacher became the parent substitute. Special problems arose in the instances of those newly arrived from Puerto Rico, since they had to orient themselves to a new, high-pressure urban society with different cultural values. A survey of the birthplace of parents showed that less than 7 per cent of these parents were native born New Yorkers.

In addition, a study of the 1953 junior high school graduates (pre-project) indicated that approximately 40 per cent had graduated from ser or high schools, as against a city wide average of 60 per cent, that less than 9 per cent had applied for admission to post-secondary schools, and that less than 4 per cent (18 out of 500) had applied for admission to four-year colleges. Subsequent studies of the pre-project classes of 1954 and 1955 showed similar results. We felt that no population group could have so many children with so few brains.

First we began by identifying the able students. The cumulative record cards of every child were studied. The entire school body was given the Stanford reading and arithmetic tests, and a non-verbal intelligence test. I should like to point out that in the past the median IQ of our school, based on group verbal tests, varied from 79 to 82. The non-verbal test produced a median score of 100 and, what is more important, a normal distribution of scores. I do not know whether this test measured the type of intelligence necessary to do academic work in college, but I do know that the score gave our teachers a tremendous lift. It is one thing to teach a class with an IQ score of 80, it is quite another thing to teach a class with a score of 100. As teachers, we expect more from our brighter children and give more of ourselves. Unfortunately, some teachers react to and teach to the IQ, although they know that verbal group test IQ scores are not, in many cases, valid for minority group children. There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, of a young teacher in the mid-west who, in her desire to better help her students, studied their record cards. She noted the number 136 on one girl's record card and the number 74 on a boy's card. Whenever the girl recited correctly, she complimented her. When the girl had difficulty in answering, the teacher encouraged her by saying, "You can do this. How did you do this yesterday? What should we do next?", and so on. When the boy recited correctly he, too, was complimented. If he recited

incorrectly, well, someone has to clean the blackboard, or empty the trash basket. At the end of the term, the story goes, the teacher discovered that the 136 and 74 were locker numbers.

Our prime approach was to create in the mind of the child an image of himself as a college student. This, of course, is easier said than done. How did we do it? We did it through intensive individual counseling, with both child and parent, and through dynamic group guidance lessons. (Each of three special counselors was responsible for both individual and group guidance work with one grade of approximately 250 students.) Prior to the project, our school had one counselor for 1500 students. It doesn't take too much knowledge of a school to recognize that if you have one counselor for 1500 students, most if not all, of his time will be devoted to "problem boys and girls". This meant that we had to change the image of our guidance office. Guidance counselors started by interviewing the better students first, so that the guidance office became a place where good students go. We, of course, did not ignore our "problem children", but we did place greater stress on our "unpolished diamonds".

If you were to enter our guidance office, the first thing you would notice would be the plethora of college pennants. We wanted our students to become familiar with the names of colleges - to get them thinking about colleges. College-going starts at an early age. I would hazard a guess that in the middle-class home, a child of nine or ten years of age knows that he will attend college. He may not know which college he will attend, but he knows he will go to college. If you want to experiment, ask such a child. Also in most schools in the United States, the child's decision to attend college is made in grade 8, not in grade 12. It is in that grade that the boy or girl elects to take the foreign language and algebra courses required for college admission. I know that a student may transfer from a general or vocational course to an academic course, but I'm willing to wager that less than one per cent of such students do.

During the school year, every child had at least two full interviews with his counselor and many had multiple interviews. The interviews dealt with all kinds of problems: educational, vocational, social, family, etc. Where necessary, referrals were made to social agencies, social workers and psychologists. This intensive counseling program has continued as part of the broader Higher Horizons program. It has led not only to a one-to-one relationship so important

in the guidance of these children, but it gave them a feeling that here was an adult who cared, who really wanted to help them.

This individual approach was complemented by a dynamic program of group guidance. Teaching the pupils they counseled individually ensured the counselors of continuing contact with each one, and gave added insight into classroom adjustment and peer relationships. Greater stress was placed on careers and career planning. In order to show students that all avenues were open to them, counselors and students prepared achievement charts, with photographs of successful individuals of various ethnic backgrounds whose abilities had enabled them to gain recognition in their field. The captioned photographs of these new heroes and heroines were a potent stimulant to our students. Other kinds of devices were used to raise their aspirational levels. Negro and Puerto Rican professional workers were invited to address classes and assemblies. Alumni who had been successful in high school or in college were also invited. College admission officers spoke to the children at assemblies. This was played up in the community, as well, because it gives a community a tremendous lift to know that a college is interested enough in their children to send a special speaker to a junior high school.

Talking and listening about careers and college going is a good beginning, but it is not enough. Students visited colleges, research centers, and professional schools. Among the places visited were Brookhaven Atomic Energy Laboratories, Columbia College of Pharmacy, Pace College and New York University's Bellevue Research Center.

Since many of our children had little or no opportunity to participate in the cultural activities of our city, we initiated an extensive program which enabled them to learn to enjoy good music, become interested in wide reading, appreciate good theater and recognize and know fine art. A threefold learning attack was made in each activity. For example, if a group was going to see a play on Broadway, they first discussed the play with a teacher. Next they saw the play and, finally, when they came back they discussed it again. It is hard to resist or forget an experience approached in this manner.

In addition, if time permitted, the children went to a cafeteria after the show. They brought their own sandwiches and purchased beverages. We wanted them to know that all places

were open to them. This was done especially after the Saturday morning concert series at Carnegie Hall. Now I know, and I'm sure you know, that New York State laws forbid discrimination in public places. It is one thing to say that a door is open. It is quite another thing to push that door open. We helped them push.

Our children were exposed to Shakespeare and Shaw, to Broadway and off-Broadway, to concerts and ballets, to symphonies and Spanish dancers, to Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera House, and to museums and movies. Wherever possible, arrangements were made to go backstage to meet the principal actors. They were especially fortunate to meet Helen Hayes, Nell Rankin and Sir John Gielgud. They took trips to Hyde Park, to the Stratford Shakespeare Theater, to West Point, and since our goal was admission to college, to colleges.

In some instances, we visited actual classrooms and laboratories and met with instructors and students; in others, mostly out-of-town colleges, we toured the campus, had lunch, saw a college football game. Our students were usually directed to the book store so that they could buy book covers. If you were to visit our school, you would see students carrying books covered by dust jackets from Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Amherst, Columbia, New York University, etc. We felt that it was good for them to be identified with a college.

No child participated in all of these activities, but all participated in some. For those in need, a special scholarship fund paid expenses, so that no pupil was deprived of a rewarding cultural experience because of lack of money. For many, the trip itself was a good experience, since they had never before traveled out of the neighborhood.

Since the understanding support of the parents was crucial to the success of the project, an all-out effort was made to acquaint the parents with the objectives of the program and the benefits that would accrue to their children from it.

A series of afternoon workshops, conducted by our counselors, were held on such topics as "Careers for Our Children", and evening meetings were set up for those who could not attend at the earlier hour. In addition, all parents were kept informed of the various activities by means of news letters in English and in Spanish. They were also

invited to attend various special events and, often, to go on trips at reduced rates. Sometimes contacts were difficult to make, but every effort was made through telephone calls, letters, and visits by the counselor and social worker.

We sought to influence the parent in such things as being reasonable in assignment of home chores, in providing privacy and time for study, and in encouraging good school work. The results of our work with parents have been most heartening. Even after the graduation of their children, many parents continue to contact the counselor. They ask advice, express gratitude, and inform the counselor of their child's progress in higher school.

So far, I have dwelt on the creation of an image and the motivation to attain desirable goals. These, by themselves, are not enough. Knowledges and skills had to be acquired, achievement levels raised, and correct study habits taught, if our children were to succeed academically.

Four teachers, two to each subject, were assigned to cope with the problem of remedial reading and arithmetic. In addition to working with small groups of students, they gave demonstration lessons and trained other teachers in the use of improved techniques of teaching. Sometimes, classes limited to half the usual register were organized in English and mathematics. This permitted small group instruction for many children, with remedial help to those who needed it.

In order to provide facilities for doing homework and extend tutorial services, after school classes were set up. At each session, a teacher was available for one hour to assist students with their homework. The students could come for help or to help others. Also, the Manhattanville Community Center set up such a room for us in their evening center. This idea of a homework room in a settlement house or church is catching on throughout the country. I know that it is in operation in Louisville, Washington and San Francisco.

Since the attitude of teachers toward their students is a major ingredient in the success of an educational program, the faculty actively participated in all phases of the program. There were numerous informal and formal conferences to discuss goals, procedures and problems. Dr. Ralph Bunche recently said, as he awarded the gold key to his former fourth grade teacher, Miss Sweet, "I suddenly perceived that she believed in me and my ability, and I responded accordingly".

Since reading is the keystone of success in an academic world, a teacher training program in reading skills was initiated. This device led to increased emphasis by all teachers on reading skills, particularly in content areas. Supervised study lessons were conducted in all classes, and direct instruction was given in how to study and how to do homework. The coordination of cultural activities assisted teachers in the preparation for the planned trips and programs and in the follow-up. Teachers voluntarily accompanied students on all planned activities, even though many of them were on weekends or after school. Book Fairs were held right before Christmas and Easter, and parents were encouraged to give books as presents.

The Project has indicated that aspirational and educational levels of children can be raised if people are willing to plan for it, work for it and spend for it. Let's look at some of the results.

A study in the rate of growth of reading showed progress of 1.5 years per year. This compares favorably with their previous growth of 0.8 year per year. One group rose from a reading retardation of 1.4 years in the seventh grade to 3 months above grade level in the ninth grade. In the seventh grade, only one student out of five was on or above grade level. In the ninth grade, it was better than one out of two. The median student had a growth of 4.3 years in 2.6 years.

Our study showed that once a student is taught how to read, is encouraged to read, learns to enjoy reading, and is motivated by a desire to better himself, he will do supplementary reading on his own. This additional reading increases his understanding and improves his scholastic work.

A comparison study made between the work of 101 project graduates of 1959 and the 105 pre-project graduates of 1953, after one semester of study at the senior high school showed the following:

In 1953, five students passed all of their majors and, of these, only two had averages above 80 per cent.

In 1959, 58 students passed all of their majors, and 28 had averages above 80 per cent.

In fact, we had to add a new classification for 8 who had averages above 90 per cent.

In the first senior high school graduating class, three of our students ranked first, fourth and sixth in a senior class of 900. The first boy is a sophomore at Amherst, while the other two are sophomores at Columbia. All are scholarship students.

A comparison of the two senior high school graduating classes with the pre-project classes show that approximately 40 per cent more pupils finished high school, and that two and a half times as many went on to some post secondary education.

Comparison studies of IQ scores on verbal intelligence tests given to the different groups over a three year period indicate positive gains. Let me illustrate this with reference to the second group. There was a median individual gain of 13 points with a median gain of 17 points for boys and 11 points for girls. The boys had generally lower scores than the girls on the first test and produced greater gains.

In 1957, 26 per cent had scored in the 110 IQ category or above. In 1960, this becomes 58 per cent. Five times as many students showed gains as showed losses. Eight students had gains of more than 30 points, and two of them had gains of more than 50 points. I can assure you that a teacher looks at a boy with a different pair of eyes when he discovers that the IQ is 130 and not 80.

There has also been marked improvement in school behavior and attendance. At the junior high school, average attendance figures exceeded city wide averages.

A study done by the Bureau of Educational Research revealed that the educational and vocational goals of our children compare favorably with those of the 1955 national sample of the top thirty per cent of high school graduates.

The tremendous improvement in other areas, not so easily subjected to statistical analysis, has been certified by the results of scientific studies and by the testimony of many educators and community leaders. I can truthfully say that it has raised the ambitions of our children. It has raised their cultural levels. It has resulted in desirable changes in attitudes, interests and behavior. It has changed the thinking of parents and the community with reference to the function of education.

If one has faith in all children, and if this faith

is transmitted to them, then children who in the past had little hope for a good life can now have one. Ventures such as these are expensive, but they are well worth the money. Abraham Ribicoff, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, said after visiting one of the Higher Horizons schools recently, "This is for all of America. This is the greatest single experience I have had, and the greatest single lesson I have learned".

Permit me to add a postscript about the extension of this concept. It has spread to 65 schools in New York, and next year 10 senior high schools will be added to the program. It is in operation in Philadelphia, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco. It was the stimulus for New York State's Project Able. The Maine State Education Department is contemplating setting up a program titled, "New Horizons for Maine Youth", and the Pennsylvania Education Department has just set up a unit in education for the culturally handicapped.

The Higher Horizons concept is spreading the length and breadth of the country, because it represents a reaffirmation and an extension of our democratic faith.

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