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Progress Report of the Minority Education Task Force

February, 1980

This report is intended to briefly explain the activities the METF has engaged in thus far while attempting to fill the Judge's charge pertaining to quality education in the designated racially isolated schools. To state what is obvious to all who participate in the struggle to determine where there is and where there is not quality education in schools, this is a most arduous and complex task.

Getting started, as is true in most cases, was difficult. Our first act, was to arrange a meeting with the principals of the racially isolated schools for the purpose of explaining our charge and soliciting their assistance and cooperation. Judging from the comments of some of the principals, the meeting was a success and went a long way in developing a cooperative relationship. The principals expressed a desire to meet with us again.

We spent a considerable amount of time attempting to define "quality education" and developing indicators that would help us measure the quality of education. After developing such a list, we abandoned it in favor of focusing on one of the indicators included on the list. As a result of much thinking and discussion, we decided that the low test scores at the racially isolated schools demanded immediate attention, particularly the reading scores. Three members of the METF steering committee were assigned to visit the isolated schools and discuss the topic of test scores with the principals. The purpose was to develop

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more insight into why the scores at the isolated schools were at the bottom. After several visits to schools, it was decided that the information we were getting was not helping to increase our insight. We aborted the visits, and decided on a different approach. At a steering committee meeting there was a unanimous expression of anger with the continued, year after year results of the disparity in test scores among the racially isolated and non-racially isolated schools. It was decided that the school board members should be contacted and our feelings regarding this issue be articulated. It was decided that the request should be made to the school board to place this issue at the top of its priority list and charge the superintendent with the responsibility to raise those scores. At the time of this writing, a meeting has been held with all but one of the board members. The meetings have been very productive, with each member appearing to share our concern and eagerness to bring about some results on the test score matter. We shall meet with the final board member in the near future.

Another decision that was made was not to use monitors in the process to evaluate quality education. It was felt that in such a complex task as this, we were not equipped, with the amount of time available, to train monitors to be effective in this area. Our conclusions will be based on information provided by task force members and the Court's consultants.

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One method of obtaining information relative to quality education is in progress. A survey has been made of teachers presently and previously located at the isolated schools. questionnaires were sent out, were returned (%). The data are being analyzed and interpreted.

During the course of our investigation into the reasons for the low test scores at the isolated schools, we have made some preliminary findings.

1) The staffs at the isolated schools are as competent, dedicated and enthusiastic as the staffs of the non-isolated schools.

2) There appears to be no disproportion of learning materials between isolated and non-isolated schools.

3) The isolated schools do not receive less operating funds than the non-isolated schools. In fact, some of the isolated schools receive more funds.

These findings add to the complication of this issue. If adequate resources are available at the isolated schools, then why are the test scores low? As we proceed in our investigation, we will involve ourselves with reading scores most heavily. Things such as teacher expectation, time on task and the test themselves will be addressed.