International Year of the Child

1979 has been designated as the International Year of the Child (I.Y.C.) by the United Nations.

In the United States, a national commission has been established. The commission is composed of 24 presidential appointees—experts on child advocacy programs and on all matters that relate to the concerns of the child. President Carter chose Jean Young to serve as commission chairperson.

The Winter 1979 issue of Compact, the journal of the Education Commission of the States, contains a report made by Jean Young. She makes clear that the United States I.Y.C. Commission has initiated a national dialogue on child nurturing, physical and mental health, education, juvenile justice, child development, and the kinds of discrimination that affect children.

Young goes on to ask what she calls the “hard questions”:

• How can we guarantee that every child in this country will be well nourished?
• How can we provide adequate day-care facilities for the millions of youngsters whose mothers must work outside the home?
• How can we expand and upgrade foster care?
• How can we assure proper play and recreational opportunities?
• How can we deal with the mounting problem of alcohol and drug abuse among young people today?
• How do we return discipline, structure, and a genuine respect for the individual to the classrooms of our country?
• How can we assure that our children will grow up in a society with a juvenile justice system in which physical, psychological, emotional, legal, and medical abuse is eradicated?

All 50 states—along with local communities—have been asked to participate with programs and services that have special meaning for them and their children. It is truly a golden opportunity, as Young says, “To instigate basic and far-reaching changes in the ways we perceive and respond to our children.”

What is your state doing about the International Year of the Child? What is your community doing? What is your school system doing?

Mobilizing for Excellence in Education

“We must excel because the sickness of racism, in too many instances, forces us to be superior in order to be considered average . . .

“We must teach our children that if they can conceive it and believe it, they can achieve it.

“We must move from educational existence to educational excellence . . .


The above are quotations from recent speeches given by the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson in his campaign to raise the achievement level of black students. In 1971, Jackson founded PUSH (People United to Save Humanity). The educational effort of PUSH is known as Project Excel. Not long ago this project received a grant of $400,000 from the federal government.

Last year a major “Excel” conference with 1,200 participants who came from 24 states was held in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Howard University, and PUSH, the theme was “Mobilizing for Excellence in Education.”

A 40-page special section in the November 1978 issue of Phi Delta Kappan was devoted entirely to the conference. Following is a sampling of quotations from the speeches given by various major conference leaders:

Kenneth B. Clark: “During the past 10 years subtle white Northern liberal racism, white backlash, and black separatism have seriously threatened the gains of the civil rights movement that were triggered by the Brown decision. Fortunately, I believe, this negative tide is now being reversed . . .”

Mary F. Berry: “Tests are useful and important, and minority children may be taught to pass them as well or better than majority children. But they are not all of what education is about.”

Robert L. Green: “We have two school systems, one attended by children whose parents are, for the most part, white and middle class to affluent; the other attended by children whose parents are . . .”
black or members of other minorities and mostly poor.”

Samuel D. Proctor: “When we decide to be courageous enough to be fair, when we open a door of opportunity, when vicarious teachers are excited about their work and the potential of their students, when all of these factors come together, then we are rewarded with the flowering of genius. Yes, a mind is a terrible thing to waste.”

accept the fact that America’s greatest underdeveloped resource is its people, then we will be prepared to declare war against the inertia and indifference that have militated against upward social mobility for minorities.”

Desegregation and Monitoring Commissions

In the process of school desegregation, federal judges are finding it desirable and helpful to create monitoring commissions. Such commissions have been established in Boston, Buffalo, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, De Kalb County (Georgia), Detroit, Milwaukee, Springfield (Illinois), and other cities.

The courts usually rely on each commission to monitor the compliance of the school system to the courts’ desegregation order. Most have been charged with overseeing, analyzing, and evaluating the content and quality of the school system’s efforts to comply.

Not long ago a symposium dealing with the use of the monitoring commission as a mechanism in school desegregation cases was held in Columbus, Ohio. Cosponsored by the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice and Ohio State University, participants came from 18 states and 26 cities.

The conference was concerned with many questions relating to the commission’s role. To state a few: How should commissions be supported and staffed? What factors contribute to successful commissions? What makes for a good relationship between the commission and the court? How can educator and community support be best elicited by the commission?

Following the symposium, a report was prepared. It is titled “Viewpoints and Guidelines on Court Appointed Citizens Monitoring Commissions in School Desegregation.” This report can be obtained from the Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530.

Vegetable Soup

Vegetable Soup—this is the name of the TV series produced by the New York State Education Department for children ages six to 12.

The goals of this series are: to teach acceptance of individual and group differences and to like one’s own ethnic group; to teach appreciation of different points of view and to reject name-calling; and to teach cooperation with different racial, ethnic, and sex groups, rejection of role-stereotyping and recognition of justice so that children will learn to reject unfair treatment on an ethnic or racial basis.

Presented in TV magazine format, Vegetable Soup consists of 39 half-hour programs.

Is the program series effective? Research has been conducted by City University of New York, Harvard University, and the University of Massachusetts proving that “children who have viewed Vegetable Soup have shown a positive attitudinal change toward various ethnicities.”

Briefs

- The Project on Sex Stereotyping in Education has developed a number of multimedia instructional units for teachers. Some of the titles are: “Girl, Boy or Person: Beyond Sex Differences”; “Reading, Writing and Stereotyping”; “Equality in Science: Formula for Changing Sex Bias”; and “We the People: Sex Bias in American History.” For more information, write Women Educators, P.O. Box 218, Red Bank, New Jersey 07701.

- This year an inservice project to help educators reduce sexist, racist, and ethnic stereotyping has been started in the state of Washington. Three Washington school districts are participating in the pilot project. The aim: to develop an inservice training model that addresses minimal teaching competencies in multicultural education consistent with the goals of basic education. For more information, write Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 710 S.W. Second Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97204.

- The Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan is making “the first attempts ever” to identify and interview large national samples of black Americans and Chicanos. The purpose: To examine the attitudes and experiences of racial/ethnic groups in terms of mental health needs and how these needs are or are not being met. For more information, write the Institute at 426 Thompson Street, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

Reminder to Readers

Readers are invited to submit appropriate items for this column to Max Rosenberg, c/o ASCD, 225 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.