

# Clark and Bell Are Both Right

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**Y**es, Dr. Clark, American educators must have the courage to continue to say to the American people that "racially segregated schools seriously impair the ability to attain the goals of a democratic education." And yes, Dr. Bell, a growing number of black superintendents are designing programs "to improve schooling where children now live rather than relying on racial balance plans as the only means of educating black children."

These are not contradictory viewpoints. The focus for minority superintendents, as well as for many white superintendents who are also concerned about quality education for minority youngsters, must be the options available to ensure quality education for all youngsters. We really don't have many options left. We know what quality education is. We know how to deliver quality programs. We also know that quality desegregated education is a wor-

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thy goal. Unfortunately, this will not be a reality in urban centers during our lifetime.

So, what are our options? What can we realistically hope to attain? As a former principal and director of desegregation programs in Evanston, Illinois, public schools; as former Superintendent of Schools in Berkeley, California (still the capital of school desegregation); and as Superintendent of Schools in Rochester, New York (known for its Urban-Suburban Desegregation Transfer Plan); I have personally observed the benefits that both minority and nonminority students receive from a quality desegregated experience. That type of experience, however, is not possible in most of our large urban centers. In Washington, D.C., there are 3,200 white students in a total student population of 91,800. In Chicago, there are 83,000 white students in a total enrollment of 445,000. In Detroit, there are 22,000 white students among the district's 202,000 students. And in Philadelphia, there are 55,000 white students in a population of 207,000. The data are similar for other large cities.

The racial composition of our urban schools will continue to be heavily minority. Many white students have, of course, moved into private, parochial, and suburban schools. Since these students receive their education in separate educational facilities, will the education received by urban minority youth be inherently unequal? I think not. Many of us responsible for providing quality programs for the young people we find in our urban districts—irrespective of our views on desegregation or our financial status—desire to provide the best educational program possible. That is our day-to-day reality.

Helping young people establish higher expectations; value upward mobility; prepare for college or the world of work; and develop better skills in math, science, and writing must continue to be important goals for urban education. To do less would be to accept failure. To do less would be to accept the thesis that a

milieu that is predominantly minority is inherently unequal. Churches, work places, neighborhoods, even a McDonald's restaurant are no more inferior because they are populated by a preponderance of blacks than if they are predominantly German, Italian, Irish, or Asian. It is not the ethnicity of our urban school students that causes educational inequality, but the inadequacy of resources.

### Resources vs. Integration

When young people of differing ethnic groups can obtain their schooling in an environment that is both desegregated and integrated, they have a much better opportunity to learn how to live more productively in our complex society. That alternative, however, is not available to school boards and superintendents in most of our urban cities. Metropolitan education in Chicago, as an example, is not really going to happen. Cicero, Niles, Park Ridge, Lincolnwood, Glenview, Winnetka, Wilmette, and Chicago are not likely to become part of any massive desegregation plan. Personally, as a superintendent, I would not want to waste one ounce of sweat attempting to desegregate Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, or Washington, D.C. Rather, urban educators must believe that quality urban education can and will be achieved in inherently segregated facilities.

Effective education for urban youngsters depends on the availability of resources needed to achieve our goals. Effective curriculum planning and implementation of programs must be high on our agendas. Educators know a great deal about individualizing instruction, raising test scores, teaching reading, teaching mathematics, and encouraging higher expectations in our students. We can also educate young people during a 220-day school year if provided with that opportunity. Many of us, however, are having a difficult time finding financial resources with which to pay for the programs that we offer in only 180 days. Financial resources, sufficient personnel, and adequate materials are the key.

Urban programs are not unsuccessful. Many of us have raised the test scores of young people when we have

targeted that as an objective and designed specific curricular thrusts to achieve it. Urban educators are generally highly effective. If educators from city school districts were to participate in an exchange program with their suburban counterparts, the delivery of elementary and secondary instruction in suburban schools would not falter. A variety of techniques, approaches, and methods of curriculum delivery is part of the instructional repertoire of significant numbers of urban staffs. Would suburban staff members fare as well in the day-to-day instructional programs in our urban centers? I think not!

This is not a cheap shot at my suburban colleagues. The reality, however, is that urban educators have been required to learn a variety of instructional techniques and skills in order to meet the challenge of educating urban youth who face daily problems acknowledged as more severe than those confronting suburban students. Life-style variances, socioeconomic issues, cultural differences, and ethnic diversity do not impinge on the educational success of suburban schools as they do in many urban communities.

Suburban education and urban education are not the same. Even a brief tour of suburban and urban districts will clearly point out the differences in school facilities, maintenance of grounds, ethnicity of students and staff, and curricular thrusts in the classrooms. These external differences may not change. The reality in the 1980s is that education in these two types of school systems can be different but nevertheless similar in quality. Educators in urban communities must accept the population of students that we have, and design and implement the best educational programs possible for them.

This is our reality. This is American society in 1983. In our cities, we have been making educational progress of which we are proud, and we will continue to do so. But, Dr. Bell, you say that successful school programs in urban minority schools will attract many white parents and students. You don't really believe that, do you? □

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