

Integration In the Schools

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Superintendent of Schools, New York City

Since its early beginnings, New York City has been a beacon to people from all corners of the world and from within the United States. In a very real sense the schools may be regarded as the cement which unites, strengthens and supports the whole social fabric.

The public schools of New York City are freely open to all children without restriction as to race, creed or ethnic origins. It is important to state directly and positively that which is implied in the reports of the sub-commission, namely that wherever a concentration of ethnic groups occur in all schools in New York City such concentration is the result of a concentration of ethnic groups in the neighborhood of the school. *No forms of "segregation" within the meaning of the historic decisions of the Supreme Court is practiced or sanctioned in New York City.*

A word about *integration*. This term is applied in some sections of the country to the situation where Negro and white children, formerly barred from attending the same schools are now permitted to attend classes together. Used in this context the term "integration" has no application to the public schools in New York City. There is, however, a much broader application of the term "integration" which has engaged our serious consideration.

Integration is a process of bringing all parts together into a unified whole. It is the process of making one united nation out of all our people—with equal rights and equal opportunities. Although integration is a process which requires action along many fronts, we are primarily concerned with the process insofar as it relates to public education.

Board of Education Resolution

To avoid possible future misunderstanding, the Board must point out that approval of these reports,

together with accompanying supplementary material, does not necessarily mean acceptance in every detail either of the language or of specific aspects of the recommendations contained therein. Accordingly, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education accepts with thanks and approves the reports of the sub-commission on Teachers Assignments and Personnel and of the sub-commission on Zoning; and, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, "that the Board of Education reserves to itself the privilege of interpreting the meaning to be attached to certain terms and phrases, of further studying and exploring the merits of specific recommendations and of resolving the administrative problems which necessarily arise in carrying out any policy for a school system as complex as that of New York City; and, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, consistent with the previous resolution, the Superintendent of Schools is directed to take such action as may be necessary to carry out the intent and purposes of the said reports, making such adjustments, where necessary, in the implementation thereof as will meet the situation from the standpoint of good administration of an effective integration program."

School Statistics

New York City is a large city, both in area and population. The following table gives the number of Negro, Puerto Rican and other children mostly white, in New York City's elementary and junior high schools, according to a tabulation made several months ago:

	Puerto			Total
	Negro	Rican	Others	
Manhattan	56,220	42,987	44,907	134,164
Bronx	22,023	27,743	93,957	143,723
Brooklyn	45,616	28,389	190,550	264,555
Queens	17,359	2,316	142,852	162,527
Richmond	1,185	236	18,845	20,266
TOTAL	132,403	101,671	491,161	725,235

The same facts are shown in the following table in percentages:

	Puerto		
	Negro	Rican	White
Richmond	5.8	1.2	93.0
Queens	10.7	1.4	87.9
Manhattan	34.5	32.0	33.5
Bronx	15.3	19.3	65.4
Brooklyn	17.3	10.7	72.0
TOTAL	18.3	14.0	67.7

The statistics in the foregoing tables are based upon the judgment of the principals and teachers. No child is asked about his race, and no notation of any kind appears on his record card. This also applies to record cards of teachers. The table shows that slightly less than 1/6 of the Bronx elementary and junior high school pupils are Negroes and slightly less than 1/5 of the pupils are Puerto Ricans.

Zoning

For some unexplained reasons, rumors have been spread that we are transporting or planning to transport groups of Negro children long distances to schools in which the pupils are predominantly white, and vice versa. *These rumors are completely false. No responsible person has the right to make such a statement. No action is planned.*

By *zoning* is meant the process of drawing boundary lines for the area which is served by a given school. All pupils, regardless of race, must attend the elementary or junior high school for the given area.

I am sure that all members of the Board of Education believe strongly in the concept of the neighborhood school, a school which is usually within walking distance for most of its pupils. There are many reasons for this belief. There is the matter of

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safety. The nearer a child is to his home, the less the likelihood of any accident. If a child becomes sick, his mother can reach school quickly. Many parents still want their children to come home for lunch. If a child takes private lessons after school, he can get home quickly. If he goes to released time instruction, he will be near the

center. If he wants to remain in school for some special activity, he can get home without being required to catch a bus. Finally, a neighborhood school tends to develop a strong parents' association and we believe in strong parents' associations. There is also a greater likelihood of developing a stronger community spirit.

Because of the value of the neighborhood school concept, most

elementary schools will remain virtually unchanged. However, at times it is possible, without abandoning the neighborhood school concept, so to draw the zone lines that it will be possible for more pupils of different races to attend interracial schools. This applies especially to "fringe" areas—neighborhoods made up of several racial groups. Many of our assistant superintendents deserve commendation for such changes made in the past several years.

Another type of situation sometimes presents itself. A neighborhood school becomes badly overcrowded, while at the same time there is another nearby school with some empty rooms. Under such conditions it is good school administration to make maximum use of all school buildings, and some children are transferred to a more distant school. If the school is at a distance greater than our established walking distances, transportation is provided. In such cases, it is often possible to bring about an interracial pupil population, with wholehearted approval. In all such cases, the principal and assistant superintendent discuss the matter with the parents' associations of the schools involved, and with the Local School Board.

Junior and Senior High Schools

A junior high school draws its students from a larger area than does a single elementary school, and therefore is the greater likelihood that it will have an interracial student body. Sometimes, after a careful appraisal of all the factors, a feeder zone for the junior high school can be created to provide for different racial groups. Unfortunately, there are in New York City a few localities populated by Negroes which cover so large an area, that it is difficult to provide an interracial population for those schools located in the heart of such areas. It is essential that we work for interracial housing to break up such areas.

As the pupils move on to senior high schools, which draw their student body from a still larger geographic area, there is less and less concentration of a particular

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ethnic group in a given school. The High School Division for years has followed the policy of endeavoring to draw the boundary lines of schools in such a way as to bring about a scattering of ethnic groups in the various high schools of the City.

Permissive Zoning

Sometimes, in a discussion of integration, the term "permissive zoning" is used. This expression is used to describe the procedure by which a child is permitted to attend a school other than the one normally attended by children in the neighborhood.

There are times, especially on the high school level, when permissive zoning may be used. However, such permission should be granted only after careful consideration of all the implications. It can lead to abuses. Care must be taken to see that it does not result in favoritism. Similarly situated schools should have the same rights. If used, it should further the cause of integration, not defeat it. Finally, we must consider the capacity of the school to which the pupils want to go.

Teacher Assignment

I believe that all of you will accept the basic principle that *all* schools should have their fair share of experienced teachers. We are frank to admit that this has not been the case. I believe, too, that all of you will accept the principle that we should try to equalize the burdens of our teachers to the extent that we can reasonably do so. This principle is accepted in the day to day operation of our schools. There are many extra tasks to which teachers have to be assigned and most principals rotate these tasks among the members of their staffs. Some teachers are excused from yard duty because they have other special assignments. If a teacher has a heavy assignment one year, the principal tries to give her an easier one the next year. Similarly we recognize the fact that teaching in some schools is probably more taxing of one's energy than it is in other schools,

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even though teaching today is not easy anywhere.

Children from homes of a lower economic level, from troubled homes, or from culturally deprived homes, need more help than other children, and the teacher's task is undoubtedly more difficult. Therefore, we have reduced the size of the class somewhat in schools where there are large numbers of such children. We have tried to give these schools more assistance from various professional services, such as the Bureau of Child Guidance, although we recognize that the amount of such assistance has been very inadequate.

We have been trying to give teachers in such schools a relief period. Our efforts may be a little more successful in the next school year, since the next year's budget provides some additional service. We are going to provide some additional supervisory help to assist the young teachers. We are assured of lunchroom aides for at least some of the schools so as to restore to our teachers in these schools a somewhat better lunch period. We also expect to provide additional clerical help to some of them.

Staffing the Schools

For the current year, Dr. Gannon plans to move toward better distribution of the teaching staff through voluntary transfers. To this end he has met with some teacher groups and will meet with others, especially on the elementary level, where the greatest effort will be made during the coming year. Teachers will be encouraged to visit the schools. We know that many student teachers and substitutes who have had experience in these schools want to go to them when their names are reached for appointment on the eligible list. They see a challenge which they want to accept.

The recommendation has been made that teachers should be required to serve at least a three year period in one of these schools in order to be eligible for a higher license. Personally, I am not sure that this recommendation is a good

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one—I have an open mind on this question—but this I do know. Many supervisors, who have won promotions of various kinds, attributed their success to their experiences in difficult-to-staff schools.

The Building Program

At the end of World War II, the Board of Education found itself confronted with the need for a tremendous building program to meet two needs:

1. School facilities for the increased school population, espe-

cially in newly built up areas, and

2. New schools to replace obsolete structures.

With the cooperation of the city government great progress has been made. At first, efforts were concentrated on meeting need No. 1 above. Now that this need has been met to a considerable degree, greater effort will be made to meet need No. 2.

In some older sections of the city, although there are many modern school buildings, there are also many obsolete buildings. To make our problem more difficult, we find that families are crowded together in some of these areas, with the

result that the school population has increased. Therefore our school building program has to solve both the problem of overcrowding and that of obsolescence in these areas. Some of the new buildings will replace old buildings which now have an interracial pupil population. Some new elementary buildings will probably have to be built in the heart of a Negro area to replace an obsolete building and thus provide the neighborhood with a fine building for evening community use as well as for day school use.

Where possible, especially for junior high schools, attempts will be made to select sites for new buildings which will provide very definitely for an interracial student body.

Conclusion

The task ahead is not an easy one. It requires cooperation from the community and the city at large as well as from school staffs. It means the establishment of an on-going program whose objective is the best possible educational program for all American youth in today's world in which new countries are being born, barriers of race and color are tumbling, and peoples are clamoring for freedom and self-determination. At the same time, the free world is engaged with the communist world in a desperate struggle for the friendship and allegiance of these peoples who are now emerging in

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 the family of nations. We would have them embrace democracy and national freedom.

The major burden of building a world of peace and happiness will fall upon the generation of children now in school. Time and distance are shrinking. Our children will first need to know how to live in good will with their neighbors of all religious faiths and ethnic origins if they are to accommodate harmoniously to the new world which is now in process of building. We would betray our children if we permit hate and bigotry to grow out of the resolution of the Board of Education of New York City to do everything possible to provide an equal educational opportunity for every child in our schools. I am confident the vast majority of our citizens are as determined and dedicated to reach this objective as we are. It will take patience, understanding and charity on all sides. We will do our best in the schools to attain this goal.

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