[MS-0234.003.002.004]

REPORT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT
SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS

by the

Citizens Advisory Committee
on Pupil Testing

Submitted by Chairman
Robert E. Russell

April 14, 1977

Formation of Committee

On November 19, 1975, the San Diego Urban League expressed their concerns to the Board of Education regarding the San Diego City Schools standardized testing program and the reporting of test scores, in particular its impact on the minority students. The Urban League asked that a citizen's committee on testing be formed to examine both good and bad aspects of existing testing programs in the district and to make recommendations for change.

In response to this request a planning committee was formed, including a representative of Urban League, to make recommendations for the membership and functions of a Citizen's Advisory Committee on Pupil Testing. Upon approval of recommendations, invitations were extended to fifteen community organizations and twelve certificated staff representatives forming the committee. Later on in May, in order to place greater emphases on the citizen role, some changes in the committee make-up and its voting procedure were made. The net effect of these changes was to create an all citizens committee that elected its own chairperson, changing district staff to non-voting resource consultants.

Functions or Charge of Committee

The functions of the committee as charged by Supt. Goodman were:

1. To review the district's standardized testing program and the impact of testing reports on communities within the district.

2. To study any proposed program changes designed to improve the validity of pupil performance measures, in general, and the fair reporting of minority pupil performance in particular.

3. To put questions of effectiveness to a practical test within the district, applying sound procedures of measurement and evaluation.

4. To make a progress report to Superintendent at the end of its first year of work based on this review and its findings and to make recommendations to the Superintendent as appropriate.

The committee also perceived its responsiblities as not strictly limited by these 4 functions.

Method of Committee

The Citizen's Advisory Committee on Pupil Testing, under Chairman Bob Russell, has met twice a month to carry out the assigned tasks. District staff who have appeared before the committee included principals and teachers from

elementary and junior highs; representatives from Programs Division, Evaluation Services, Multicultural Education, Compensatory Education, Early Childhood Ed., Bilingual Ed., psychologists and psychometrists from Student Services as well as a panel of students from junior high and local colleges.

Outside speakers have included the Dean of Education from San Francisco State and authorities from the State Department of Education and the McGraw-Hill Co. Additional resource people, representing divergent points of view, were denied the committee.

Barbara Kingston

BK:sg
4/14/77

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PUPIL TESTING

Considerable interest in test issues was demonstrated by this Advisory Committee and by the large number of individuals that came before the group in a long series of organized hearings which reflected growing concern in the community about testing. Educators and parents are equally concerned. It became evident early in committee deliberations that most educators have as much need to become informed about testing as do non-educators. Clearly, there are aspects of testing and testing programs of which some educators are not appreciably knowledgeable and there are testing functions for which there is disagreement among educators. These facts and other findings gave rise to general speculation regarding the soundness of the state's and district's testing program, especially as the program relates to schools with large minority pupil populations. Specific recommendations contained in this report address such concerns as well as those of a more general nature.

While the committee did not conclude that it should call for a strict moratorium on Standardized Tests, it is unequivocal in its insistence that the district immediately embark on a test reform program which specifically addresses problems relating to the education of minority pupils, as well as those concerns relating to the testing of all students regardless of racial/ethnic identification or socio-economic status.

Findings and conclusions of the committee fall into several specific categories. They are: (1) Administration and Coordination of Testing; (2) Knowledge of Testing Methods and Procedure; (3) Use of Tests; (4) Utilization of Test Results; (5) Correlation of Tests and Curriculum; (6) Benchmarks for Improvement in Pupil Achievement; (7) Fulfillment of Test Purpose and Functions; (8) Political Implications of Testing; and (9) Publication and Dissemination of Test Results.

It is our firm belief that there is a fundamental value in the organized participation of citizen advisory groups in the investigation of testing and testing issues. Such investigation must lead to actions which are designed to insure against misuse of tests and test results, and to assure the creation of new policies, new and more humane test measures, improved guidelines and controls, and alternate ways to make judgments about learning. The committee's recommendations, when implemented, can meaningfully serve pupils, the schools and the community.

We recommend that board and staff give the contents of this report their immediate and full attention.

AB:sg
4/14/77

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PUPIL TESTING

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS*

April 14, 1977

FINDINGS

1. The statements of teachers, counselors, site administrators and students consistentlyindicated that there is insufficient uniformity in the preparation of students and teachers for the testing program or the reporting and utilization of the test results in the schools throughout the District. There is inadequate coordination in this regard.

RECOMMENDATION

A. Prior to any large scale testing program within the District, the site administrator shall review the testing procedures with teachers who are to administer tests so that the correct procedure given in the testing manual is followed.

FINDINGS

2. Statement of district representatives indicates that there is insufficient coordination among the testing and curriculum development units and the individual schools on the utilization of the test results to improve the curriculum and the effectiveness of the instructional program at individual schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

B. The District establish a formal administrative and academic mechanism for incorporating test results into curriculum and instructional methods and assign these functions to a specific division.

C. Upon receipt of test results, the site administrator shall interpret test results to the teaching staff.

D. Teachers and counselors shall interpret test results to their students. Students should receive verbal statements of strengths and weaknesses rather than numbers.

E. Current test results shall be compared with previous test results so that a student may learn of his/her improvement or lack of improvement. When too little improvement is made, a prescriptive program shall be established so that improvement in performance can be achieved.

F. The site administrator shall assure that his teachers are teaching toward the achievement of the goals and objectives of the curriculum guide.

*Recommendations have been repeated when they address more than one finding. The letters in parentheses before each recommendation refer to the label first used with each statement.

FINDINGS

3. Although there were indications that the District does make adjustments in its curriculum and instructional program to reverse decreases in the districtwide averages on tests, there is no evidence that the District has devoted similar efforts to improve the test scores of the schools scoring in the lowest one-third regardless of the geographic area.

There were no indications that the District has established goals and time tables for the improvement in the scores of those schools scoring in the lowest one-third.

RECOMMENDATIONS

G. The District shall establish a formal public plan with goals and time tables for the improvement of test performances of each school in the district. Such plan should span a three-year period. Achievement of this plan shall be the explicit responsibility of the site administrator.

H. The District shall examine high achieving schools for exemplary practices and develop instructional programs based on these findings for use in lower-achieving schools.

(B) The District shall establish a formal administrative and academic mechanism for incorporating these findings into curriculum and instructional methods and assign this function to a specific division.

FINDINGS

4. All district representatives including counseling staff stated that norm-referenced tests are not adequate measures of what students know and that they should be used in conjunction with other measures in evaluating and counseling students.

RECOMMENDATION

I. The District shall identify and use a more complete and valid battery of measures of a student's knowledge.

FINDINGS

5. Under present credentialing laws, teacher candidates are not required to take courses in test and measurements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

J. The district shall mandate in-service training for teachers in tests and measurements which includes the impact of cultural and ethnic factors on test performance.

K. The district shall encourage teacher training institutions to require a course in tests and measurements for all teacher candidates.

L. The Board of Education shall recommend to the State Legislature that current credentialing laws be changed to require a course in tests and measurements for public school teachers.

FINDINGS

6. All district representatives and consultant test experts stated that the CTBS and CAP tests should be considered relatively free of cultural bias and valid measures of the basic skills the California State Board of Education and the District consider essential to all academic work. However, the executive from a leading test publishing company stated that he advertised in a local newspaper(Monterey, California) for unemployed teachers to apply for jobs to construct test items for standardized tests. This technique in selection might reflect a class or cultural bias.

RECOMMENDATION

(J) The district shall mandate in-service training for teachers in tests and measurements which includes the impact of cultural and ethnic factors on test performance.

FINDINGS

7. Regarding the stated "Purposes and Functions of the District's Standardized Testing Program" dated April 29, 1976, considerable evidence was received that two of the functions were not being adequately met at many of the schools. These two functions were:

Item 3. Provide teachers with an assessment of individual pupil's achievement in the Basic Skills areas based upon standardized tests to aid in the improvement of instruction through further diagnosis and/or counseling with pupils and parents relative to classroom achievement, attitudes, work habits, etc.

Item 4. Provide counselors with achievement test results to use in conjunction with classroom achievement, teacher recommendations, etc. for placement in advanced and remedial classes; and as additional information in guidance and counseling with pupils relative to programming needs and educational planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(C) Upon receipt of test results, site administrators shall interpret test results to their teaching staff.

(D) Teachers and counselors shall interpret test results to their students. Students should receive verbal statements of strengths and weaknesses rather than numbers.

(E) Current test results shall be compared with previous test results so that a student may learn of his/her improvement or lack of improvement. When too little improvement is made, a perscriptive program be established so that improvement in performance can be achieved.

FINDINGS

8. Reporting of scores by schools has a demoralizing effect on staff and community in schools with low percentile rankings and in schools where scores are below expectancy levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

M. To encourage balanced, accurate reporting of test scores:

a) the District shall formally present the test results (with statements of explanation and interpretation) to the Board of Education at a public meeting and to the news media at a formal press conference, and

b) the District shall encourage the news media to report percentage of questions answered correctly with more emphasis than it reports percentile ranking for individual schools.

c) the Board of Education shall request that the State Department of Education publish test score information in a manner more easily understood by the public.

FINDINGS

9. The reliance of funding agencies, legislators, and segments of the general public on test results as a principal component of their assessment of the effectiveness of educational programs is a major reason for the continued use of standardized tests.

RECOMMENDATION

N. This over-reliance on norm-referenced standardized tests shall be deemphasized and other means of assessment such as criterion-referenced tests, performance by goals and objectives, accreditation, and subsequent performance and accomplishment of students be considered as part of the total evaluation process.

FINDINGS

10. When a student consistently does poorly on tests there are feelings of failure and frustration not only on the part of the pupil, but of his parents and teachers as well. The school psychologists reported that feelings of failure generally lead to emotional and behavioral problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(H) The district shall examine high achieving schools for exemplary practices and develop instructional programs based on these findings for use in lower-acheiving schools.

O. A program of early screening of specific learning skills (perceptual and motor) shall be instituted for all K-1 children so that pupils with various strengths and problems can be attended to in specific ways before they fall two grade levels behind.

FINDINGS

11. School psychologists reported that the bulk of their time at the school site is spent in assessing students for placement in special classrooms, most of which already have waiting lists, rather than in working with pupils with learning and emotional problems.

RECOMMENDATION

(O) A program of early screening of specific learning skills (perceptual or motor) shall be instituted for all K-1 children so that pupils with various strengths and problems can be attended to in specific ways before they fall two grade levels behind.

FINDINGS

12. Testimony indicates that the Educational Handicapped (EH) students in programs for more than half the regular day are exempt from testing. However, there are as many as 400 students who have qualified for EH classes but for whom there are no places. These EH qualified students are subjected to mandated testing.

RECOMMENDATION

P. All students who have qualified for EH classes shall be exempt from testing.

FINDINGS

13. All district and (expert) consultants stated that the inadequate instruction of students is a contributing factor to lower test scores.

RECOMMENDATION

(F) The site administrator shall assure that his teachers are teaching toward the achievement of the goals and objectives of the curriculum guide.

FINDINGS

14. Limited English-speaking and non-English-speaking students are required to take mandated tests after 10 months of instruction, regardless of the student's proficiency in English.

RECOMMENDATION

Q. The policy of testing of non-English-speaking children after 10 months shall be changed. The District shall recommend to the State Department of Education that students be exempt from mandated testing until their facility in English be established according to criterion-referenced tests.

FINDINGS

15. Test scores have social, economical and political consequences, regardless of whether they are good or poor measures of potential achievement (e.g., 6th grade CTBS results are used in tracking students in junior and to some extent senior high schools).

RECOMMENDATION

(N) This over-reliance on norm-referenced standardized tests shall be deemphasized and other means of assessment such as criterion-referenced tests, performance by goals and objectives, accreditation, and subsequent performance and accomplishment of students be considered as part of the total evaluation process.

SI:sg
4/14/77

NEWS SAN DIEGO URBAN LEAGUE, INC.

DATE: September 19, 1979

CONTACT:
Ambrose Brodus
263-1423

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

As we enter into this news conference today, which will address specific aspects of the San Diego Plan for Racial Integration and the issue of quality education in the 23 racially isolated schools, we deem it essential to restate our position that the Urban League is firmly committed to the belief that education is a vital variable in determining life-style options of Black Americans. We believe this firmly, and our actions at all times shall reflect this belief.

Since August 9, 1979, when the San Diego City School Board of Education approved an amendment to the Secondary Integration Program section of the San Diego Plan for Racial Integration, the Urban League has been deluged with calls from parents who, to this day, continue to express concerns about the implications of the board action to remove Magnet Programs from Morse, Lincoln and San Diego High Schools and Memorial Junior High, and to redesign the program at Morse, Lincoln and San Diego as "more limited career centers." These parents are raising questions too, about quality education in the 23 racially isolated schools. Needless to say, our staff has taken into account these concerns and have taken steps to review conditions as they exist and to make accessment of them.

While the magnet school concept has never been supported by the League as a most viable avenue to achieve integration, during the first year, our posture was generally one of watch it and see what happens. Fortunately, elementary magnets made a moderate but reasonably effective showing. An aggressive elementary administrator who handled the recruiting earned the credit for this achievement.

Regarding the concerns for the removal of secondary magnet programs from four minority isolated schools, the implication is that the Board of Education cares less about the feelings of Black parents and Black students than it does about the mechanics of planning to satisfy a court order. No where in this episode has adequate attention been given to the needs and aspiration of those black students who were enrolled and/or scheduled for enrollment in those magnet programs. In this regard, Judge Welsh must stand up and take a share of the criticism, for the boards' action in removing the magnets was based on suggestions made by the judge in his Memorandum Decision of July 27, 1979.

Since magnets are normally designed as high quality programs,

4261 MARKET STREET
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92

offering something of special value to students, the board action to remove these programs in questions was perceived by some black parents and the community in general as taking something of special value away from black students. Right or wrong, this perception exist. Efforts by district staff to help parents to understand the rationale for such change was a case of too little too late. Announcement of the change in programs was at the worst possible time. In Mid-August, few school administrators are available to provide information and counsel to parents who have the need to know.

The scheduling of limited career centers at these schools in the form of ROP courses, for the most part, leaves somethings to be desired. Most of the courses offered in this ROP group simply fail to provide adequate base for a group struggling to overcome years of deprivation and poor self-concept. Courses like child care development, food production services, recreation services, restaurant occupations, nursing assistant and exercise technicians are hardly the bases for building of good self esteem. The inclusion of such a large percent of courses like these in the "limited career centers" programs reflect a mentality that was present in the first planning of the Urban Studies magnet at Morse. That magnet was poorly conceived from the start and white students were never really encouraged to try the program. While the board may have had good intentions in approving this program, it is clear to us that efforts to enroll white students in the Morse magnet were short circuited down the line by site administrators and counselors who failed to take adequate steps to sell the program to white parents and students.

The probable effects of the school board action in removing magnets from Morse, Lincoln, Memorial and San Diego High are as follows:

1. Limit quality programs.
2. Reduce further the chance of enrolling white students from majority schools, thereby encouraging isolation of minorities.
3. Increase the number of minority students leaving these schools to attend VEEP, as recruiting efforts are likely to be stepped up among students at these schools.
4. Increase the brain drain on these minority isolated schools and cause school test scores in these schools to decline.
5. Reduce the capability of these schools to compete academically with other schools.
6. Increase potential for closing the schools, for under utilization.

Urban League staff share these perceptions as delineated here. Someone must take desirable steps to correct the real conditions which exist and demonstrate by sound action the intent to be fair and equitable in the design and implementation of integration programs. The school district and the court must share in this responsibility. The Urban League consistently demonstrates its willingness to serve

in promoting integration and quality education programs.

The question of quality education in predominately minority schools is an issue that is about as old as the district itself. Most parents accept the fact that test scores reflect generally on the quality of education in a given school. White parents and black parents alike look at school test results as an indication of what teachers, counselors and administrators are doing with students in a school. While we recognize that test scores don't tell all that is going on in a given school, we do know that predominately minority schools score consistantly lower on all standardized achievement test, including the California Survey of Basic Skills, California Test of Basic Skills and the California State Reading Test, than non-minority schools. That this is the case, is always of great concern to us, as well as to parents in the community. In studying this phenomena of test results in San Diego City Schools, we have arrived again at some conclusions. They are as follows:

Many of the 23 racially isolated schools now have good site administrators who believe in themselves. their staff and the students whom they serve. These administrators have pride in their work and they have learned from experience how to be effective with students. They have learned that while all students will learn, they don't all learn at the same pace. Such staff fully understand how to work meaningfully with parents. Parents are made to feel welcome in the successful schools. These conditions have not always existed.

The school that is experiencing new success in terms of pupil achievement is usually the one whose staff: (1) is confident in his/her ability; (2) has pride in work; (3) has strong administration who is not afraid to take new steps to achieve goals on behalf of students and parents; (4) is competent, and (5) highly humanistic in approach to educating students.

Schools who fit these standards are: Bell and Memorial Junior High SChools, Horton, Webster, Johnson and Chollas Elementary. There are several other schools who are gradually moving to this level, both elementary and secondary.

With regard to course offerings at local schools, of major concern to us is the fact that in too many instances minority students are not enrolled in the essential courses in junior and senior high schools. Too often the higher levels of math, english and science are not available to these students.

Some administrators don't take it upon themselves to promote the advance courses of English and Math. Counselors too often give up on encouraging students to enroll in algebra and geometry and students are permitted to take subjects which are considered to be easier. Parents, likewise are due for some criticism as some don't insist that the student take "harder" courses.

The school district must permit schools to offer all levels of math, english and science, as well as foreign languages even if only 6 or 8 students are enrolled. When schools take the posture that everyone benefits when the best and most demanding courses are offered in every school without regard to the number of students enrolled in the course, and when school staff begin to demonstrate the kind of posture that is shown at Bell and Memorial we will be on our way to achieving a higher quality of education in minority isolated schools.

9/19/79/vg