

Education for Pluralism

Max Rosenberg

Multicultural Education: Content and Context

The California State Department of Education has recently issued a *Guide for Multicultural Education: Content and Context*.

The authors of the guide seek to describe "the principal characteristics of a school in which multicultural education will be effective." Here are some of these characteristics:

- Cultural pluralism permeates the total school environment.
- Policies and practices foster cooperative and friendly interaction among members of different ethnic groups.
- Administrative, instructional, counseling, and support staffs are multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual.
- The program of multicultural staff development is systematic, comprehensive, and continuing.
- A systematic program is used to involve all ethnic groups of the community in multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual teaching and learning.

The Guide provides a system model for those school districts planning for multicultural education. This includes such key elements as planning, needs assessment, program development, implementation, and program evaluation.

The authors of the guide examine many components of multicultural education: the rationale, the needs and goals, the importance of a supportive school environment, the instruction process, required staff training, desirable behaviors for teachers and administrators, a procedure for analyzing

and evaluating curriculum materials.

This guide is a noteworthy tool in the evolving educational programs appropriate to life and learning in a pluralistic, democratic society. As Wilson Riles, California Superintendent of Public Instruction states in the Foreword: "Multicultural education, aimed at the development of human dignity and respect for all peoples, is an essential part of the design to help children grow and function in our society."

For further information, write California State Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, California 95814.

With or Without Turmoil?

Desegregation Without Turmoil: The Role Of The Multi-Racial Community Coalition In Preparing For Smooth Transition. This is the title of a publication issued jointly by the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Justice Department and the National Center for Quality Integrated Education (a project of the National Conference of Christians and Jews).

The publication, which is based upon a national conference that was held more than a year ago in Washington, D.C., is called an "experience guide." This guide offers advice and counsel to community organizations that can review the experience of others as they prepare their own towns and cities for the desegregation process.

The conference included 572 representatives from 89 communities and 35 states, along with the District of Columbia.

While the conference discussions and analyses included the negative experiences of Boston and

Louisville, the emphasis was upon the positive experiences of such cities as Detroit and Memphis.

Most participants agreed that the major factors that resulted in peaceful school desegregation were affirmative community involvement and affirmative leadership.

"The seeds of turmoil are present in all cities. Whether they sprout and grow depends on the gardeners." These were the words of the conference keynoter Ben Holman, who heads the U.S. Community Relations Service. The gardeners? They are the community leaders and the coalitions who do or do not "wait passively for events to happen."

Here are some of the specific activities carried out by successful community coalitions in various cities: building a public information program, organizing speakers' bureaus, planning neighborhood meetings, reviewing other desegregation efforts, reaching the news media, mobilizing influential support, and promoting understanding in the schools.

The publication *Desegregation Without Turmoil* was published by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, 43 West 57th Street, New York, New York.

Cultural Pluralism: Various Perspectives

"The sad fact and a major indictment of our profession is the reality that American education has resisted with zeal and vehement resentment most major change efforts stemming from the civil rights movement of the 1960s . . . (I)t is evident that this resistance continues to the present day." So writes Tomás Arciniega

in the May-June 1977 issue of *Journal of Teacher Education* in the guest editorial column.

The theme of this issue of the *Journal* is multicultural education, and it is examined from various perspectives—historical, anthropological, philosophic, political, psychological, and so on.

Here are a few of the ideas expressed:

- To "understand" a culture or subculture means to see it as a whole.
- Ethnicity is an important factor in the political power structure.
- It is possible to teach children to become citizens of the world as well as to be loyal to the United States.

To return to Arciniega, he asserts that educators must reject both assimilation and separatism. That is clear. "What remains unclear is how best to organize and operationalize the noble precepts of cultural pluralism in educational form and practice."

Minority Group Parents and School Politics

Should school principals respond to pressures for minority group community involvement in the determination of educational policies? This is a key question in a study reported in the October 1977 issue of *Intellect* magazine. In a survey conducted by Thomas Monteiro, responses were obtained from 52 New York City school principals and 49 "educational activists." (These activists are employed by federally funded Community Action Agencies to organize parents and act as change agents.)

Here are a few of the issues raised. The response in each case was the same—activists, "yes"; principals, "no."

- Should parents and other citizens assist the principal in the evaluation of teachers?
- Should community representatives make the final decision in the appointment of principals?

• Should the selection of curriculum materials include parents along with teachers and administrators?

Monteiro recommends that School-Community Councils should be organized at the school level that would include teachers, administrators, parents, and community persons. Then, he says, these people would work together in arriving at educational decisions that affect the school. This "would lead activists to make more realistic demands for change."

The title of the article is "Sources of School-Community Conflict in Black Communities."

Unlearning "Indian" Stereotypes

The Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators has produced a teaching unit titled *Unlearning "Indian" Stereotypes*.

Many elements in our society serve to reinforce a derogatory stereotype of American Indians. Movies and TV and radio play a part, but for children, their picture books constitute a particularly significant factor. And the resulting concept dehumanizes Native Americans, degrades their cultures, and distorts reality.

Scholars at the Center analyzed some 75 children's picture books, including many books published recently. Their conclusion: Most of the images that children received regarding Native Americans are "stereotypic, distorted, and unreal."

What can be done?

Part of the answer is to *unlearn* the stereotype.

This teaching unit (a filmstrip is also available) offers a number of helps directed to the classroom teacher and librarian. These suggested activities deal with stereotypes; role playing; factual, non-traditional history; the different perspectives of a Native American toward American holiday celebrations.

One section is titled "What

Not To Teach." Written by June Sark Heinrich, it is a series of classroom "don'ts." To cite some examples: *Don't* talk about Indians as though they belong to the past. *Don't* talk about "them" and "us." *Don't* lump all Native Americans together.

For more information, contact Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, 1841 Broadway, New York, New York 10023.

Standard Tests and Minority Groups

The July-October 1977 issue of *The Negro Educational Review* is devoted to an analysis of standardized testing in the public schools and its effects upon minority groups.

Norman R. Dixon, guest editor, states plainly that standardized tests are "inaccurate, unfair, and inappropriate for assessing the aptitude and achievement of black students." For black students, he insists, "norm-referenced tests stand as racially biased sentinels that guard the gates to dignity, respect, and opportunity."

These seven articles all deal with different phases of the testing problem. One writer asserts that the application of tests from one culture to another is "scientifically untenable." A second writer contends that standard tests used in public schools are "basically dishonest." A third maintains that they are nothing less than "racist."

There appears to be general agreement by these authors upon two conclusions: One, that test results can be of great importance in the life of an individual. Two, today's standardized tests are unfair to blacks and members of other minority groups.

Reminder to Readers

Readers are invited to submit appropriate items to Dr. Max Rosenberg, Detroit Public Schools, 5057 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48202.

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