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Development of a Bilingual Task Force to Improve Education of Mexican American Students.

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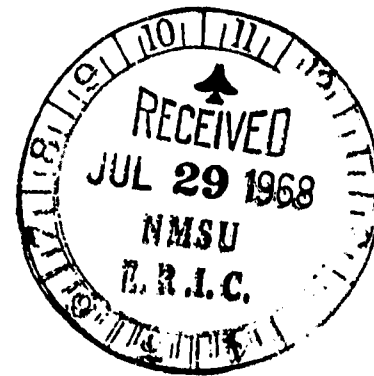
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It is proposed that resource task forces be developed to mobilize local California school district personnel toward more effective programs for Mexican American students. As conceived, each task force would provide in-service training for school district personnel, give classroom demonstrations, work with Mexican American communities, and assist in evaluating programs designed primarily for Mexican American children. Each task force would consist of from one to five persons and would be assigned to a specific regional area. Each task force would include persons with combined professional qualifications of bilingual ability, administrative-supervisory experience, possession of a regular teaching and/or administrative credential, curriculum development and evaluation experience, and special training in working with Spanish-speaking students. The program would be supported by State funds, with local school districts providing matching funds at a specified ratio. (VM)

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Compensatory Education



DEVELOPMENT OF A BILINGUAL TASK FORCE TO IMPROVE
EDUCATION OF MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

Purposes of the Task Force

As originally proposed, the statewide task force would travel from school to school to help the regular classroom instructor teach Mexican American children to read, write and speak English as well as to use Spanish more effectively. This framework would modify that concept, in that the duties of the task force would not be to teach the children but to be resource persons in mobilizing local district personnel toward more effective programs for Mexican American students. A task force which would attempt to do the actual teaching would not be feasible because of the numbers of task force members that would be necessary to do the job and because the need is for sustained, coordinated programs that cannot be accomplished by teachers who spend a short period of time in a school before moving on. What is needed is a team of educational specialists, not limited to language teachers, who can deal comprehensively with all the educational problems of the Mexican American.

One of the major responsibilities of the task force would be to provide in-service training to school district staff personnel to enable them to work with Mexican American children in upgrading their communication skills. This would involve helping to develop curriculum, instructional materials and aids. The task force would work with the teacher in improving methods of teaching English to Spanish-speaking youngsters, especially in effective ways of individualizing instruction. The task force would give classroom demonstrations and help set up local internship programs.

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The teaching of English cannot be considered as an isolated unit in the educational development of the Mexican American child. Many factors may influence whether the Mexican American child--especially if the child is from a poverty background--is receptive to the instruction in reading, writing and speaking. Whenever these factors are applicable, they must be dealt with in any program whose goal is improving education for Mexican American children.

The role of the task force, therefore, may include working with school district personnel in the areas of parent education, psychological services, health and social welfare services, counseling and guidance, recruitment of bilingual staff members, coordination of efforts and services of local, state and federal agencies, and involvement of civic and social organizations for promotion and development of services.

It is expected that the task force would be especially effective in working with the Mexican American community to develop better community-school and home-school relationships where language may presently be a barrier. The task force would be instrumental in the recruitment and training of bilingual teacher aides from Mexican American neighborhoods.

And finally, the task force should assist school districts in evaluating programs to upgrade the communication skills of Spanish-speaking youngsters and assessing the auxiliary programs designed to promote a higher educational achievement level among the students.

Administrative Organization and Personnel Qualifications

The members of the task force would be hired, and their activities coordinated, by the State Department of Education. Each task force team would consist of one to five persons and would be assigned, as a team, to a region which they would serve. Such a regional operation would cut down on traveling expenses, as

the task force would be home-based in the region. The regional areas would be determined by the concentration of Mexican American population and by the volume of requests for services by school districts.

Services would be provided only upon request by the school district for grades pre-school through eight. Priority would be given to school districts or schools with the highest concentration of Spanish-speaking youngsters and the highest percentage of such students scoring in the first quartile on statewide reading tests.

The professional qualifications of the task force would include the following:

1. Bilingual
2. Administrative-supervisory experience
3. Curriculum development and evaluation experience
4. Possession of a regular teaching and/or administrative credential
5. Special training in working with Spanish-speaking students

This does not necessarily mean that each member of a task force would have to meet each of the qualifications. However, each team assigned to a region would possess all of the qualifications.

In addition, each person employed in a task force capacity should have an understanding of the diversities in historical, socio-economic, and cultural background of Spanish-speaking students. He should have an awareness of the psychological and sociological attitudes of Spanish-speaking students, such as their self-image, their concept of the role of the community or barrio, their community and individual values; and their concept of opportunity in education, employment and housing.

The task force member should have the skill to communicate with the Spanish-speaking community, the ability to promote involvement of the community in education, and the ability to function effectively in, and be accepted by, the community.

Recruitment for the task force should be from both in the state and out of state. If necessary, consideration should be given to establishment of a special credential as a recruitment incentive for qualified persons out of state who do not hold a California credential. Other incentives would be establishment of the positions at an attractive salary level, the benefits of being a state employee, and the opportunities for broadened educational experience and travel.

Legislation and Funding

State legislation would be required to authorize and fund the program and the positions. The salaries and supporting expenses of the task force would be paid by the state. School districts would be required to match the state output at a determined ratio, through involvement of local personnel and provision of funds for other program expenses, such as instructional materials. A formula could also be determined whereby the state contribute to part of the local district expenses as well as the expenses of maintaining the task force. Federal funds available to the school district could also be used to support the program.

Wherever applicable, the program should be coordinated with other district programs which have related goals, such as ESEA Title I, the Miller-Unruh Basic Reading Act and the various pre-school programs.