

Human Relations: These Approaches Can Succeed

KAREN S. DIRLAM*
ROLAND L. BUCHANAN, JR.

There must be two thrusts in human relations programs: (a) an interpersonal component, by which students and educators become better aware of self; and (b) intergroup relations to develop an improved understanding and appreciation of human behavior and human differences. This article explores these two thrusts and their integration.

THE TERM "human relations" has taken on many meanings for many people, particularly people who interact within our educational institutions. Terms such as race relations, intergroup relations, group dynamics, sensitivity training, interpersonal relations, T-groups, problem-solving training, transactional analysis, intercultural relations are all associated in one way or another with "human relations." For the purpose of this article, the term "human relations" is defined as:

Individual behaviors and institutional practices which affect the extent and ability of persons to (a) understand and obtain knowledge about themselves and others; and, (b) use knowledge and understanding to interact productively with others.¹

¹ Cheryl Birtha. *Philosophy of the Human Relations Department*. Madison, Wisconsin: Madison Public Schools, 1974. p. i.

Using the above definition, the many terms frequently equated with human relations may be grouped under two basic headings: (a) interpersonal relations, and (b) intergroup relations; one the arteries, the other the veins of human relations.

The need for human relations, both interpersonal and intergroup, is not unique to any group of people, be they students, educators, or parents; ethnic minority² or non-ethnic minority; rich or poor. Neither is the need for human relations unique to any given community, be it rural, suburban, or urban; nor to any geographic location, north, south, east, or west. The need is universal. Yet it is a need that is not often acknowledged by those educators in positions to improve the human relations environment within our educational institutions. Only recently have these institutions begun to acknowledge that affective education is just as important as cognitive learning; and that, more important, for real learning to take place, one cannot be isolated from the other.

² Ethnic minority: A group of people who may share certain characteristics based on color, culture, nationality, religion, or customs.

* Karen S. Dirlam, Coordinator of In-Service Education, and Roland L. Buchanan, Jr., Director, Human Relations Department; both with the Madison Public Schools, Wisconsin

To Solve Human Relations Problems

One educational institution that has received national recognition with respect to human relations education is the Madison Public Schools, Madison, Wisconsin. Since the creation of the Department of Human Relations in 1969 under the leadership of Roland L. Buchanan, Jr., the department has developed and implemented a number of programs for students and educators.³ All programs, for students and educators alike, focus on the integration of interpersonal and intergroup relations.

Programs in interpersonal relations assist educators in developing their abilities: (a) to understand themselves—the why of their thoughts, feelings, values, and actions, as well as how they relate and communicate with others; and (b) to use the skills of self-understanding, relating to and communicating with others to analyze and plan strategies to solve human relations problems within the classroom. The assumption here is that when educators are in touch with their own feelings and the *why* of their feelings, they are then able to help students become more aware of and express their feelings, because feelings are vital to human functioning.

Programs in interpersonal relations have as a primary focus self-understanding which facilitates a state of self-awareness. The processes utilized are designed to affect attitudes and behaviors in order to develop the ability of students and educators to know and understand themselves, which in turn enables them to know and understand others. For, as Harry Stack Sullivan states, "One can't integrate with others until one integrates with self."⁴

Because the skills required for living in our society become obsolete almost as

fast as they are acquired, there is, according to Carl Rogers, a need for continuous learning and adaptability. He states that: "... the goal of education must be to develop individuals who are open to change, who are flexible and adaptive, who have learned how to learn, and are thus able to learn continuously."⁵

The "Dialogue-Inquiry" Approach

There are several ways to facilitate constructive interpersonal growth. One very effective way that has proven to be successful for the Madison Public Schools Human Relations staff is the "dialogue-inquiry process."

Dialogue-inquiry is the coordination of two processes: (a) the process whereby two or more persons reveal their feelings and thoughts to one another with a reciprocal awareness of the threat to self-esteem that is involved for each; (b) the process whereby two or more persons ask and answer questions that are relevant to their situation.⁶

In a school, dialogue is a communication among professional colleagues (including parents and students)—a teacher talking to a principal, or a problem-solving session of several persons. It is from dialogue, facilitated by the interpersonal competencies of participants, that the specific functions of inquiry (describing and evaluating reality, formulating and analyzing problems, setting goals, elaborating and examining alternative plans, acting to implement a plan for changing reality) are generated and given form and meaning. Dialogue activates inquiry. It enables group members to rise and answer questions and to state and consider alternatives regarding a specific function of inquiry.⁷

Dialogue, unlike debate, is designed to unify rather than divide people. The process

³ Carl R. Rogers. In: Neild B. Oldham, editor. *Human Relations Training in Schools*. New London, Connecticut: Croft Educational Services, Inc., 1969.

⁶ John Cogley, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. In: Max Goodson, editor. *Some Notes on Dialogue Inquiry*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison. p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*

of dialogue seeks to construct an atmosphere in which educators are able to share their feelings and their ideas in order to clarify assumptions they may have made about themselves, others, or the institution in which they function.

The process of inquiry is designed to integrate and coordinate ideas and feelings so that the interactions among all people have purpose and are productive. Out of inquiry come solutions or alternatives on which educators can act in order to correct or improve conditions in their classroom and school environment.

All programs in interpersonal relations take place within small group settings and are dependent on active participation among educators for success. The Human Relations staff members serve only as facilitators of process, thus providing the opportunity for the educators to become actively involved in analyzing and solving the identified problem areas. Though pre-structured activities are used, facilitators must be perceptive and sensitive enough to group needs in the event the planned agenda requires changing. "School time" is provided for such programs, whether for students in a given class or for a total faculty.

The data collected from these short-term in-service programs, which generally range from one half-day to six days in length, have been in the form of written and verbal responses of both students and educators. From the results, the process used, that is, dialogue and inquiry, has proved to be a most effective way of identifying and solving interpersonal, as well as organizational problems.

The "Individual Differences" Approach

A second approach to the integration of interpersonal and intergroup relations is a program developed by the Human Relations Curriculum Coordinator, Marlene Cummings, and entitled "Individual Differences." Following a number of years of working with classrooms K-3 on an individual basis, explaining the "why" of different skin color pigmentations, a committee of six teachers and Ms.

Cummings developed a test and handbook to assist teachers in dealing with the attitudes of students toward differences found within the human family.

Test results clearly show that children as early as kindergarten do discriminate on the basis of color, size, mental, and physical differences. Numerous other research studies show that children as early as the age of 2 and 3 discriminate based on skin color (Ammons, 1950; Bettelheim and Janowitz, 1950, 1964; Blake and Dennis, 1943; Clark and Clark, 1939, 1950; Dirlam, 1973; Frenkel-Brunswik, 1946, 1953; Goodman, 1952; Horowitz, 1936, 1938, 1944; Radke, 1949, 1950; Rose, 1948; Stevenson, 1962; Trager and Yarrow, 1952). The *Individual Differences Test* supports the major research in this area, but also finds that the children are often more discriminatory with respect to the fat child and the poor child than to the child of color (ethnic minority). The research studies cited, however, only considered the variable of skin color.

Although their work is still in an experimental stage, the first grade teachers who have used the *Individual Differences Handbook*, integrating it as part of the daily curriculum, found that at the end of one year the students were more accepting of all differences: cultural differences, mental differences, physical differences, size differences (the short boy, the fat child, the tall girl), and economic differences. In addition, the students had greatly reduced using stereotypes they previously applied to different individuals or groups of people. Thus, the initial point of intervention and concentration for the school with respect to human relations education should be at ages five through twelve where young people acquire their basic attitudes and values with respect to people different from themselves.

The "Intergroup Relations" Approach

A third major program integrating the interpersonal and intergroup relations approach is the Intergroup Relations Program. This program grew out of concerns within

the Madison community for incorporating a pluralistic (multicultural) approach into the established school curriculum. With a three-year grant from Title III ESEA, a comprehensive in-service program was developed for educators.

The Intergroup Relations Program is designed to discuss and share ideas in order to assist educators in designing more flexible and productive approaches to working with all students. The basic thrust of the program speaks to providing a learning environment that will maximize the potential of all students, particularly students from non-middle class backgrounds, ethnic minority groups, and those who have been identified as having special needs, for example, the physically and mentally different student.

The program focuses on how the perceptions and attitudes that educators have about family, class, and ethnic differences affect learning processes and how these in turn influence the operational values and design of our educational institutions. Topic areas include: (a) the school and classroom as a social, psychological, and physical system; (b) the relationship of class and ethnicity to intellectual and emotional functioning; (c) families and education; (d) racism; (e) sexism; and (f) classism. Each topic area represents the integration of three levels of learning: *cognitive*, *affective*, and *behavioral*.

The *cognitive* level (that is, intellectual and/or content level) is designed to identify and dispel myths and stereotypes educators may have about various cultural, ethnic, economic, and social groups, both in society and in educational institutions. Articles and essays have been compiled for each topic area to assist educators in this process.

On the *affective* or feeling level, short films within each topic area have been developed and are designed to be used as a basis for discussion about attitudes and beliefs educators may have about various ethnic, cultural, social, or economic groups, particularly as these attitudes affect behaviors toward such groups in the schools.

The *behavioral* level speaks to the design and use of instructional materials (for exam-

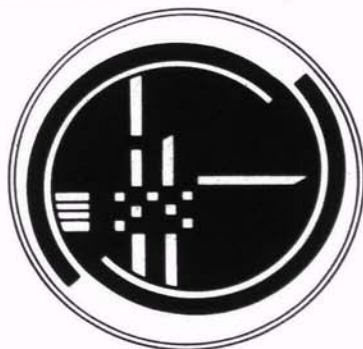
ple, applied exercises, multicultural curricular materials) in order to transfer to the classroom what educators have been exposed to during the in-service sessions. Educators themselves participate in specific activities for students which serve to increase their understanding of the various concepts presented.

Principals, teachers, specialized personnel, teacher aides, non-certified personnel, and parents participate in the program, which consists of 16 weekly meetings over a period of one semester, for a total of 45 hours.

Data collected from the first two years of piloting have shown significant changes at all three levels—*cognitive*, *affective*, and *behavioral*. Changes in understanding, respecting, and accepting the pluralistic society in which we live were exhibited not only on a number of evaluative instruments, but in the verbal responses of the educators and parents and in the activities they implemented with students in the classroom and at home.

ELIMINATING ETHNIC BIAS

IN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:
COMMENT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY



Stock No.: 611-74020 62 pp. \$3.25

Order from:
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Suite 1100, 1701 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

Numerous examples could be cited here, but for the sake of brevity we will share only a few.

The second year, educators who had participated the first year submitted activities they are now using with their students. In turn the Human Relations staff shared these activities with those educators currently participating. Later in the program a principal commented: "This program, of all the many we've participated in, provided our faculty with a sense of unity and we're now really beginning to plan for the present and future needs of our students."

A parent who had opposed the program was, by the end of the program, selling it to the school community. Within individual classrooms, multicultural bulletin boards began to appear, multicultural materials were brought in or developed by the indi-

vidual educators, and boys and girls began to decide on "free" activities based on their *interest* rather than the *sex role* attached to the activity. While change is slow, these small steps are encouraging, especially when signs of even greater ones are evident.

In summary, there must be two major thrusts in implementing human relations programs. First, there must exist an interpersonal component; a process whereby students and educators become better aware of self. The development of self-awareness facilitates openness, trust, flexibility, adaptiveness, empathy, and continuous learning. The second component of human relations programs must be that of intergroup relations in order to develop an increased understanding and appreciation of human behavior and human differences.

References

- Ruth Ammons. "Reactions in a Projective Doll-Play Interview of White Males, 2-6, to Differences in Skin Color and Facial Features." *Journal of Genetic Psychology* (75):322-41; 1950.
- B. Bettelheim and M. Janowitz. *Dynamics of Prejudice*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1950.
- B. Bettelheim and M. Janowitz. *Social Change and Prejudice*. New York: The Free Press, 1964.
- R. Blake and W. Dennis. "The Development of Stereotypes Concerning the Negro." *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology* (38):525-31; 1943.
- Kenneth B. Clark and M. Clark. "The Development of Consciousness of Self and the Emergence of Racial Identification in Negro Preschool Children." *Journal of Social Psychology* (10):591-599; 1939.
- Kenneth B. Clark and M. Clark. "Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children." *Journal of Negro Education* (19):341-50; 1950.
- Karen S. Dirlam. "An Investigation of Skin Color as a Salient Variable in Interpersonal Preferences in Dyadic and Group Social Situations Among Elementary School Children, Black and White, Boys and Girls." Doctoral thesis. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1973.
- Else Frenkel-Brunswik. "Studies of Social Discrimination in Children." *American Psychologist* (1):456; 1946.
- Else Frenkel-Brunswik and J. Havel. "Prejudice in the Interviews of Children: Attitudes Toward
- Minority Groups." *Journal of Genetic Psychology* (82):91-136; 1953.
- Mary Ellen Goodman. *Race Awareness in Young Children*. New York: Crowell-Collier Co., 1952.
- Eugene L. Horowitz. "The Development of Attitudes Toward the Negro." *Archives of Psychology* (164): 1936.
- Eugene L. Horowitz. "Race Attitudes." In: *Characteristics of the American Negro*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1944. pp. 139-247.
- Eugene L. Horowitz and Ruth E. Horowitz. "Development of Social Attitudes in Children." *Sociometry* (1):301-38; 1938.
- M. Radke, J. Sutherland, and P. Rosenberg. "Racial Attitudes of Children." *Sociometry* (13): 154-71; 1950.
- M. Radke and H. Trager. "Children's Perceptions of the Social Roles of Negroes and Whites." *Journal of Psychology* (29):3-33; 1950.
- M. Radke, H. Trager, and H. Davis. "Social Perceptions and Attitudes of Children." *Genetic Psychological Monograph* (40):327-447; 1949.
- A. M. Rose. *Studies in Reduction of Prejudice*. Second edition. Chicago: American Council on Race Relations, 1948.
- Harold Stevenson. "Studies of Racial Awareness in Young Children." *Young Children* 18: 206-213; May 1962.
- H. Trager and M. Yarrow. *They Learn What They Live: Prejudice in Young Children*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1952. □

Copyright © 1974 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.