

Education for Pluralism

Max Rosenberg

A Multicultural Program For Our Public Schools

Members of various ethnic minority groups must be represented at the policy-making level of a school system—this is one of a number of recommendations made in an article which appeared in the September 1979 issue of the University of Michigan's *Innovator*.

The article, written by Evy Eugene Mavrellis, is titled "How Can Schools Develop a Multicultural Program? An Administrative Policy Approach to Multicultural Education."

Here are some more recommendations:

- Recruitment of minorities for professional and administrative staff positions
- Intensive staff workshops dealing with various intercultural approaches and needs
- A strong bilingual program
- Revision of instructional materials to eliminate bias
- Design extracurricular activities which foster the enhancement of self-concept and cross-cultural contact
- Incorporation of specialized intercultural courses into the academic program.

Mavrellis lists a number of courses that would give special emphasis to a multiethnic dimension throughout the K-12 curriculum.

The article closes with this thought: "Educators must endeavor to promote in their students not only an identify consciousness of their own cultural heritage, but also a value orientation that transcends a multitude of cultures."

Another Cardinal Principle?

In 1918 an education commission issued what was destined to become a very famous document popularly known as the Seven Cardinal Principles. The full title was "Cardinal

Principles of Secondary Education: A Report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education."

This report on secondary school goals became a classic. Why? Because it was widely recognized that the Cardinal Principles were indeed of top priority and special importance to the students in America's secondary schools. Since 1918 a number of attempts have been made both by individuals and organizations to revise and update the Seven Cardinal Principles. In 1978, for example, the *Phi Delta Kappan* published what was called a "restructured" set of cardinal principles prepared by Richard E. Gross.

In June 1979 the *Phi Delta Kappan* published a follow-up article titled "The Multicultural Principle: Missing from the Seven Cardinal Principles of 1918 and 1978." Gordon L. Berry, author of this article, proposed an additional principle: "It is that the secondary school pupil has a moral responsibility to learn, understand, and respect the values inherent in other races and religions, and to practice behaviors that will ensure human dignity and civil rights to males and females of cultural groups different from their own."

Since 1918, writes Berry, there have been many changes in the American way of life. What is needed now is a stronger multicultural principle, more direct and dynamic. Berry summarizes his position in these words: "My premise is that young people need to learn about, respect, and understand the pluralistic nature of our society."

Many will agree that the Cardinal Principles or goals of our schools—

and not only secondary schools—should include one that emphasizes the multicultural nature of our society.

Greenville, Mississippi: A School Integration Report

In 1968 Greenville, Mississippi, integrated its public schools. The May 1979 issue of *PTA Today* tells the story. The article was written by Virginia Hines, a teacher in one of Greenville's junior high schools.

Has integration worked out in this city of 50,000 located in the heart of the Mississippi Delta? According to Hines, "Indeed it has worked." However, she adds, it would be unfair and untrue to say that everything went well from the start. At the start there was much tension due primarily to "a fear of the unknown."

A number of steps were taken so that the school integration plans could be successful. Greenville black and white teachers were reassigned on a 50-50 basis. Elementary schools were paired. A black high school was disbanded. A new secondary school became a tenth grade school. Greenville High School became the city's only high school, accommodating all of the city's eleventh and twelfth graders.

Hines concludes with the thought that the years of effort and adjustment have reaped great social dividends for the citizens of Greenville.

Practices and Politics of Relations

The book *Unequal Americans* is an in-depth study of intergroup relations. Based largely upon interview techniques, this study focuses on those who are disadvantaged in the pursuit of equal opportunity because of their group identity—racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual.

The author, John Slawson, served for many years as Executive Vice President of the American Jewish Committee—one of the oldest human relations agencies in the United States. *Unequal Americans* deals broadly

Reminder to Readers

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with the theory and practice of inter-group relations. One section is devoted to school integration. "Our hope," declares Slawson, "is ultimately with the child. . . Our children must not be excluded from an experience to be educated in an environment representative of diversity. . . ."

Here are a few recurring themes:

- Pluralism in the U.S. is on the upswing.
- Economics is the basic ingredient in the quality of group relations.
- Prejudice lingers on very much longer than overt discrimination.

The final message: "In spite of regressions, it can be stated that America is well on the way to becoming a truly civil rights-conscious nation. We must continue to be vigilant, however, to curb the regressions we continue to experience today."

The full title of the book, which was published in 1979, is *Unequal Americans: Practices and Politics of Intergroup Relations*. It was published by Greenwood Press, 51 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut, 06880.

Treatment of the American Indian in Our Textbooks

"The American Indian: No Longer a Forgotten American in U.S. History Texts Published in the 1970s," the title of an article written by Jesus Garcia appears in the February, 1980 issue of *Social Education*.

After reviewing 20 American history textbooks, Garcia concludes significant progress is being made in broadening the scope of American history; it is no longer merely a white man's experience. "Textbooks of the 1960s and 1970s include content which more objectively depicts the experiences of Native Americans and other minority groups."

There is still room for considerable improvement. Garcia states that some of the "glaring weaknesses" in American history textbooks are: (1) The "disjointed and incomplete treatment" of minorities; (2) The absence of a "Native American perspective to the events and issues"; (3) Descriptions of Native Americans "remain stilted."

U.S.-Soviet Textbook Project

U.S. and Soviet scholars have joined together in a notable effort to

examine and review some basic social studies textbooks used in classes on various grade levels in each country.

Howard Mehlinger, Indiana University, is director of the U.S. group of scholars. He says, "No matter how meticulously this joint program is carried out, we are not going to reverse the ways the two countries educate their children. But if we can bring about corrections in the textbooks where they are called for, we will be taking at least a small step toward improving relationships between the two countries."

The following are some understandings the Russians and the Americans share:

- Textbooks play a very important role in the teaching/learning process in most schools and in most classes. Teachers and students almost always utilize the textbooks as the chief authority. So it is important that texts are fair, balanced, and accurate. The interpretations may well be different, but the basic facts should certainly be the same.
- Furthermore, in the case of social studies textbooks, children learn about peoples of other lands. What they learn results in positive or negative attitudes which can affect the relations between nations for years to come.

The story of this project appears in the January/February 1979 issue of *American Education*. The article, titled "The U.S.-U.S.S.R. Textbook Project," was written by G. K. Hodenfield.

Bilingual Education for Armenians

Watertown, Massachusetts, contains a large Armenian group with many uprooted families who are faced with the problems of coping with a culture unfamiliar to them. Since 25 percent of Watertown's population is made up of Armenians, many students enter the schools who speak little English. Under the Massachusetts Transitional Bilingual Education Act, a bilingual program for Armenians has been introduced in the school district.

Last year, the program had 86 students in it. The purpose of the program is to assist students with the difficult transition from the Armenian language to English. The program offers English-as-second-language courses, as well as basic course offerings in mathematics, history, and grammar. These courses are

taught to the students in their native language. Federal support was given the program, which allowed the program to be expanded as a regular supportive service of the school district.

The program has included curricula for both students and parents. One of the more successful features has been a series of day trips for students and parents. These visits have been to such landmarks as Old Sturbridge Village, Lexington and Concord, and the Massachusetts State House. Parents have also had direct interaction with members of the community advisory council. This has provided them information with respect to health care, safety, and legal affairs. In addition, teachers have received inservice education support through the program.

Students are assessed on an individual basis, and program changes are made for the individual students based on their progress. The stress is to determine the grade at which the student speaks English through a series of written and verbal tests and to improve their language skills with an individually designed program for them. *EL*

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