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The first section of this position paper traces the background of the problem of equal opportunity for the culturally, economically, and psychologically disadvantaged (migrant farm laborers, mountain whites, Negroes, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans). The second section discusses ways and means of overcoming the problem through education (1) the role of the school--nursery and kindergarten, elementary and secondary education, adult and continuing education, (2) the education of teachers of the disadvantaged, and (3) school-community relations. The third section, "De Facto Segregation as a Special Problem," includes lists of principles and recommendations to govern the search for solutions to de facto segregation problems. (JS)

# American Education and the Search for Equal Opportunity



EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMISSION

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# Background of the Problem

A striking characteristic of the human condition is the discrepancy between aspiration and opportunity. The reach forever exceeds the grasp. The individual who can think or dream is therefore subject to a permanent striving. For him, ideal is a permanent challenge to practice.

As it is for the individual, so it is for the society as a whole. There is always a gap between the ideals that are espoused and life as it is lived. Societies, like individuals, seem destined ever to reach for fruits just beyond their grasp.

From belief in the equal dignity of all men, a demand for equal opportunity for all men logically flows, and American history is in major part a story of the search for it. National origin, religion, and sex gradually became less relevant to chances for personal development and advancement in the United States. Americans even developed an institution—the public school—specifically to make the ideal of equal opportunity a reality.

For some Americans, however, barriers to personal advancement have never fallen. The children of many migrant farm laborers, mountain whites, Negroes, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, or Mexican Americans have not had the same chances for personal progress as have most other American children. By and

large, they have been disadvantaged by subcultures which did not attune them to the demands and opportunities of modern life. By and large, they have been further disadvantaged by the lack of respect in which other Americans have tended to hold them and their ways of life. Finally, they have been disadvantaged by the poverty arising out of both causes.

The term *disadvantaged* applies to all these groups, for they are all disadvantaged culturally, economically, and psychologically. But there the similarity ceases, for they differ in a way profoundly relevant in America: some are not white. A disadvantaged white needs only to overcome cultural and economic obstacles to be fully accepted. Many Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans do not differ noticeably from Caucasians, and those who do can still take heart from the increasing accession of members of their groups to positions of respect in American society.

But Negroes have a different and more difficult situation. Although slavery has disappeared, cultural patterns, habits, and attitudes which accompanied slavery have not been entirely eliminated. The end of slavery was a moral goal of millions of Americans, and when it was achieved, many persons assumed that the problems it had created would be solved. But the assumption was not fulfilled. Particularly in those areas where the freed slaves were most numerous, many Americans did not respect Negroes fully as human beings. They taught Negroes—as they believed—that Negroes were inferior. They established institutions and customs to enforce their belief, and they rarely gave Negroes opportunities to demonstrate the contrary. Thus in American intentions many Negroes found little basis from which to progress; in living conditions they found still less.

Not that this deliberate degradation was the lot of all Negroes; there were exceptions. In all periods of American history *some* Negroes have earned admiration and acceptance, even

among committed slaveholders. But the exceptions have always been rare. For the most part, the American Negro has been discriminated against and excluded by the dominant white community.

White Americans extolled the virtues of democracy, and in many ways they came to practice as they preached. They prided themselves on their belief in human dignity and equal opportunity, and in many ways they justified that pride. But toward nonwhites, they too generally placed prejudice above ideals.

Furthermore, until recently, the matter has not caused general concern. It is not that the suffering based on race prejudice was invisible in areas where Negroes lived. It is, rather, that the prejudice was so deep that many Americans did not perceive the suffering or cared too little about the victims to let the painful sights create an impression. This neglect was the supreme proof of race prejudice, the most insulting and most harmful sign of disdain.

For many years this problem was permitted to persist. It did not generate that unrest which in a democracy precedes the making of changes in major public policies. Today, conditions are different; unrest is widespread and critical.

It is not in all cases an upsurge of sincerity, or even a concern for America's intellectual strength, that has made the disparity between ideal and practice intolerable. Often it is, instead, the increasing concentration of blatant misery in urban areas, the vocal and sometimes violent protests of the victims, the gnawing fears of greater violence, and the rise in public relief expenditures. On the part of the disadvantaged, there is an increasing unwillingness to tolerate hopelessness, persecution, and suffering. Moreover, improved education has contributed to the rising expectations, growing attainments, and increasingly articulate leadership of the Negro community. The resulting unrest is an American

counterpart of the spirit of independence that is coursing through the entire world.

So, today, Americans are mobilizing to fight an old disease. The fight must be waged on two fronts. One front is the prejudices which have perpetuated the problem and which may prevent its solution. The other is the condition of the disadvantaged themselves. It is to these two problems, in their relationship to the schools, that the Educational Policies Commission wishes to address itself. Their treatment cannot be separated and will therefore be intermingled in the pages below.

Americans have typically thought of education as a healer of great social divisions. When the need arose to make one nation out of many communities of foreign origin, the people turned to the public schools, and their faith was justified. Today, a difference in levels of opportunity, rather than a difference in national origins, is the great divider. Again the people must turn to the schools, for the ultimate solution can be found only in the fuller development of the capacities of the disadvantaged and in a rational reaction to racial and social differences on the part of all.

To deal effectively with a disadvantaged child, as with any child, the school must adjust its program to his perceptions of life and to the other consequences of his life's circumstances. It must, as educators say, take him from where he is. In the case of the disadvantaged child, several consequences of great educational significance are characteristic.

First, the disadvantaged child is likely to be very poor. Persons whose cultures keep them apart from the mainstream of American life find the gravest difficulties in employment, partly because they tend to lack both the job skills which would justify their employment and the learning skills which would enable them to acquire the increasingly difficult job skills of an intellect-based economy. But for a significant group among the disadvantaged, there is a still worse handicap: the persistence of racial

prejudice in employment. There are occupations in America today which are virtually closed to Negroes. For example, apprenticeship in the craft trades has been all but blocked to them, because of the policies of the labor unions and employers in those fields. Yet apprenticeship is the only way to enter those trades. Training institutions for some of the professions and technical occupations have been reluctant to admit Negroes or have permitted only token representation. Poverty and unemployment are problems of economic and social policy, but they gravely affect home life and hence a child's self-image, aspirations, and view of the world.

Second, the disadvantaged child is likely to react with fear, distrust, and hostility toward the institutions of a society which seems to give him little but pain.

Third, the disadvantaged child is likely, by almost any literate standard, to have an impoverished vocabulary and hence a meager capacity to understand abstract concepts. He tends to be limited to the vocabulary of his immediate environment. In addition, he may enter the first grade without ever having seen a person read and with no knowledge of what the reading experience means.

For all these reasons, there is likely to be a deep rift, sensed or explicit, between the home and the school. As a result, there is little preparation in the home for the child's school experience, little contribution to the child's understanding of what it is or what it can do for him, and little day-to-day reinforcement through the home of the progress which the school attempts to achieve.

Just as these consequences of cultural disadvantage are grave handicaps to their bearers, so are they grave handicaps to the school. Some schools in which disadvantaged children predominate are high in accomplishment and morale. But too often the public school—America's chief instrument for fostering equality of opportunity—succeeds only in reinforcing the results of the discrimination that is built into the entire social fabric. When this happens, disadvantaged children learn to think that they are in-

ded untalented, unliked, and unworthy. They may react in the unhealthy ways characteristic of human beings who are repeatedly subjected to indignities. They may become overaggressive or pitifully withdrawn, learn little, and eventually drop out. They then have good reason to expect a future as bleak as their past. If the school cannot succeed with these children, they continue to live without the opportunities or satisfactions that most Americans enjoy. Eventually, they tend to raise children in their own image. Their failings and society's injustices tend to be perpetuated into the next generation.

A myriad of reasons account for the inability of schools to solve these problems. By no means all of these failures can be laid at the doorstep of the school; first, because the school is asked to remedy a profound failure in American life with deep roots in American history; second, because the public has rarely granted the schools anything near the resources they need to do this vast job; and third, because the school is only one factor in the background of a citizen.

But if the failures can be explained, they cannot be explained away. They manifest a gross injustice in the nation. These are children who from birth have been denied a fair chance to realize themselves.

Yet much can be done to improve the education of the disadvantaged American. A host of programs are under way which demonstrate that, with energy, creativity, hopefulness, and money, progress can be made. Almost all these programs are still regarded as experimental. Almost all of them have begun since 1945, and most since 1959. Before World War II, special attention to the education of the disadvantaged centered in Negro institutions. Now much more experience has been accumulated, providing a basis for recommendations on how schools may best educate the disadvantaged and on what needs to be done in community, state, and nation to enable schools to do their best.

# Ways and Means of Overcoming the Problem

Just as many of the handicaps of the disadvantaged lie in things they have learned or failed to learn, so may the solution to many of their problems be found through learning.

## THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The goals of education for the disadvantaged are not different from those for other American children. The goals are to enable each child to play a constructive, respected role in society and to lead a life which to him will be satisfying. Any school must therefore know its pupils well enough to offer each child a program appropriate to him.

The circumstances of a disadvantaged life create serious educational deficits. The worst of these are stunted social attitudes, low intellectual and vocational aspirations, circumscribed experience, poor vocabulary, and difficulty in dealing with abstractions. The effort to compensate for these disadvantages and to replace each by its opposite is the basis of the school program relevant to the disadvantaged child. The principle of compensation is fundamental in education of the disadvantaged.

The first conclusion to be drawn is that the disadvantaged child should have certain educational experiences before he enters the first grade.

*Nursery and Kindergarten Education.* As infants and children grow, they become physically and emotionally capable of responding to a widening variety of situations. It appears that the greater the variety of situations to which they must adapt their behavior, the better they are prepared for the succeeding stages of growth, including school learning. A child deprived of large portions of such stimuli is likely to be deficient in learning and in readiness for it. For example, a child who has never seen a person read cannot understand what reading might do for him or what pleasure may be found in it. Such a child may simply fail to respond to the stimuli which would elicit responses in other children. He may be oblivious to constructive elements in his environment which are everyday matters for other children. For many disadvantaged children this relative lack of stimuli is a fundamental reason for the difficulties they encounter in meeting school demands. They are less well prepared for school and they find school more confusing and frustrating than do middle class children.

Adequate schooling for disadvantaged children, therefore, requires an early start. So that every child can have a fair start in the regular elementary school program, nursery and kindergarten education for disadvantaged children should be available everywhere at public expense.

The best age for commencement of nursery school education varies with the child and the home conditions. Certain learnings seem to be acquired most efficiently at certain ages. For example, age three or four seems the optimum time for learning to observe and focus attention and for learning basic patterns of speech and understanding. It is also an optimum time for learning certain skills of socialization, such as playing and working with other

children, following directions, and being neat and clean. If the home environment fosters little progress in these directions, parents should be encouraged to send their children to a nursery school at age three or four.

Lack of love or care in the home can have disastrous impact on the child's self-concept, attitude toward the world, speech development, and general ability to learn. Some parents, whether disadvantaged or not, deprive their children of love and care. The reasons may include personality problems of the parents, marital problems, overcrowding in the home, or the need for parents to work outside of the home during the child's waking hours. Such situations are particularly common among the disadvantaged. In these cases, it is hard to believe that there is an age too young for nursery school experience; therefore the public should make provisions for this experience beginning in infancy.

A child who reaches elementary school age without having acquired certain skills and foundations for learning which other children have acquired will be slowed in his further development. But there is another important reason for trying to prevent such a gap from growing. It is that a seven-year-old who feels that he is doing a four-year-old's task is likely to react with shame and rebellion and to lose self-esteem, thereby limiting his progress.

The question whether preschool experiences should be designed to prepare a child for the first grade or to help him to develop and live well at his own age is, or should be, meaningless. The successful performance of developmental tasks at age two, three, four, and five *is* the best preparation for the first grade. The urge for the earlier acquisition of the learnings traditionally associated with the first grade should not determine preschool experiences, nor should a child who is obviously ready to progress further be held back for arbitrary reasons. Either practice would be poor education and show disrespect for the dignity of the individual.

The secret of nursery education is the ability of the teacher to recognize and seize every opportunity to help each child take the next step.

On entering their children in a nursery school, parents should be encouraged to attend the class or a related learning or discussion session at periodic intervals. Much of the value of the nursery experience can be reinforced in the home if parents can be led to do this. If the parents of disadvantaged children make such a contribution, not only will the children benefit, but also the parents themselves will find that their interest in education and their self-esteem increase.

Finally, a strong word of caution is in order. The public school must look with hope and respect upon all children, including disadvantaged children who enter the first grade without the advantages of a nursery school or kindergarten experience. To succumb even slightly to a defeatist attitude is neither reasonable nor just. It is the duty of the school to provide the proper stimulation for every child.

*Elementary and Secondary Schools.* In the case of disadvantaged children, hostility toward education can easily arise on the basis of the typical discontinuity between home and school experience and on the basis of a deepening expectation by both the child and the teacher that the child will fail. The principle of compensation in education of the disadvantaged therefore calls upon the school to make of itself a congenial place—that is, a place in genuine contact with each child. The means to this end, once again, is attention to and concern for the individual child as a person important in his own right.

True individualization of programs provides an excellent opportunity for demonstration of the teacher's professional competence. Execution of a centrally determined syllabus, with all children more or less in the same mold, is stultifying for the teacher and, in particular for disadvantaged children, often fruitless.

Another important step in the direction of individualized instruction would be elimination of excessive emphasis on the remedial concept. The argument here is not semantic: all education is in a sense remediation, in that it is an attempt to fill in gaps. But education should rather be viewed as a permanent state of progress, the duty of the school being to provide the proper stimulation for any child, wherever he is intellectually and whatever his interests may be. Concepts that force teachers to see all children solely in relation to an artificial standard militate against this view.

The school should be so arranged that each child moves ahead at his own best rate, without fixed standards holding him back in learning or convincing him that he is retarded. Educators realize full well that no two children can be expected to learn the same things in equal time, but few schools have been structured to correspond with this fact. This failure has worked to the detriment of disadvantaged children in particular, in part because of the invidious comparisons made, in part because of the stiffness and formality of the typical school structure and expectations. Many children who learn slowly can learn well and in considerable quantity; the lock-step may deprive them of the time they need, and their failure to progress at the standard speed may deprive them of the will to try any more. Their learning may be reduced, rather than stimulated, by the insistence on grade standards.

Moreover, the grade-level concept is one reason for the frustration of teaching in inner-city schools. The removal of this barrier would not spare the teacher any work; it would only increase his opportunity to move realistically toward long-range goals. The learning level attained by most pupils at the end of a given number of years would very likely be higher than under the lock-step system, for the teacher could help them to progress more naturally and with less trauma.

Disadvantaged children may have a more pressing need than other children for constant evidence of their worth. They also may be less in the habit of working for distant results. For these reasons, teachers must help pupils not only to understand that much important learning takes a long time to acquire, but also to achieve a quick sense of accomplishment in learning. Then, each child will be able to respect himself more at the end of the day than at the start. Here again is an opportunity that only the individual teacher can provide, and that he can provide only if he enjoys considerable freedom of action.

At the same time, within the context of an understanding reaction to the apathy and lack of energy which all children—and especially the disadvantaged—at times display, teachers should never be satisfied when a child does less than his best. Without this criterion, respect for a child can be neither felt nor shown, and empathy becomes maudlin.

Every child should feel that there is at least one person on the staff who really cares about him and who likes to talk with him. This person will normally be his teacher or his counselor. The existence of such a relationship is a major contribution to individualization of the curriculum, for the relationship would be a major part of the child's school experience.

Teachers in all grades should give pupils many chances to discuss and investigate subjects of spontaneous interest to them. This is more than a good outlet. It is also evidence to the children that what is important to them is important to the teacher and to the school as well; and, whether the subject be jobs, dress, school discipline, dope addiction, sex, sports, or race prejudice, it often provides a strong basis for valuable motivated learning experiences in more traditional areas. Furthermore, the readiness to devote time to such subjects shows pupils that value and wisdom can emanate from themselves as well as from the teachers. This tech-

nique may be especially beneficial for the boys, who suffer even more than girls from enforced passivity.

For all children, reading is the most important academic tool, and the one in which failure causes the greatest discouragement. The schools must make an an all-out effort in this area; they can do so in a manner fully consistent with any degree of individualization of the curriculum.

English is a foreign language for many disadvantaged children, and school English is virtually a foreign language for many others. Many disadvantaged children are highly vocal on subjects of interest to them, but their vocabulary is likely to be limited, and their pronunciation and grammar make their speech difficult to understand for most Americans. Many other disadvantaged children have had virtually no linguistic development outside of school. The development of abilities in oral English must therefore precede or at least accompany attempts to teach reading. It has been found wise, in teaching children to read, to begin with vocabularies that they actually use, with songs that they sing, and with rhymes that they use at play.

As a basis for individualizing instruction, teachers in all grades should acquaint themselves with each child's living conditions, including his home and neighborhood, and in particular should get to know his parents. The teachers should be on the lookout for fatigue, hunger, or a physical disability or disease among their pupils. Teachers should contact parents about these problems and, if necessary, should take other steps to remedy them. Teachers often need the help of principals, attendance personnel, and school social workers in making these contacts in disadvantaged areas.

One of the pressing realities of which the school must take account is that few problems appear more immediate or more basic to the disadvantaged child than those associated with money. He

learns early that money is important and hard to come by. He knows that many of the worst experiences he may undergo—including family insecurity, emotional upset, and even violence—are associated with lack of money. He tends to respond, therefore, to activities whose financial value he can perceive.

A school which is attempting to serve disadvantaged children consequently offers them opportunities both to earn and to learn how to earn. These opportunities fulfill two major obligations of the school. One is to treat the child with respect; the other is to help him take a normal and accepted place in adult life. A child whose motivations are oriented toward a job should be respected for that fact and should be helped to achieve his own goals. He will usually respond to this respect and will more readily look on the school as an environment which has meaning for him. He will also be helped to better himself in the search for jobs, thereby helping to overcome some of the economic, as well as some of the psychological, consequences of cultural disadvantage.

The role of the principal in the education of the disadvantaged is crucial. Where a depressed-area school is successful in educating children and retaining teachers, it is almost certain that the teachers have the leadership of an understanding, competent principal.

Principals should make it clear that they stand behind their teachers. A teacher should never fear to discuss controversial issues in class. He should have maximum assistance in procuring teaching resources which he may need. He should never need to fear for his safety or for the security of his property. He should feel as free to discuss any problem with the principal or supervisor as with any other concerned and sympathetic colleague.

Administrators should ensure the maximum independence for each teacher The teacher must be free to teach his own class, to experiment, and to discard practices that prove poor. The only

hope for an individualized curriculum lies in the freedom of the qualified and competent teacher to make his own decisions. In teaching matters, principals and supervisors should regard themselves, and should be regarded, as helpers, not as bosses.

The principal should accord to teachers a role in planning what the school does. Not only will the teachers' enthusiasm be strengthened in this way, but the educational program will have the benefit of the entire staff's creativity. That principal is particularly to be commended who succeeds in achieving an atmosphere of respect for the views of new, young teachers.

Planning should provide for continuity in the educational program, with the teachers themselves at the forefront of such planning. For example, principals might arrange for junior high school teachers (and the principals themselves) to discuss mutual problems with staffs of feeder elementary schools. The same relationship may prove valuable between a high school and the feeder junior high schools.

A serious handicap in the education of the disadvantaged and of many other Americans is their tendency to know well only persons of backgrounds similar to their own. In such cases, a growth of intergroup contacts should be a basic objective of educators. All schools, including those which draw their pupils mainly from middle and upper classes—perhaps especially these—should do all they can to develop a rounded understanding of American life both as a valuable end in its own right and as a basis for a sense of community among all Americans. Success in this endeavor would have an important, lasting impact on the child concerned and on the rest of the society. Until widespread stereotyping and discriminations cease, many Americans will remain seriously disadvantaged. There is now a large-scale movement to remedy the misery in the cities, but it probably remains true that a great number of Americans are quite indifferent to the misery of their fellowmen and that many whites remain convinced of the

inferiority of other races. Mere exhortation does not overcome this problem. But knowledge accompanied by experience is both an honorable basis for a change of attitudes and often an effective one. In addition, every educated American should possess knowledge of the way his fellow Americans live.

To this end, integrated faculties as well as improved curriculums can be valuable. Schools without teachers of a second race might arrange faculty exchanges to bring in teachers of another race. This would be of particular benefit in cases where Negro, Mexican-American, Indian, or Puerto Rican teachers are brought in, so that children can see them in a position of status.

Individualization of instruction implies a high degree of flexibility on the part of the teacher. The greater the professional attention available to each child, and in particular the more attention his teacher can devote to him personally, the more his program can be individualized. The problem of the disadvantaged will not be solved without investment of a generous measure of professional attention in every child. This requires that the teacher have time enough to work with the pupils individually. This costs money. Money alone is not the answer, but money is a vital ingredient, for there is an obvious correlation between class size and the possibility of individual attention.

*Adult and Continuing Education.* The principle of compensation applies also to adults who have lacked either the opportunity for adequate education or the understanding to take advantage of opportunities which were present but unperceived. To overcome these lacks calls for educational opportunities similar to those available for children: literacy, citizenship, and occupational training and retraining.

An adult education program of this sort would be important not only to the adults themselves but also to the success of the school program at the elementary and secondary levels. The same

adult who is disadvantaged by his own educational lacks is likely to be the parent of the disadvantaged child. Anything he learns that improves his own prospects in life serves also to improve the prospects of his children.

As has already been noted, there should be regular parent-education experiences in connection with nursery school programs. Much parent education should take place informally through contacts with teachers and other school personnel. For example, acquainting parents with what their children are learning in school is often a successful, inspiring form of education. Parent participation in job exploration trips or other field trips is frequently valuable.

Full-fledged school programs should be available to persons who decide to return to school at any age, and disadvantaged adults should be encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. But it is necessary that the schooling be appropriate to the student's age. A thirty-year-old fifth grader cannot be treated in the same way as a ten-year-old, and there may be little use in bringing a dropout back to the same program from which he once fled by quitting school.

A common need in education of disadvantaged adults is for speech therapy. Improved speech on the part of parents can help them vocationally. It can also facilitate their children's linguistic development.

In family life education or other education of benefit to parents, the disadvantaged—and others as well—are likely to respond less favorably to lectures than to concrete suggestions or informal discussions in which they can express their feelings.

For parents who are free during the day, it might be wise (if it is feasible) to schedule adult education activities during regular school hours. Children may be inspired by the sight of their elders finding it worthwhile to come to school.

Special attention needs to be paid to the economic handicaps of the disadvantaged. Even if no discrimination in employment existed in the United States, the employment opportunities of the undereducated would be meager, and increasingly so. The economy is developing in such a way as to place little premium on mere muscular energy in employment. In these circumstances the adult who cannot read is all but unemployable, and one who can read but cannot understand more than a child's vocabulary, equally so. As technology advances, jobs utilizing specific and easily learned skills become increasingly scarce. Nevertheless, the human needs of persons of limited ability remain as great as ever, and the American promise of equal dignity and respect requires that ways be found to help persons who are so grievously handicapped. To fulfill this promise calls for vocational education, frequently in rather low-level skills, and education to develop attitudes needed in the work situation.

In its treatment of adults the school should apply the same general principle it applies in the treatment of children: all persons are worthy of respect. Their disadvantages are to be regarded as deriving from the circumstances of their past or present lives. It is the business of the school and of the whole society to strive to overcome these disadvantages.

## THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

To teach disadvantaged children effectively is to display the highest professional competence. Few jobs are more demanding, but few are more rewarding. To help a child achieve the human promise born in him but submerged through no fault of his own is a noble task.

The essential precondition for teaching disadvantaged children is a deep understanding of the causes of their behavior. The teacher must therefore possess both the general background needed for teaching anywhere and a knowledge and understanding of the circumstances of life for the disadvantaged.

Preparation of teachers for this service is a continuous process. Some aspects can be supplied in advance of teaching, but virtually all the necessary insights require consolidation and deepening after teaching has begun. The preservice program of teacher education should seek to develop in each student a sense of genuine respect and empathy for the children he will teach. To this end, he should become fully sensitive to the relationship between experience and character. He should recognize that every child is born with considerable potentials and that some children have great obstacles to overcome in order to develop them. He should know that under the proper conditions almost any child shows himself quite capable of learning. He should learn the importance of being approachable and of enjoying a close relationship with disadvantaged young people. He should expect the children to sense quickly whether he likes them and whether he believes that they can succeed, and he should know how crucial this judgment will be to his chances for success.

Teacher education should include observation and practice in teaching and otherwise working with the disadvantaged. The shock of the first day on one's own before a class is great enough; it should not be compounded by the shock of a first awareness of what it is really like to teach disadvantaged children. Fear of the unknown and lack of specific preparation are two of the greatest obstacles to successful teaching in depressed-area schools.

Teacher education should include experience in a disadvantaged community outside the school. Work in a community agency can prove an invaluable contribution to the student's subsequent work as a teacher. It is an excellent introduction to life in the

community and to the contribution of agencies other than the school. It is an excellent way to learn to relate to disadvantaged adults and children and to learn that, although sharing a common subculture, the disadvantaged are individuals.

The ability to individualize instruction requires the overcoming of stereotypes. By definition, all disadvantaged children have severe cultural handicaps. But most have two parents, most of whom are interested in their children and most of whom earn their own keep. The overwhelming majority of these children are not delinquents. Many do well in the school. Every household has its own characteristics. Teacher education must prepare teachers to regard each child as an individual.

Teachers need a sufficient sense of security not to take personally the outbursts of a pupil, even if directed against the teacher himself. The only reaction likely to be helpful is one void of a need to retaliate or to defend one's self-esteem. Teachers must learn not to expect pupils to react in some preconceived, "proper" way. They must recognize, for example, that many disadvantaged children react by doing rather than saying and have not learned well to control their impulses.

Teacher education should include preparation in the history of minority groups in the United States and, in particular, of the civil rights movement. Teachers should learn to analyze the problems of disadvantaged children as social problems, not only as problems of psychological adjustment.

Every teacher should be acquainted with what is known about the psychology and impact of prejudice and about means for combating it, and teacher education should stress the insights of sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, and other relevant fields.

Preservice education of teachers should also stress the need for research on the problems of cultural disadvantage. Although

much has been learned about dealing with this problem, much remains to be learned, and no teacher in preparation should look on this field as one in which the final lessons have been drawn.

The college years may be a good time to interest students in careers in inner-city or other depressed-area schools. These are likely to be years of idealism. Efforts should also be made to recruit for the teaching profession persons of disadvantaged background. This may be done by encouraging high school students of disadvantaged background to help pupils who are having difficulty, by developing active future-teacher clubs, or by hiring high school or college students as school aides or community aides.

Education of teachers for this complex array of problems can probably never be regarded as finished. Successful teachers go on learning indefinitely, and their teaching is endlessly enriched by the experiences which come to them while teaching. Thus the in-service aspect of teacher education should receive appropriate stress.

In-service education should enable teachers consistently to improve their understanding of their pupils. Teachers should acquaint themselves with the living conditions of their pupils and try to relate their knowledge of sociology and psychology to those conditions. They might also undertake cooperative research with universities and other educational agencies. In these ways, teachers can learn better to see life the way their pupils see it and hence to decide what experiences are appropriate for those pupils.

Teachers should develop an acute awareness of the impact they can have on children for better or for worse. This awareness will increase their desire to do well, their abhorrence of having little impact, and their consciousness of the care which good teaching constantly demands. It will also serve to prevent them from focusing so strongly on the subject matter at hand that they forget the child.

## SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

A deep concern over the gross inequalities of opportunity in American society must motivate educators not only to do something *for* the disadvantaged, but to help the disadvantaged do more for themselves. Enlisting the help of those who need help most may lead to significant improvements in the community and in the schools. In addition, for those who need selfish reasons to do the right thing, it can be pointed out that there may be no other hope for integrating the disadvantaged into American life in an acceptably short time span.

The disadvantaged, and Negroes in particular, are increasingly impatient for practical results. If they do not sense progress, and progress at a sufficient rate of speed, the entire community will continue to suffer. What is intended here is not that the schools start a revolution, but that they help direct a sweeping and urgently necessary social change along the most just, most hopeful, and least destructive paths. An honorable, active status for the disadvantaged as participants in the process of change would itself be a large measure of progress.

One of the most serious obstacles to successful education in disadvantaged areas is the lack of communication between school and community. In a pathetic sense, the schools are not schools *of* the disadvantaged community, but schools *in* the disadvantaged community. A new mutual confidence and mutual understanding between school personnel and parents is desperately needed.

The superintendent and principal should make it one of their greatest missions not merely to receive and take account of the community pressures that reach them but actively to seek out the views of as many citizens as possible. Genuine representatives of the community must be sought out, and not only those who are most acceptable from the standpoint of the middle class authorities.

This mission would obviously be difficult to perform. It would involve a time-consuming effort to help the inarticulate to speak, the ignorant to think, the apathetic to participate, the insecure to press their views. The results are not likely to be quick and miraculous, for the disadvantaged, like other Americans, cannot be expected to concoct magical solutions to their woes.

Nor can it be anticipated that the disadvantaged will from the start be masters of all the relatively complex techniques of influencing public policy through the normal, orderly channels of democracy. The disadvantaged have had little opportunity to develop sophistication in the social and political organization through which public pressures are brought. Moreover, even the most sophisticated and responsible leaders have often found the normal channels barred to them.

Yet it is of first importance that citizens control, within the limits of the law, the public schools, and this principle applies as much to disadvantaged citizens as to others. When people know that they have a true voice in molding the public institutions which affect their lives, they tend to work with those institutions rather than be hostile and apathetic toward them.

This approach would have the further inestimable advantage of developing local leadership. The leaders would no longer be outsiders who come in from day to day or now and then or the few insiders who succeed and move out. Moreover, to those disadvantaged citizens who know of no way but violence to express their frustrations, an effective alternative would be shown.

Communication between the people and the school board, regardless of the intentions of the authorities, is difficult when a school district is vast. Every school system should be so organized that those who control its administration are easily accessible to the individual parent. This implies decentralization of city systems. It also implies responsiveness of school officials to all citi-

zens, so that the primacy of the influence of certain individuals and groups is not overwhelming.

One major test of the quality of a school is—Are parents made a part of the educational process? Do they feel that the expression of their desires and feelings is welcome there, or do they consider the machinery of education unapproachable and impersonal? Most disadvantaged parents are probably convinced that school is good for their children, and they want their children to succeed in school. But their conviction and desire are often vague; they may be unconcerned with the specific elements that make for success; and they may retain a bad taste from their own school experience. In addition, many disadvantaged parents have learned to fear public authority, including the school, and are therefore reluctant to have contact with it. Yet, until the parent shares the school's concerns, the child's education continues to be severely handicapped.

Some parents of all backgrounds are indifferent to the education of their children. But it is a serious mistake to act on the assumption that parents lack interest in their children's education. Such action may be a factor in producing the appearance of indifference and will merely consolidate any indifference that may actually exist. It is much wiser, in the case of the disadvantaged, to assume that what appears as indifference is actually confusion or fear and to seek to remedy the causes.

One measure to be recommended is frequent parent-teacher and parent-counselor meetings. A visit with school people should be a pleasant, useful event for parents; parents should not associate it with the anger of the authorities or a threat to their self-esteem. The specific suggestions made at such meetings can help the parents and teachers cooperate toward common ends. The general sense which the parents acquire that the school cares about their children can do even more to promote that cooperation. Meetings should be arranged at times convenient for both parties, and the

parents must be made fully aware that their statements will be treated confidentially. Parents should feel that there is a school person with whom they can at any time discuss their concerns and who has sufficient status within the school system to be able to respond effectively.

In every encounter with parents, school people should be good listeners. It is true that parents can learn much at such meetings—what the school is trying to do, how their child is progressing, how they might contribute further to their child's progress, and how to discipline by means other than whipping or shouting. But teachers can learn much, too. They can learn about the child's likes and dislikes, about the parents' aspirations for him, and about methods that seem to work with him. Teachers should not assume that they know most, or even more than the parents, of what is worth knowing about a given child or about what should be done for his benefit. Such an open approach not only may result in valuable learnings for the teacher but will dispose parents favorably toward the school. The parents are likely to be deeply pleased when a real effort is made to discuss common problems with them.

Schools can help parents and themselves also by offering activities to parents and families. The school should organize weekend, evening, or vacation field trips with the help of, and for, children and their parents. It should remain open evenings, weekends, and during vacations for use of young and old, perhaps sharing costs with the recreation department of the community. The school should be a place to study, to play, to hold meetings, or to repair, construct, or sew, perhaps in family groups. It should provide a full-fledged summer school for all children who wish to enroll. In these ways it can be an inviting place, a place toward which the community develops warmth. Not only would the school's relationship with parents and children improve, but all would have an added opportunity to spend their leisure time constructively.

The school can improve its liaison with the community also by seeking the regular help of parents and pupils as volunteers or paid workers in the school. These assistants cannot take the place of professionals, but they can make many significant contributions to the work of those professionals. School personnel can train local citizens to serve as interviewers, homemaker helpers, homework helpers, community action organizers, links between school and church, escorts to and expediters in community agencies, or recruiters or coordinators for adult or parent education. For such work, the school needs local people who are respected by the community and whose attitude is not defeatist. In Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, and often Indian communities, the helpers should be bilingual. The most effective training is on the job, in tasks of increasing difficulty, with assistance always available at the trainee's request. One of the skills which should be acquired is that of respecting the confidences of clients.

The use of such help has considerable advantages for the school and the community. It relieves the school's manpower shortage. It develops local leadership. It turns persons who might otherwise be unemployed into productive workers. It strengthens the aide's self-respect. It develops allies for the school, being evidence of the school's determination to serve the community. It establishes links between the school and the community in the guise of persons who relate well to the local citizens and who can help interpret the school to the people and vice versa. It presents an example of personal progress to pupils and parents alike.

Members of minority groups who have been successful in their careers may lend another type of assistance to the schools. Contact between them and pupils should be a common facet of the curriculum, though it is wise for the teachers to help both the children and the adults prepare for such meetings in order that maximum benefit may be derived. Over the long run these meet-

ings can have considerable impact on the children's self-esteem and aspirations and on the community's support for the school.

The schools should also establish close relations with community agencies, for most of the problems of the community and of its individual citizens deeply affect the schools. A father's unemployment affects a child's aspirations and self-concept. A pregnant woman's toxemia or malnutrition may result in permanent brain damage and retardation in her children. Uncorrected dental or vision problems, obesity, or anemia may affect learning. Poor home conditions affect learning. Therefore, conditions in the community are inevitably of concern to the school.

Since the school is the agency which meets far more children and parents than any other, it should take the initiative in promoting interagency contact and coordination. Responsibility for community improvement rests on all agencies and citizens, but the school has a special responsibility and a special opportunity to discharge it. It can make of itself the focus of a community-wide effort at self-improvement.

# De Facto Segregation as a Special Problem

Segregation by race has been persistent in America. In some places it has been sought as public policy; in others it has been the result of housing or business practices.

The type of segregation which had the support of law, as it had in many Southern states, is today recognized as outside the law. The school-desegregation decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have made the law on this matter clear. Much remains to be done to realize the effect of removing the legal basis of segregation, but the law at least is clear. In many areas, however, there persists a form of segregation which is produced by discrimination in the sale and rental of housing. It is not limited t any single section of the nation, as legally enforced segregation has generally been. Whites are free to move to virtually any housing they can afford. Negroes in many places do not enjoy a similar freedom but find instead whole areas closed to them. The result in many cities has been concentrations of uniform population as dense and as segregated as a medieval ghetto. It is this form of racial separation which is here referred to as *de facto* segregation.

The price of such segregation, viewed from the perspective of the general welfare of the nation, is high. When people of different cultures, classes, or races are kept apart, whether by circumstance or by design, they tend to acquire many stereotyped, exaggerated, and false impressions about each other. When the segregation is racial and based either directly or indirectly on prejudice, it also works psychological damage on all races concerned. The persons who cause the segregation through their lack of understanding or disdain for others develop an irrational sense of innate racial superiority. Members of the disdained group live constantly amid evidence that they are looked down on. If they are Negro and lack a cultural base on which to build a feeling of self-esteem amid the insults, they are pressed constantly to feel shame and resentment at inherited characteristics. They may retreat into apathy and defeatism or lash out in bitterness and hatred, with much of their human potential in either case withering within them.

Thus, the damage wrought by segregation occurs at different levels. On the one hand, it denies people a good opportunity for learning to live in a multiracial and multicultural world. On the other hand, it denies people the mental health necessary to the fullest use of their t. .ents. In both ways, everybody suffers, and opportunities for learning and progress are less than they might have been.

In American practice, segregation is inherently unequal, for it has been based—and this is universally sensed—on a persistent and widespread prejudice against nonwhites. Today, the nonwhites are protesting. But the educational problem, being inherent in the situation, long antedated the protest.

The protests have dramatized the inequality and have made it impossible to maintain any longer the fiction that the conditions of the competition for success in American life are equal or fair.

The awareness that conditions are grossly unfair is a large step forward. But it does not of itself solve the problem of school segregation, and still less the rest of the problem of equal opportunity. Many parents prefer that their children go to school close to home, and this preference for a neighborhood school is frequently based on sound educational reasons and may be free of prejudice. It is, after all, more convenient to go to school near home; it saves on transportation; and the school and the home need to be in close contact. The fact that a neighborhood school may also be limited to children of one race is seen by many to be incidental. Furthermore, even parents who know that the situation is unfair may still prefer that their children not go to school with children whose cultures are widely different from their own. This phenomenon occurs even within the races. Middle class Americans of any race usually resist having their children mix with disadvantaged children of the same race. Thus it is not uncommon to find gerrymandered school attendance zones even in places where community leaders are fully aware of the corrosive effect of segregation on American ideals.

The following principles should govern the search for solutions to the problem of de facto segregation in the schools and the development of an integrated school system and an integrated society.

*Segregation on grounds of race is bad.* In education, it denies children, white or Negro, a chance to obtain a broader perspective on the society. It complicates the overcoming of racial stereotypes. In middle class schools, it breeds a sense of innate superiority which is unjustified and unhealthy. It causes Negroes to feel that they are being discriminated against and produces the inherently unequal circumstances of which the Supreme Court spoke in 1954.

Conversely, contacts among children of varied backgrounds are essential to education. Pupils learn much from each other.

Laws or customs which enforce segregation cannot prevent contact between cultures; they merely prevent those types of contact which would do the most good. They do not insulate cultures; they only prolong incompatibility.

The best way to build good relations between the races is to enable each race to have experiences with the other which are welcome and fruitful and in which each race can come to see the other as composed of individuals and not stereotypes. Negroes who have no contact with whites—or only contacts which threaten their security—tend to develop negative attitudes toward whites in general. The school which is integrated can supply interracial experiences and offset the possible damage from their denial. By contrast the school which is racially segregated loses this capacity.

*Desegregation of schools should be planned with awareness of its possible consequences and likely effects on the whole community.* No two communities are identical, and each must approach the process of integration with full knowledge of local facts. There are communities, for example, where insistence on an even racial mixing in schools is more likely to produce a resegregation than an integration of schools. Care should be taken to avoid steps which will defeat the larger purposes sought through integration, and the programs of schools should be planned to increase, not decrease, the amount of integration.

*The neighborhood school has many advantages, particularly in early education.* It facilitates the efforts of the teacher to know the home and community, which explain so much about each pupil. The neighborhood school makes it easier also for parents to identify with and support their children's education, and it is easier to make a community center of the school if it truly is a neighborhood school. However, the theoretical advantages of the neighborhood school should not be used to argue in its behalf where they are not carried into practice. Teachers in a neighborhood school may fail to profit from its advantages or may learn

little about the background of their pupils. The school becomes a community center only through the conscious efforts of citizens, teachers, and administrators. If it is not or cannot become such a center, the reputed advantages of the neighborhood school disappear.

In addition, the benefits of the neighborhood school are not necessarily lost if children are transported outside the neighborhood. If a teacher has time, he can come to know homes and communities that are geographically far apart, and schools in consolidated attendance districts of vast size have succeeded in involving parents deeply in the education of their children.

*The simple mixing of races in a school does not of itself solve all problems of integration.* Desegregation is a physical phenomenon, but integration is a psychological phenomenon. The mere physical presence of different groups in the same building can be bad as well as good. In heterogeneous situations Negro children, if they are disadvantaged, may be unable to compete academically. White pupils may come to feel superior, and Negro pupils despised and lonely. The various groups may develop only disrespect, fear, or jealousy of each other.

*Educational considerations should be primary in the schools.* The questions which arise from efforts to eliminate de facto segregation deeply involve public passions pro and con, thereby complicating the search for solutions that the public will tolerate. This search must be illuminated by the understanding that the purpose of schools is education and that no child is being served if education is being made impossible. School authorities must make clear when they believe that pupils are being used as pawns in the struggles of adults. The question to be asked about all proposals is whether they will improve the education of the pupils involved, not whether they will contribute to other goals, even desegregation.

In line with the foregoing considerations, the Educational Policies Commission recommends the following:

1. *Where de facto segregation exists, intensive efforts should be made to desegregate the schools.*

2. *It should be recognized that effective desegregation may be impossible for the schools to accomplish alone and that they must have the intensive support of other public and private agencies to make it possible.*

3. *Funds should be expended within a district and within a school with a view to equalizing educational opportunity, not with a view to equalizing per-pupil expenditures.* This means that more should be spent for each culturally disadvantaged pupil, just as for each physically handicapped pupil, than the average per-pupil expenditure in the school district. The greatest help should be given to the children in greatest need.

This recommendation is made despite the difficulty that would often be encountered in deciding which children should be classified as disadvantaged. For most children, the decision is likely to be cut-and-dried. Since disadvantage so often corresponds closely with extremely low income, the family income level might be used as the chief criterion.

Because it is impossible for the money to be spent on a child-by-child basis, some children will be under- or over-financed according to the criteria of this system. But the inequities would be much less than under a system in which all children are treated as if their educational needs were equal.

4. *Provision should be made in every school, preferably with pupils and parents participating in the planning, for intensive intercultural activities.* Such activities should be an important part of every school program. When children go through school and develop little sense of the way large portions of the area population live or of the contrast between American ideals and American

reality, their education must be considered seriously inadequate. The schools should provide a basis in experience as well as in knowledge for combating stereotypes.

5. *Attendance district boundaries should be so established and modified as to avoid boundaries which contribute to racial separation.*

6. *Interracial experience should be provided even in places where the population of an entire school district is of one race.* This can be done, if need be, by transportation to bring pupils of different races together for certain activities. Glee club concerts, games for small children, tutoring by older pupils, or joint language clubs are examples of these activities. Art, music, and drama studios provide excellent opportunities for the development of self-respect and of mutual respect between the different races or cultures. For participants, they also motivate effort in other subjects. There are a host of other possible activities. Parent and student groups, such as PTA's and student councils, have proved ingenious in developing ideas, acting on them, and intensifying the contacts made.

Especially is it important that all-white schools in suburban areas establish relations with schools in the central cities and bring their pupils into personal contact. The suburban schools should recognize that their pupils are being deprived of experience of a part of reality if they maintain isolation and that the quality of education in the suburbs is thereby diminished. To make parents—and teachers—aware of this is an important part of school leadership.

7. *Urban renewal should involve housing and school planing in cooperation.* Many people choose to live in an area partly on the basis of the school situation. The goal should be to create neighborhoods that will attract a mixture of racial, cultural, and economic groups. It is inexcusable for urban renewal to result in

the preservation or spread of segregation, yet that has occasionally been its result. It is equally inexcusable for public housing to contribute to de facto segregation, yet that has occasionally been its result. Urban renewal and public housing should help to revivify, not to kill, the common school.

8. *Where it is impossible to put all children in a desegregated situation, that goal should still be sought for as many as possible.* Where, for example, the children of one race form a small minority of the school population, even the most complete dispersal of those children through the educational system will not produce an integrated situation. Nevertheless, even in such a situation there may still be another way to look at the problem; namely, to seek a healthy integrated situation for as many students as possible. Helping just a few more pupils to live in a multiracial world is worth considerable effort.

9. *School staffs should be racially integrated.* The principles which apply to school population apply also to school staffs. Racial separation of faculties creates the same problems as racial separation of pupils, and desegregation of school staffs offers the same advantages as desegregation of pupils. It provides pupils with examples of good relations between the races and of equal status of the races and helps to counteract or prevent stereotyping. All teachers should be selected and assigned on identical standards, irrespective of race. To effectuate this policy implies upgrading of teachers whose own educational background may be less than adequate, and the needed training should be provided at public expense.

# Conclusion

An attack at the roots of inequality of opportunity means education.

Prejudice, which is a lack of objectivity, is learned; objectivity, too, can be learned. Therefore, insofar as inequality of opportunity is based on prejudice, it can be fought by education.

A disadvantaged life means a dearth of skills and understandings, a dearth which has a real existence apart from prejudice. The acquisition of these abilities is also a matter of education.

For millions of Americans, the American promise has been largely or wholly unfulfilled. Millions of others have lived their lives blinded by prejudices and by their actions or their attitudes have prolonged a situation of gross inhumanity. The fundamental solution in both cases lies in the greater development of the abilities of all Americans. The public school therefore has before it two jobs of unique and surpassing importance, two jobs which, given the resources, it alone can perform—to make of the United States one nation, and to make it a nation of equal opportunity.

The recommendations in this publication are those of the Educational Policies Commission, a commission of the National Education Association of the United States and the American Association of School Administrators. Publication in this form does not constitute formal approval by the sponsoring associations. However, on July 2, 1965, the Representative Assembly of the National Education Association of the United States formally adopted this publication as a statement of position by the National Education Association.