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REPORT OF THE MINORITY EDUCATION TASK FORCE

The METF focused on the quality of education in the twenty-three minority isolated schools as the most important step in the process of integrating San Diego City Schools. The Committee spent the year collecting and analyzing information to develop recommendations in response to the Court's charge to "monitor, analyze and evaluate the quality and methods of education in all minority isolated schools and recommend steps that should be undertaken to make certain that in all such schools, the quality of education is at a superior level and that all children are inspired to achieve". This report contains those recommendations. We want it to be clear to the Court that embodied in each recommendation is the feeling that the task of improving the image of the minority isolated schools relative to quality education can be achieved.

It is important to note that the METF describes quality education somewhat differently from what is normally heard. It is our conclusion that the staffs at the minority isolated schools are doing just as good a teaching job as staffs at non-isolated schools; in some instances they are probably doing a better job. However, the needs of the students at the minority isolated schools differ somewhat from the needs of students at the non-isolated schools. We find that it is the needs that must be identfied and understood and the teaching process directed toward thoses needs. Therefore, we describe quality education in the context of the curriculum, teachers, teaching methods and other resources, and their use in meeting the needs of the students. Identification of those needs might show that certain students need remedial instruction in reading and math, or that additional hours during the school day spent on reading and math are needed. It might also be revealed that parental and home contact are needed or that more and better motivational techniques are needed. It needs to be determined whether those things presently being done by the district should be increased, modified, or eliminated. We are making reference to students' readiness level when they enter school - the amount of exposure to materials and situations during the pre-school years that prepare some children for school better than others.

We find that in measuring quality education in a given school, the achievement test score is much too narrow a measure of staff competence and commitment. The most competent and committed school staff could be producing a majority of students who achieve low test scores if the majority of students attending that school need to develop the fundamental skills of reading, math and communications. The reason we are so upset with the low test scores is because they reflect the failure of our schools to fulfill the primary responsibilities for which they were hired.

Our statement earlier in reference to improving the image of the minority isolated schools relative to quality education was phrased in that manner intentionally. We purposely avoided language which spoke to the improvement of quality education. We discovered that, when speaking of racially isolated schools, quality education means to most San Diegans that children cannot receive a "good" education at those schools. We conclude that that is more fiction than fact and is the result of a negative and inaccurate perception of Southeast San Diego schools. This perception is created by test score results and the image of violence. We have found that the incidents of violence in the schools show no relationship to school integration.

We have also found that there are many students attending schools in Southeast San Diego who score high on the achievement tests. The irony of some students achieving high test scores while others score very low shows that we have dual systems operating at some of our racially isolated schools, if not all of them. Yet the one system, that which produced low test scores, is the one that is widely known and accepted by the public. So, the image of racially isolated schools is of much concern to us. The METF, in its interim report, expressed its anger and dissatisfaction with the disparity in test scores among the racially isolated schools and the non-racially isolated schools. We still feel just as angry and dissatisfied. However, the METF is very confident that the disparity can be removed with the implementation of an ambitious plan directed at achieving that purpose.

The following recommendations, based on the above remarks, are respectfully submitted with the confidence that their adoption will contribute to a more positive perception of the racially isolated schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The concept of the METF should be continued. We have found widespread support for pursuing the subject of quality education in the racially isolated schools and this should be a part of the charge to the Integration Task Force for the next year.

2. A report is to be submitted to the Court by the district, due August 1, 1980, listing the number of students ranked by school at the various levels of the achievement tests in reading and math in grades K through Six.

3. The district will submit to the Court by September 1, 1980, a plan which contains the study and methods of approach to a solution that addresses the needs of those students ranked below the national reading and math averages. The plan is to focus at the K through Sixth grades.

4. A report of each major incidence of violence that could be interpreted as harmful to the integration program is to be sent to the Integration Task Force for investigation. There is to be continuation and strong enforcement of the discipline code.

5. A plan is to be developed and implemented in the Fall of 1980 that projects the positive aspects of racially isolated schools. This plan should be submitted to the Court by September 1, 1980.

6. The Court should invite major companies and universities to adopt one or more of the 23 isolated schools. The business firms and the universities would work with the schools to assist in developing new programs or maintaining current ones in moving toward the goal of integration and a higher quality education. The business firms and universities would develop instruments or methods to evaluate the schools' progress with the various programs.

SUMMARY:

The METF feels strongly that the School Board should be responsible for installing a mechanism that establishes superior and objective improvements in the minority isolated schools. As a corollary, those who set policy must be responsible for the success or failure of those goals. The METF is very concerned about the School Board. The Committee feels that the Board is more concerned with the integration law suit than it is with integrating the schools and providing quality education to the district's students. In our interim report we expressed the feeling that the Board members were beginning to cooperate with the ITF and a closer relationship between the two was developing. At this writing the Committee has no evidence to suppoort that judgment. In the interim report the Committee was concerned with the district's low credibility in the minority communities and the use of its pollster. At the time of this writing the Committee has not received any evidence from the Board that it is seriously giving thought to any of the above concerns. There was, however, a reaction to those concerns by one of the Board members. The ITF was pleased to receive from the Board member his written ideas as to how our concerns might be translated into constructive action. There was overwhelming support for those ideas among the ITF members and a motion was passed to support the Board member's recommendations to the Board. That action was subsequently reconsidered and postponed until the Board had an opportunity to respond to the recommendations. The intent of the postponement was to prevent giving the impression that we were attempting to pressure the Board. At a Board meeting held June 3, 1980, the Board member presented his three recommendations to the Board and all three were defeated by a 3 - 2 vote. There is a deep concern and agonizing frustration with the lack of Board and administration leadership and enthusiasm in integration and quality education efforts.