

## Desegregation California

DIRECTLY across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco lies the village of Sausalito, population approximately six thousand. To the casual observer it is a place of infinite charm and grace. Those, however, who have penetrated the facade of this community soon discover that long-standing tensions and differences are an integral part of Sausalito.

Especially are these disturbing elements seen within the educational framework of the Sausalito School District. The extended community which the School District encompasses is composed of three different entities: the town of Sausalito, the unincorporated community of Marin City, and the coastal military bases. Each of these segments poses a distinct educational problem for the schools.

The population of Sausalito itself is primarily middle class and above. Many of these families have no children. They are attracted to Sausalito because of its nearness to San Francisco and in many of these families the breadwinner commutes across the bridge to his job in the City. Marin City lies across U. S. Highway 101, west of

Sausalito. This section developed as a war housing project for the Marin Shipyards during World War II. It is a community of public and low cost housing and is predominantly populated by Negroes. It supplies nearly half of the school children to the total enrollment of the Sausalito Schools. To the south, three military forts, Cronkite, Mason, and Baker, nestle between Sausalito and the Bay. These small protective reservations are a source of two hundred children to the District.

### **A Commission Reports**

In September 1963, the Trustees of the Sausalito School District requested, of the California State Department of Education's Commission on Equal Opportunities in Education, a study of the ethnic distribution of its pupils and the school attendance areas. By July of the next year, the Commission had completed its study and submitted a report to the Board. The disturbing, albeit not unexpected, findings of the Commission pointed to the extreme racial imbalance which existed in the Sausalito Schools.

While problems existed in other areas,

# in a School System

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such as those posed by constant turnover of personnel of the Forts and subsequent changes in pupil enrollment patterns, the major issue facing the Sausalito School District in July 1964, was the *de facto* segregation that existed in its schools. The ethnic composition of the schools in the District at that time was as follows:

	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Non-Caucasian</i>
<i>Central and Bayside</i> (K-5, Sausalito and Fort enrollment areas)	324	40
<i>Manzanita</i> (K-5, Marin City enrollment area)	19	250
<i>Richardson Bay</i> (6-8, all 6-8th graders in the District)	207	201

Qualitative substance was added to the figures by the statement that the Marin County Chapter of Core presented to the Commission:

The vicious circle begins with the plight of many Marin City parents.

Either hampered by inadequate schooling in their childhood or forced into low-paying jobs by society's lingering prejudices, both parents are often required to work to obtain sustenance level income and, as a result, most Marin City children get inadequate pre-school preparation. Having their intellectual curiosity stunted during their crucial third and fourth years, they arrive at kindergarten or the first grade less able to read.

The Sausalito Board of Trustees now took an important step. The problem had been stated to them and they indicated that they wanted to do something about it. Administrative problems in the District delayed the implementation for almost a year. In June 1965, Dr. Virgil Hollis, by virtue of his position as Marin County Superintendent of Schools, was Acting Superintendent of the Sausalito Schools, the previous District Superintendent having left at the close of the school year. The Board of Trustees directed Dr. Hollis to present, within thirty days, a workable plan for desegregation that could be put into operation prior to the opening of school in September of that year. A consultant

team composed of Dr. Hollis, Dr. David Shapiro, Assistant Superintendent of the San Ramon Valley Unified School District, and the author was immediately established.

A series of meetings with the Board of Trustees, in open session, was held to analyze the problem and to reflect upon the possibilities there were for the children of Sausalito. It was obvious that the Board was seriously interested in a desegregated-integrated program and would probably consider any reasonable recommendation. The procedure to be followed was carefully structured by the consultants.

It was decided that school personnel and community leaders should be as closely involved as possible in the proposal. This involvement would start with the principals of the four schools. In an attempt to gain varying points of view on desegregation, interviews were held with every member of the school staff who was available that summer, both individually and in small groups. This included the teaching, clerical, custodial, transportation, and cafeteria staffs. High emphasis was placed on the opinion of the teaching staffs and their understanding of the problems that face children who go to school in the Sausalito District.

In addition, the team made a personal inspection of the school buildings, accompanied by members of the teaching staff. Inadequacies of materials, housing and supplies were evident. An insight was developed into the feelings, attitudes, anxieties, aspirations and hopes of the teachers as they worked with children in the District. There followed meetings with the Marin Housing Authority, citizens of the com-

munities of Marin City, Sausalito, and the Forts, members of the Recreation Commission, members of a citizens' group that had been established by the Board of Trustees, and many other interested citizens who were concerned with what should be done in Sausalito.

## **Desegregation and Equality**

The consultant team, early in the examination, realized that desegregation must be integrally tied in with the quality of the educational program. To desegregate and not to insist on quality, or to raise educational standards but not to consider desegregation, would be totally a mistake and would in no way be attacking the problem at hand. The team was interested in determining the potential for education in this District.

Diverse ideas and plans were formulated and studied. Some of the more feasible ones follow:

1. Move very slowly by desegregating the kindergarten and first grades only. Each year the desegregated classes would then move up one grade level. (This had possibilities but would delay opportunities for many children.)
2. Desegregate the kindergarten and fourth grades; start at the bottom and the top and eventually put the two parts together. (It should be noted that since all Sausalito children attended the same school for grades 6-8 (Richardson Bay School), physical integration was actually taking place there.)
3. Desegregate the kindergarten, first grades, and fourth grades. (This would have deprived the youngsters in the second and third grades of early opportunities.)
4. Total desegregation of the school system. (The consultant team had many questions on this proposal: Was the educational program ready for it? Was the community

ready for it? What was the attitude of the teaching staff toward it? What would be the levels of complaint? How best to achieve it? If the plan proved premature, would it delay possibilities for future desegregation?)

### **A Study of Needs**

Before making a final recommendation to the Board on desegregation, the consultants pointed to some immediate and urgent needs that existed in the School District and presented them to the Board and the community. These included the necessity for developing a program of in-service education for the teachers. Such a program would help teachers to understand children better, to work with each other in a more optimum way, to comprehend the content of new curriculum materials, and to grasp the concept that might be developed through modern teaching acts. Other needs indicated were:

1. The development of the library as the core of the instructional program.
2. An analysis of the function and operation of the maintenance division.
3. A review of the furniture and equipment needed for a modern program.
4. A study of the transportation system to insure that it did not dictate the educational program.
5. A determination of the leadership potential of the school principals in the proposed desegregated environment.

In addition, the team made a careful analysis and prediction as to the probable staff morale under desegregation.

It was realized that, in order to complete any desegregation-integration of the Sausalito Schools, a definite building program would have to be insti-

tuted. A bond issue would be needed to provide the funds either to complete existing facilities, develop an educational park, or to build a new primary school.

With all of the data gathered and in hand, the team held an open citizens meeting to present its findings. The meeting proved to be very crucial in influencing the final decision by the Board of Trustees.

### **Implementing the Program**

After some introductory remarks by the Acting Superintendent, a series of slides was projected. These showed the exterior and interior of most of the classrooms in the District. The abject condition of much of the physical plant was soon apparent. Inadequate lighting, furniture, audio-visual equipment, and thermal control were obvious. Most of the schools were surrounded by asphalt jungle. Poor drainage for rain resulted in pools of water in the playgrounds. Then the ethnic make-up of the schools was discussed.

Finally, a unique derivation of the well-known Princeton Plan was presented for consideration. The Manzanita School, located in Marin City, would service all of the kindergarten youngsters in the District. No other grades would be housed there. There would be three classes in the morning and three in the afternoon with careful attention to the inter-racial possibilities in each class. There would be no grouping other than that necessary for the age and maturity of the youngsters.

A second school, Bayside School, would house all of the first graders in the District. The Central School, badly

in need of major repairs, was recommended for use for a period not to exceed three years. It would house all of the second, third, and fourth grade students. The Richardson Bay School, located between the city of Sausalito and Marin City, would house the middle grades from five through eight. This plan of total desegregation would necessitate an increase in the bussing services of the District but could be managed with the existing equipment.

The consultant team stated emphatically that it felt the neighborhood school concept had met the needs of the culture in decades past but was no longer adequate in today's urgency for an integrated community. It suggested that the Negro community would remain in an unhealthy state if it were to continue to be serviced by segregated schools and declared that in the segregated schools Negro youngsters tended to depreciate themselves and in separate societies to develop a lower self-concept. It also maintained that the Caucasian youngsters are being cultur-

ally deprived when they grow up in a world that they perceive to be less than multi-colored.

The audience, having heard the full report, participated in an active discussion with the consultants. There was an energetic display of questions and a thoughtful appraisal of answers. It was evident that the plan had caught the imagination and enthusiasm of those attending. The consensus was overwhelmingly in favor of the plan for desegregation of the Sausalito Schools, as presented.

Despite the solidarity of opinion among those who had heard the report, final action was reserved for the Board of Trustees. Meeting the following evening, the Board reviewed the work of the consultant team and accepted it unanimously. In so doing, this Board established the first planned desegregated-integrated school system in California.

This design for education was instituted in September 1965, and is now in operation. 

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### SCIENCE

by RICHARD E. HANEY

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