

Preparing Teachers for Multiracial Schools

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PROSPECTIVE teachers need professional laboratory, clinical, selected intergroup relations, and student teaching experiences which will prepare them for teaching in multiracial classrooms. The number and percentage of multiracial schools in the United States have increased tremendously since 1954. It may be recalled that in 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the "separate but equal" doctrine adopted in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (163 U.S. 483 [1954]). It held in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (347 U.S. 483 [1954]) that segregation of white and Negro children in public schools was inconsistent with the equal protection of laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Other Supreme Court decisions and the Civil Rights Act enacted by Congress in 1964 have since reinforced this decision.

Since many teachers were totally unprepared to meet the challenge of teaching in multiracial schools, some teacher education institutions are increasingly accepting the responsibility for preparing prospective teachers for such classrooms.

In the quality of education that schools offer, teachers are the most important element. The quality of their training, the extent of their experience, and their attitudes toward students are all important. A new multiracial school system is not without its

special challenges to student body relationships, to staff relationships, to communications between school and community, and to a teaching environment for teachers and learners alike.

In multiracial schools, a professionally helpful and reciprocal, interpersonal relationship among members of the teaching staff affects the learning climate. Since such schools are a departure from social patterns and traditions, "guided" interaction is necessary; schools cannot rely on "natural" interaction. Developing effective intergroup relations skills among faculty members of multiracial schools may encourage the same among pupils of the schools, which might, in turn, provide a model of leadership for the community-at-large.

Florida A & M University, a majority black university, and Florida State University, a majority white university, have engaged in two demonstration teacher education intergroup relations projects. The two projects are (a) cooperative student teaching intergroup relations improvement project, and (b) a conference workshop on improving intergroup relations and preparing prospective teachers for multiracial classrooms. The cooperative student teaching project extended

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throughout the entire spring quarter of 1970, while the conference workshop lasted for one week. The conference workshop involved senior undergraduate students from both institutions; the cooperative student teaching project involved student teachers from both institutions.

A Cooperative Project

Primary objectives of the cooperative student teaching project were: (a) to develop in black and white prospective teachers an awareness of the identity of the other; (b) to develop an understanding of minority culture and problems; and (c) to develop intergroup relations skills.

Major features of the cooperative student teaching project were these: (a) establishment of a pattern of student teaching assignments within the Leon County school system which provided for proportional inclusion of prospective teachers from nearby majority black Florida A & M University and nearby majority white Florida State University; (b) cooperative participation in student teaching seminars; (c) relevant intergroup relations content; (d) participation of supervising teachers, black and white; (e) cooperative participation of Leon County school system's instructional personnel; and (f) joint participation of FAMU-FSU student teaching personnel.

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The Conference Workshop

The major objectives of the conference workshop were: (a) to provide an opportunity for interaction between black and white prospective teachers on instructional problems of mutual concern; (b) to sensitize prospective teachers to the causes of cross-cultural and racial conflict, misperceptions in the classroom, and their effects on learning; (c) to extend the knowledge of prospective teachers about the cultural patterns, needs, problems, and aspirations of black students and the black community; and (d) to encourage prospective teachers to develop attitudes, teaching styles, and instructional sources essential to multiracial classrooms.

The conference workshop included four sessions. Session 1 dealt with the subject, "Role of Teachers in a Multiracial Society." Discussions in small groups centered on this presentation supplied the focus of Session 2. The topic, "What the Black Community Expects of the Schools," was the center of interest during Session 3. Provisions were made for reactions and questions from the participants. Session 4 focused on a discussion by African scholars of the topic, "An African Perspective on the Problems of Education and Racism."

Sessions 1 and 2 were held at Florida A & M University, a majority black university, while Sessions 3 and 4 were held on the campus of Florida State University, a majority white university. Approximately 200 senior undergraduate prospective teachers, teacher educators, and leaders from the black community were involved.

Based on evaluations of the two demonstration teacher education intergroup relations projects, a program can now be put together as "A Model for Teacher Education Intergroup Relations Project Involving Nearby Majority Black and White Universities."

It is hoped that these demonstration projects will be copied and expanded in Florida and throughout the United States where there are majority black and white universities in close proximity. □

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