

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 038 827

EC 005 659

TITLE The Six-Hour Retarded Child. A Report on a Conference on Problems of Education of Children in the Inner City (Warrentown, Virginia, August 10-12, 1969).

INSTITUTION President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, D.C.

SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.

PUB DATE [69]

NOTE 36p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.25 HC-\$1.90

DESCRIPTORS \*Disadvantaged Youth, \*Educational Needs, \*Exceptional Child Education, Inner City, \*Mentally Handicapped, Urban Education

ABSTRACT

A conference on problems of education of children in the inner city considered the functionally retarded child. Recommendations and suggestions for action were made concerning early childhood education, the family, teaching, labeling, educational research, school responsibility, and community participation. (JD)

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**“We now have what may be called a 6-hour retarded child --retarded from 9 to 3, five days a week, solely on the basis of an IQ score, without regard to his adaptive behavior, which may be exceptionally adaptive to the situation and community in which he lives.”**

“It can only be through a concern for the value of life for all men that we will finally evolve a true equality of education and a truly equal society.”

Commissioner James E. Allen, Jr.

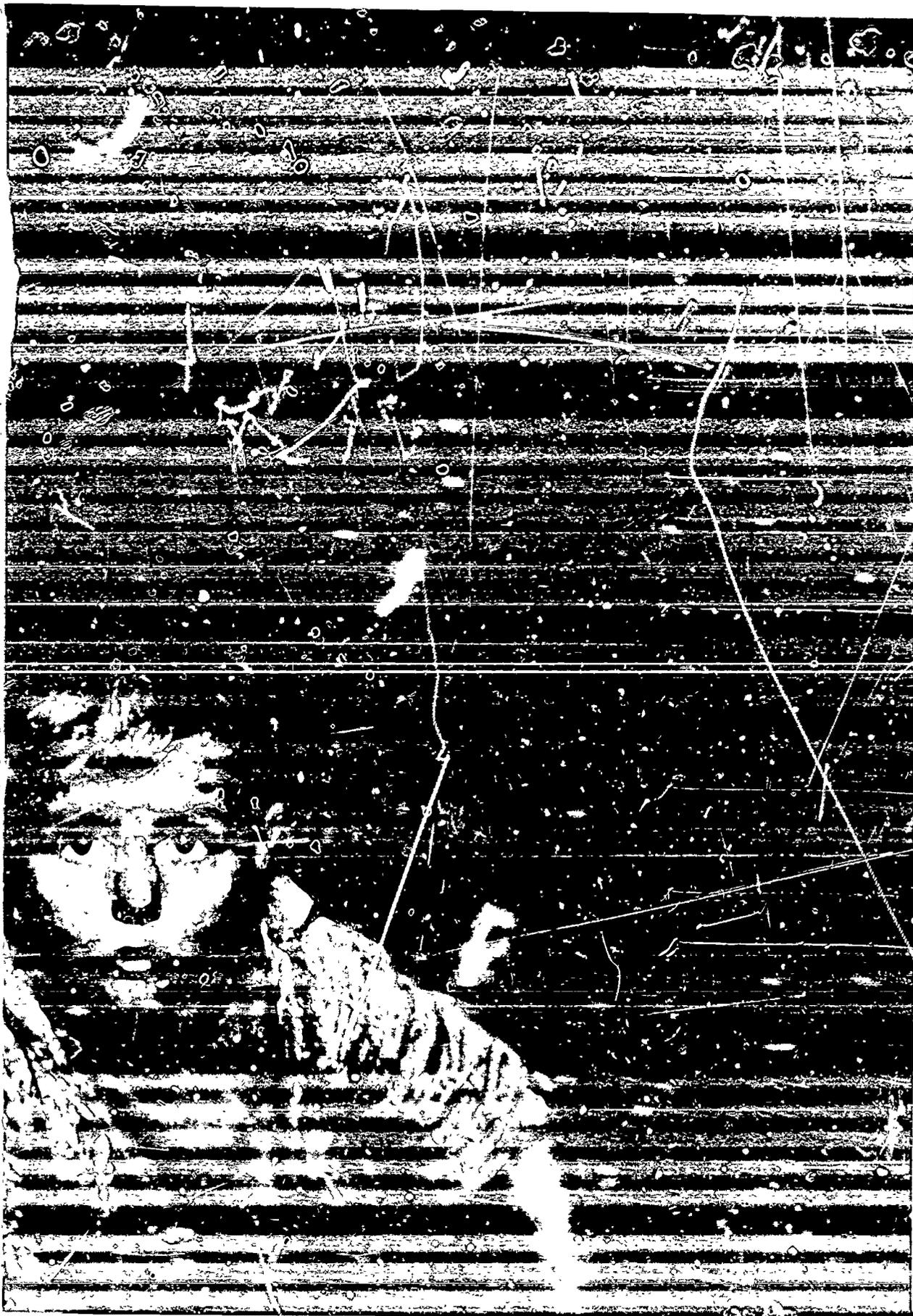


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The quotes used throughout are drawn from statements made by participants.

The position papers, quoted widely in this report, are published in their entirety in a separate publication which also includes the keynote speech of Commissioner of Education James E. Allen, and a fact sheet prepared by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. Copies are available without charge from The President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, D.C. 20201.





words of Isaiah:

You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.

**ROBERT H. FINCH**  
Chairman, PCMR

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We owe our first debt of gratitude to the 92 participants at the conference, each of whom offered a unique and valuable contribution. It is their views alone that this report attempts to present.

Instrumental in shaping the discussions were the three position papers distributed prior to the conference. We are sincerely appreciative of the insights and the scholarship of the authors. Drs. Wilson Riles, James O. Miller, and Edmund Gordon.\*

The logistics involved in bringing together such a varied group and the plans for a smooth operation were in the capable hands of Mr. Frank Y. Lynn, Miss Mary Kay, and Mr. [unclear].

With time and talent which provided the [unclear] of [unclear]

DAVID B. RAY, JR.  
Executive Director, PCMR



Within the last decade there has been a mass migration to the large cities. Among the "immigrants" are large numbers of low-income families from minority groups, whose children often fall further behind with each school year. A large number of these children score low enough on individual tests of intelligence to be classified as mentally retarded. They are sometimes called functionally retarded to distinguish them from those who, presumably, would have been retarded regardless of environment. The latter are sometimes called organically retarded even when there is no evidence of organic deficit.

The production of so many functionally retarded children by our society raises disturbing questions: Do we need more Special Education that is designed for the retarded? Do we need more of the same kind of education these children have been getting in the regular classroom? What is the role of the schools in a society beset by racism, poverty, alienation, and unrest? Are fundamental changes needed?

The overriding issue narrows down to one basic question: How do we improve the quality of education—and the quality of life—in the inner city?

The apparent answer is, of course, the immediate appropriation of funds to enable communities quickly to enhance their education programs. But the solution involves even more than money, as the eloquent testimony of the participants will show in this document.

It was a concern for these problems that prompted the President's Committee on Mental Retardation and the Office of Education's Bureau of Education for the Handicapped to call a conference on "Problems of Education of Children in the Inner City."

Representatives of all levels of education—college presidents, teacher aides, heads of departments of education, public-school teachers, administrators, parents, psychologists, sociologists, and Federal officials came together for three days to seek solutions.

"The educational system," said one educator at the conference, "must become relevant to all sectors of the population and prepare children to cope effectively with a rapidly changing society. This is more than a challenge, it is an educational imperative."

The response to that imperative is presented on the following pages.

*Leonard W. Mayo*

LEONARD W. MAYO  
Conference Chairman

**“We have got to stop talking as if money is not available. It is. It is about time that the educators of the country begin to name the priorities.”**

## THE CONFERENCE

It did not begin as a comfortable conference. It was not intended that it should.

"This is a long way from the inner city," said one participant Sunday night, as he checked into his room with a view of the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains beyond Air-lie Farm.

There were skeptics who feared the conference would change nothing. There were others who feared it would change too much.

Ph.D.'s, teachers, school administrators, Federal officials and inner city citizens, Black, Brown (Mexican-Americans), White, from big and little cities across the country met and smiled at one another politely while each wondered if the other really understood the problem.

There were anxieties about the purpose of the conference. Was the topic mental retardation or inner-city children with serious educational problems? What is the relationship of Special Education to regular education? Is this conference confined to the problems of the black, urban poor? Then what about Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and poverty-stricken white children in Appalachia—or right in those Blue Ridge Mountains?

In the beginning the 92 participants had but one common source of reference: Position papers written by experts in their fields which were sent out prior to the conference as springboards for discussion.

All had arrived infused with the facts and philosophies offered by the

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authors, Dr. Wilson Riles, Associate Superintendent and Chief, Division of Compensatory Education, California State Department of Education; Dr. James O. Miller, Director, National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education, Urbana, Illinois; and Dr. Edmund W. Gordon, Chairman, Guidance Department, Teachers College, Columbia University.

From Dr. Riles' paper they had learned that in California "the disadvantaged child falls further and further behind, at the rate of three months for every school year." They knew this fact was mirrored throughout the country.

Old concepts were jolted when Dr. Riles pointed out that in California "the rate of placement of Spanish surname children in special education is about three times higher than for Anglo children; the Negro rate is close to four times higher than the Anglo rate. . . . The question must be raised: To what extent are children classified as mentally retarded when the true nature of their learning disabilities stems from environmental factors?"

"The poor and the alienated are no longer willing to accept the status quo," wrote Dr. Riles. "They are demanding what any middle-class parent would have demanded long ago if his child did not seem to be getting anything out of the educational system. They are demanding an accounting and a change in the system to make it more relevant to their [children's] needs."

Introducing an historical prespec-

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tive, Dr. Miller documented the social revolution and technological development following World War II. "But technological development and affluence," he stated, "etched a much sharper picture in the contrast between skilled and unskilled, both socially and economically. . . . The accumulated educational deficit of a significant number of the population came sharply into focus. . . ."

"Equality of educational opportunity, a civil right, was a hollow victory indeed for the individual, if doors were closed to him because environmental circumstances had failed to provide the necessary support to insure educational success."

We are just becoming aware of the scope of the "dynamic social revolution in the United States," in Dr. Miller's opinion. "The student revolts are a direct response to the intransigence of the educational system to social reality."

He sees society finding one answer in early childhood education "as a constructive alternative to a mass sit-in on the educational system."

Dr. Gordon reviewed the often contradictory literature on educability of diverse people. "Educability," wrote Dr. Gordon, "has been defined less by the actual potentials of persons and more by the level of society's demand for people capable of certain levels of function."

Reviewing the trends in ever-broadening concepts of educability, Dr. Gordon brought history up to the

present by writing that now "the demand is made for education of high quality, where possible, on an ethnically integrated basis. However, where segregation exists (and it does exist for the great majority of ethnic minorities in this country) the demand increases for control of those schools serving such children, by groups indigenous to the cultures and communities in which they live. Hence the demand for 'black schools run by black people'."

It was these papers, as much as the unique experience which each participant brought with him, that set the stage for the conference. Their total impact will be seen later, as other pertinent portions of the papers formed the backdrop for many of the recommendations that came out of the meeting.

**A**t the opening session on Monday, Conference Chairman Leonard Mayo, Professor of Human Development, Colby College, Maine, sounded the keynote. In reference to the handicapped—handicapped by retardation, poverty, race, color—he said: "The people we once rejected as a drag on society are now showing us a wisdom and giving us a knowledge that enables us to understand ourselves better, and to understand how we can effectively deal with the problems of all humans in society."

"The stone rejected by the builder has become the headstone of

the corner,' " he quoted from the Scriptures.

U.S. Commissioner of Education, James E. Allen, Jr., furthered the theme. "It can only be through a concern for the value of life for all men that we will finally evolve a true equality of education and a truly equal society."

He said that although many children from the slums score low on intelligence tests and that their academic achievement is comparably low, "we doubt that it all is due to low intellectual ability."

"Despite the uncertainties of how and why learning does or does not take place," Commissioner Allen said, "one thing is clear: No child can be expected to learn satisfactorily in a hostile environment.

"We are gravely concerned with the thought of children growing up in an environment ridden with health hazards," he said, "where rodents carry disease from house to house, where infectious diseases are unchecked, where malnutrition is a way of life.

"We should be equally concerned with impoverished and dangerous educational environments; where discouragement is a way of life and the infectious diseases of apathy and disinterest interfere with normal educational growth and development."

Commissioner Allen pointed out the accomplishments in mental retardation as a result of the Report of the President's Panel on Mental Retardation. He concluded by telling

the conference that we need a new perspective, this time focusing on the problems of the mentally retarded living within the ghettos of our great cities. He said, "we need a new set of recommendations, a new set of challenges and new goals for tomorrow. We are looking to this Committee and this meeting to give us these new challenges."

The Commissioner pledged the strong support of the Office of Education for programs in urban education, citing the fact that it is of the highest concern to the Administration at this time. And he promised serious attention to the recommendations made in the conference.

Dr. James Gallagher, former Associate Commissioner of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, and recently named Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Office of Education, said he hoped this would not be just another conference on the inner-city problems, but "part of a process" to reach decisions.

Suggesting the problem-solving approach, he cited a problem presented to a group of children and the two styles with which they approached it. The problem was: What would happen if everybody in the world were born with three fingers and no thumb?

One category of youngsters gave these kinds of responses, he said: "We couldn't hold a spoon. Couldn't open a door. Couldn't play tennis. Couldn't play baseball. We couldn't drive a car. Everything would be terrible."

Another kind of youngster would give a very different answer: "We would have a number system to the base six instead of ten. We would have sliding doors instead of door-knobs. We would design a rudder for cars instead of a steering wheel. We would have a pushbutton society. There would be no more green thumbs; just green fingers."

He asked the group to choose the solution-seeking style in the conference, to come up with specific ideas about how things can be constructively changed. "We know what the problems are," Dr. Gallagher said. "How do you, in fact, provide for that noble goal of fitting the curriculum to the needs of each individual child?"

Mr. Mayo also put in a plea for constructive change and for reaching the heart of the matter quickly. "Let's not allow ourselves to get into petty squabbles about what Special Education is and who are the retarded," he said. "We know that every child in the inner city has special needs. If he isn't retarded organically, he is functionally in terms of his disadvantaged condition and his state of impoverishment. Let's change impoverishment to enrichment."

In the Monday morning session Dr. Riles gave a brief summary of his paper, concluding with this statement: "If there is a question as to whether you and I and all of our colleagues around the country fail to meet this challenge (of education problems of the inner city) with the mentally retarded or the disadvan-

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tagged for whatever reason, then the public schools simply are not going to survive. And if we don't meet the challenge, I don't think the public schools deserve to survive."

Dr. Miller sounded another kind of warning when he said he was disturbed by the underlying notion that there are absolute solutions. "The solutions we come up with today," he said, "are not the solutions for tomorrow." He asked for continuing innovations, and moving new knowledge into practical application, through the "on-line individual in the classroom" who is going to make the real difference with children.

As the opening session drew to a close, participants were assigned to the six highly diversified study groups, of about 15 members each, to explore the position papers and ultimately, on Tuesday, to come up with some recommendations.

In order to further discussion, Mr. Mayo gave participants an open-ended invitation to meet in the evening.

The study groups met on Monday afternoon and wrestled with the problems. By dinner time some felt concerned about a lack of progress, and a few decided to take Mr. Mayo up on his invitation.

**M**onday night a number of blacks and browns (Mexican-Americans) gathered for an intensive session to draw up a set of recommendations. They worked late into the night and were back at work early Tuesday morning.

Breakfast that morning was a quiet affair. Not thirty feet away, the closeted ad hoc group pressed on to complete the job they had set for themselves.

As the regular study groups reconvened, the members of the ad hoc group rejoined them, bringing copies of a report of their deliberations and recommendations to be considered by all participants.

In the plenary session Tuesday afternoon, leaders presented the results of each group's work. Recommendations were remarkably similar. The black-brown report's influence was felt in every group. The recommendations were consolidated with others that came out of the original six study groups. (A report of the discussions and recommendations begins on page 7.)

When all the reports had been given, emotional relief permeated the air. Those who represented the educational system and those who were struggling to change that system found themselves to be allies in the same camp. There was now valid hope for constructive change, as "they" suddenly became "we".

Diverse views had merged into common agreement: The burden of failure lies with society and its institutions; not with the children.

The work groups concluded that the following are needed:

- Greatly expanded programs in early childhood education;
- Increased parent and child involvement in the educational system;

- Concurrent teacher, and administrative involvement in community and family life of the students;

- Major changes in teacher education and retraining with emphasis on sensitivity to each child's needs;

- Intensive use of associate professionals, such as teacher aides, etc., working with professionals;

- A thorough study and report on the strengths of inner-city families, exploring the positive aspects of those who do surmount the negative aspects of their environment;

- A zero-reject goal in the schools, which shifts the responsibility for failure from the child to the educational system;

- The reshaping of the curriculum to provide for an individualized and prescriptive approach to education, where possible.

- An examination of the use of intelligence tests in determining the mental ability of children and the consequent assigning of labels.

A recurring theme was that emphasis be placed on the child rather than on a classification. There was a consensus that many children now labeled retarded are "six-hour retardates," who are competently coping with their environment everywhere but for the six hours per day in the classroom. Only in the academic environment do these children function at the retarded level. Do these children become dropouts, participants asked, or pushouts from an often inflexible, irrelevant social system as reflected in their schools?

After the presentations, Dr. Leo Cain, President of California State College, Dominguez Hills, emphasized the interest of the President's Committee in education, and, he said, "You cannot separate a specific problem of education—like mental retardation—from the total school environment. . . . Special Education has made a very significant contribution to education. It has taken the leadership in providing services for many children who were never provided for before.

"But just as everything moves, and everything changes, Special Education and all education must move forward . . . must be creative, and must see if the program it has been operating in the past fits the present, and will fit the future."

It was the kind of conference that encouraged self-confrontation.

"I have had to reexamine a good many of my views," said a participant. "I have been functioning a good deal of the time in the last few years with a heavy sense of guilt because I know in a sense I am part of the white population living on the periphery of the inner city . . . consciously or unconsciously . . . responsible for its continuance and the maintenance of the status quo."

There was talk of accountability—not only of teachers, school administrators, parents, teacher trainers and the entire educational system, but also accountability to ourselves. Perhaps we should all analyze ourselves and our own motives and attitudes, it was said, as well as holding the schools accountable for edu-

cational failures.

Even the most skeptical seemed to have found something fresh and dynamic in the outcome of the conference, "with a feeling and an impact that I have not really felt in any conference before," as one man expressed it. Relationships as well as opinions had changed in those two days.

In conclusion, Mr. Mayo made a plea for continuing cooperation. "I emphasize again," he said, "how very much we need each other. How very tragic it is when there is diversity at the core. We can't afford not to disagree on the periphery. We cannot afford basically to disagree in terms of the fundamental objectives we seek.

"And we can never give up."

**A**s the participants walked away from the main Airlie House toward their rooms to pack for the trip home, they talked to one another as they had not done on that first night.

"I didn't know you had been a classroom teacher, too," one of the elementary school teachers said to a university department head in a tone of pleased discovery. And they talked about their common hopes for something constructive that would come out of the conference for the children they both knew.

"I feel good about this conference," the young black man said to nobody in particular and to the world in general. "They listened."

"We all listened to one another," someone else added. "That's the point. And we all grew a little, together."

"I'm glad we came here," said one who had been a little bitter at the contrast between the inner city and the "outer city," as he termed it. "Maybe drawing apart from the sights and the sounds and the smells of the slums has given us a perspective we never would have gained in the middle of Harlem or Watts or Newark. This is good."

It was now clear that one consideration cut across the diversity of people and interests and experience—a basic concern for children.

The concern had started with the mentally retarded child. It had spread to the inner-city deprived child who is black—then to brown, red, white children who are living in poverty—and finally to encompass all children.

**“In light of what we have heard in this conference, we must rethink many of the things we have taken for granted.”**



## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION**

In the final, plenary session of the conference, each work group presented a set of recommendations and suggestions for action. The unanimity expressed in the recommendations made it possible to combine them in one presentation in this report.

Quotes from position papers, speakers, and participants trace the development of each recommendation, and the rationale behind it.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

**Provide early childhood stimulation, education, and evaluation as part of the continuum of public education.**

### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

**Conduct a study of histories of successful inner-city families who have learned to cope effectively with their environment.**

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

**Restructure education of teachers, administrators, counselors. Retrain those now in the field.**

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

**Reexamine present system of intelligence testing and classification.**

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

**Commit substantial additional funding for research and development in educational improvement for disadvantaged children and youth.**

### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

**Thoroughly delineate what constitutes accountability, allocate sufficient funds to carry out the responsibility entailed and hold the school accountable for providing quality education for all children.**

### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

**Involve parents, citizens and citizen groups, students, and general and special educators in total educational effort.**



## **RECOMMENDATION 1**

**Provide early childhood stimulation, education, and evaluation as part of the continuum of public education.**

**ACTION** – Establish multi-service centers for prenatal care, infant care and day care, emphasizing education, with pediatric, psychological, psychiatric and other diagnostic services on a continuing basis. An integral part would be a parent education program to aid in the development of sound parent-child relationships. These centers would be community oriented and would be for all children.

“If the educational decade of the sixties is remembered for its student revolts on university and college campuses, it must also be remembered for the unprecedented awakening of interest and commitment to early childhood education.

“While earlier conceptions saw growth and development occurring according to a fixed genetic pattern and pace in a closed system, the evidence now seems to point to growth and development being an interacting process between the individual's genetic endowment and



his environmental circumstances in an open system. This new conception will have a profound effect upon child rearing and educational practices in the development of a competent and productive citizenry."

—DR. JAMES O. MILLER

"Is it possible that we are so awed by the complex psychological constructions of learning and cognition that we have overlooked some of the simpler principles of human development?"

—DR. JAMES E. ALLEN, JR.

"If we can get youngsters who are in trouble early enough and if we are smart enough in diagnosing their problems and bringing appropriate services to them we can save ourselves a tremendous amount of time, energy and funds."

—PARTICIPANT

"Research is accumulating to indicate that meaningful early sensory-motor experiences can prevent functional retardation by the time the child is ready for school. During the child's early developmental years he

passes through significant critical periods when the need to learn is at its optimum. With the passing of certain critical periods, learning then becomes more difficult. For example, during the first three years of life the child, with adequate environmental stimulation learns concepts which relate to the concrete and physical objects in his immediate world. With continued experience, he learns how things function (or functional concepts) and with significant stimulation he begins to understand abstract concepts."

—PARTICIPANT

**Conduct a study of successful inner-city families who have learned to cope effectively with their environment.**

**ACTION**—Discover the methods by which they were able to achieve upward mobility and present a pattern that can be emulated by others with similar handicaps in similiar sociological environmental situations. Offer models of successful inner city minority families and the characteristics they possess and have acquired.

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"It is probably true that adverse conditions of life do not facilitate academic achievement in most children, but we have no firm evidence that such conditions preclude academic success. In fact, there are sufficient cases of success despite adverse conditions to make untenable the conclusion that difficult life circumstances prevent success in school. Insufficient attention has been given to the fact that many 'normal' and well-functioning individuals have such adverse circumstances in their lives."

—DR. EDMUND W. GORDON

## **RECOMMENDATION 2**



"Early post-natal family training and education is needed along with early education for the child. These areas should not be separated."

—PARTICIPANT

"To deny the history of a people is to deny their humanity."

—PARTICIPANT

"Much of our knowledge concerning children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds has been drawn by inference from the wide literature on juvenile delinquency. Sensitive analysis of this literature leads to an awareness of several other characteristics of this population."

—DR. EDMUND W. GORDON

"As we think about the education of the child under five, we think about the social process going on in these communities in the inner city with respect to the family. Therefore, we should have studies of families who have been able to make it despite the odds stacked against them."

—PARTICIPANT





### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

#### **Restructure education of teachers, administrators, counselors. Retrain those now in the field.**

**ACTION**—All teacher-training institutions should continue to seek new models for preparing professional teachers who can individualize instruction and handle diversity.

- Reassess current licensing and certification requirements. This should contain an expansion of such programs to include associate professional personnel in education and healthy related programs.
- Assess the role of the associate professional within the educational enterprise with serious consideration to their upward mobility.
- Encourage the preparation of child development specialists and the utilization of associate professionals in this field.
- Provide prospective and current educational personnel with opportunities for obtaining teaching and work experience with urban and rural disadvantaged children. Colleges and universities, public schools, and State educational agencies should cooperate in developing more viable teacher preparation programs. Teacher education is an equal responsibility among these agencies.
- Emphasize a cooperative approach to teaching and working with service agencies in the community.

- Within teacher education programs, emphasize communication between general educators and special educators.

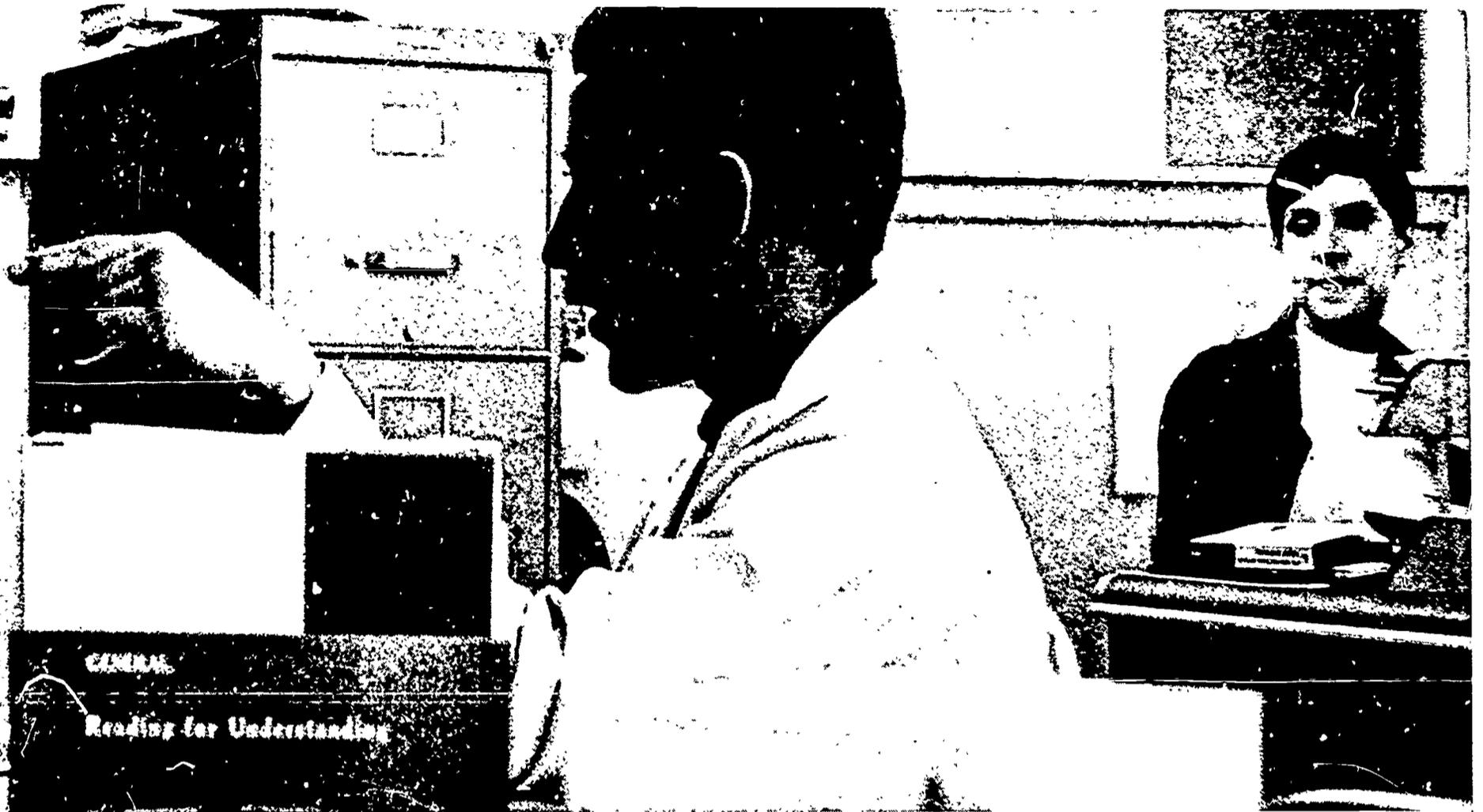
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“While there is no question of the concern and dedication of the people who have assumed classroom responsibilities, there is a definite question as to their ability to design and implement an instructional curriculum. . . . Nurturance . . . an active endeavor requiring skill and knowledge of the significant adults in contact with the child.”

—DR. JAMES O. MILLER

“There are many good reasons for improving the living conditions of the disadvantaged; there is certainly no good excuse for an affluent society to fail to do so, but a concern on the part of the school for changing poor conditions of life should not substitute for a primary concern with the improvement of the teaching-learning process.”

—DR. EDMUND GORDON



"Most of our large training institutions are quite removed from the inner city. Now there is something new on the horizon—the community college—which offers a tremendous opportunity to move the training of people into a more relevant context."

—DR. JAMES O. MILLER

"It is time to do a very careful analysis of the purposes served by certification. Much is lost by too rapid a movement toward prescription of requirements. Preservice preparation is only the beginning to the task of establishing and creating teacher competence. Many factors enter into the equation. The match between the teacher's experience and the children she must teach, personality adjustments to supervisors and colleagues play important roles in developing competence. Simply establishing that an individual is prepared to teach is only one step in certifying teacher competence. . . . They need desirable working conditions, career patterns and differentiated levels of compensation."

—DR. JAMES O. MILLER

"Crucial to the success of a city school system in meeting the concerns of disadvantaged communities is a change in personnel policy and practice. It is common practice in many school districts for the inexperienced teachers and administrators to be placed in the ghetto area schools. Then, if they survive a few years, they are promoted 'up the hill.' Often this is not due to design, but to a seniority system where the experienced teachers are given their choice of assignment, leaving the younger teachers with no choice but to take what is left—usually the 'difficult' schools. In the case of school principals, a common practice is to move them around the school district to different schools as training prior to promotion to the front office.

"If we are to solve the educational problems of our ghettos, we cannot leave the selection of principals and teachers in those areas up to chance. We must recognize that not all principals and teachers, even good ones, have the temperament and skills to work effectively with children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. School personnel must be assigned on the basis of their ability to function in a specific situation."

—DR. WILSON RILES

"In early childhood education, we have the opportunity to experiment with a number of career development patterns which could demonstrate advancement in competency without promoting the teacher out of the classroom. Certification should reflect identification of levels of competence so that compensation can be made in terms of differentiated teaching roles and responsibilities rather than simply length of service. With flexible and differentiated certification, steps should be taken to implement the standards at a national level. Perhaps the chief responsibility for certification should be in the hands of the professional organizations which would act for the legal regulatory agencies at the local and state levels."

—DR. JAMES O. MILLER

"If we can have an extension of the university in Paris or Madrid, we can have it in the community where the schools are."

—PARTICIPANT

"Teacher education is also a primary function of the school system."

—DR. LEO CAIN

**Reexamine  
present system of  
intelligence testing  
and classification.**

**RECOMMENDATION 4**

**ACTION**—Limit designation of mentally retarded to those who do not show a significant increase in either intellectual or adaptive behavior normal for age in spite of various therapeutic attempts at correction of the problem (e.g. no “final diagnosis” until after remediation has been applied).

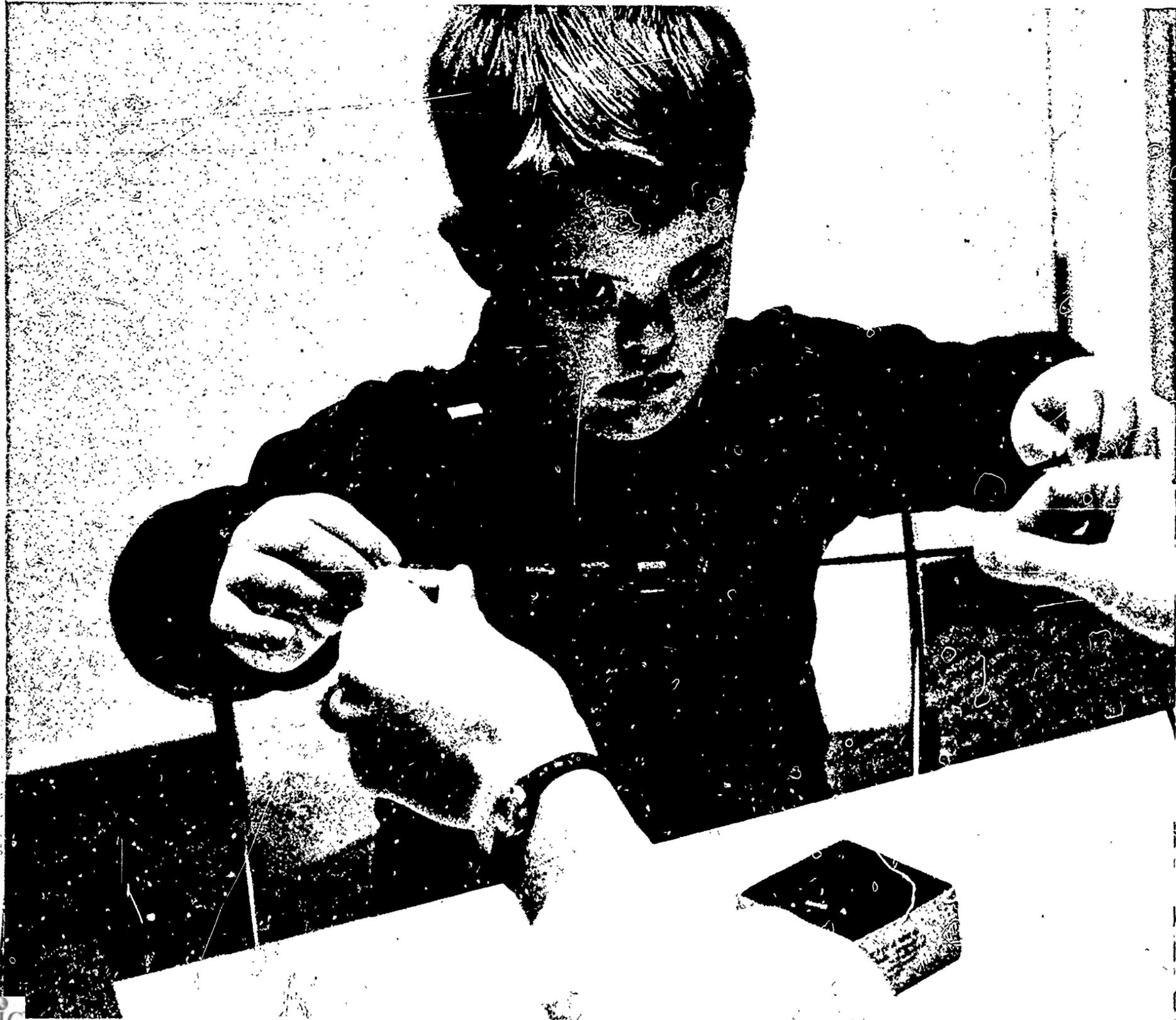
- Assess child’s behavior in home and neighborhood. Where adaptive behavior is not consonant with test score, child should not be labeled mentally retarded, but should be provided proper educational treatment.

- Assess child’s strengths so that appropriate planning and curriculum development can be provided, and instruction focused on strengths rather than weaknesses.

“Whereas something like less than three percent of the general population are now regarded as retarded, the population in the inner city and in severely disadvantaged rural areas shows a retardation prevalence—at least in learning and academic achievement—of something like twice that number.

“When youngsters from severely disadvantaged areas enter school, almost at that moment they begin dropping behind so that when the child from the disadvantaged area is a teenager, he is generally at least two years behind his more fortunate colleagues and friends who come from more advantaged areas, communities and families.

“. . . in many cases we are



placing a large number of children in so-called special classes either because they are unresponsive in the so-called regular classes, or because, according to the tests which we give them, it is indicated that they are retarded, and the tests we give them . . . are often more related to our world than to theirs."

—MR. LEONARD MAYO

"If the child—black or white or brown—is not very tidy, clothes a little tattered, if he is inarticulate in the English language, many teachers' first reaction is that the child must be mentally retarded."

—DR. WILSON RILES

"We know that many children living in ghetto neighborhoods would score low on intelligence tests, but we doubt that all such low scores reflect retarded intellectual ability.

"Recent definitions of mental retardation do not seem to imply so much a continuing but something more like a case of pneumonia, suggesting that a diagnosis is valid only at the time and under the circumstances existing when it is made.

"Is it possible that the term (mental retardation) is no longer of any value to an educator? Do we need to find a new concept of education for children with special needs—one which does not carry with it surplus meaning which is threatening to parents and detrimental to children?"

—DR. JAMES E. ALLEN, JR.

"The assessment of all children should include an assessment of the child's behavior in his home, and in his neighborhood. Where the adaptive behavior is not consonant with a test score, the child should not be labeled MR, however placement in a special class may be needed.

—PARTICIPANT

"Perhaps we have gone beyond now what we have been doing in the past, and that is, labeling by numbers. When we attach a number to a child we conveniently put him in a slot where we say a program has been devised to fit that particular number."

—DR. LEO CAIN



## **RECOMMENDATION 5**

### **Commit substantial additional funding for research and development in educational improvement for disadvantaged children and youth.**

**ACTION**—Assess existing programs within the organizational structure so that the best educational models may be perpetuated, with improved techniques for getting tested effective programs into the classroom as soon as possible.

- Increase longitudinal research to discover how children of various life styles learn, and how teachers and schools may encourage diverse learning styles.
- Demonstrate new and innovative models and improve coordination among agencies so that research findings of proven effectiveness may be applied quickly.
- Encourage constructive competition among schools and teachers who create imaginative and successful atmospheres for learning, and try to group children around teachers compatible with their personalities and learning styles.
- Encourage prescriptive teaching, non-graded schools, programs rather than classes, community teacher helpers (some of whom may be bilingual), part-time diagnostic teaching by master teachers, increased use of teacher aides, and increased use of the older students as tutors for younger ones.

“We need a national assessment system of educational systems, schools, and personnel. This would provide for the first time a consistent, comprehensive analysis of the educational system that nationally could be used to measure progress and determine priorities;—and locally could be used by administrators, the community and teachers for such things as to where to locate, what to expect, and what elements are required for major modification. Also, the availability of this reference would help through competition and local pride to stimulate community support.

“One of the problems with educational programming for inner-city children is the lack of systematic planning. The planning for inner-city schools is often piecemeal and related to the solution of specific crisis situations. Many of the practices and attitudes found in such schools evolved over the years while the schools underwent a transition from middle-class white to poor black students.”

—PARTICIPANT



"A portion of research may be used to encourage constructive competition among teachers and school with emphasis on learning atmospheres and teacher styles.

"We are constantly looking for some new way by which all children will learn. But this contradicts what we have been saying: That all children are different, with different learning styles.

"Let's try to find a system in which each individual teacher finds himself most comfortable and has the full right to teach in a way that is compatible to his personality. Children who are best suited to that particular atmosphere can be grouped around that teacher. Then we will begin to have a good system of diversity."

—PARTICIPANT

"I would like to know more about intelligence and how it develops. What role does language play in the development of cognitive skills and what role does experience play in the development of language? Is facility with certain parts of language necessary for the use of language in the development of other cognitive skills? Must the processes of learning themselves be learned? If so, can they be taught?"

—DR. JAMES E. ALLEN, JR.

". . . the massive size of the segregation problem or the difficulties, both financially and logistically, of implementing racial balance in the classroom should not be used as an excuse to stand still and fail to make any efforts toward providing our urban students with some form of integrated educational experiences. Such situations demand not less effort, but more creativity."

—DR. WILSON RILES

"To give meaning to the concept of educability in populations where there is deprivation of developmental and educational opportunity, several educational preconditions are indicated. These include (1) provision for a more appropriate distribution of emphasis between the effective, cognitive, and conative aspects of learning; (2) a shift in emphasis in educational appraisal from quantitative measures and static prediction to qualitative measures and dynamic prescription; (3) increased attention to individually prescribed learning experiences; and (4) greater concern for insuring that the learning experience is relevant to the general experience of the learner."

—DR. EDMUND GORDON

"We need very much to have a middleman, a middle institution; one that is not caught up in the traditions of academia, not caught up in the traditions and problems of the direct on-line system, but that can stand as the place where a teacher can go and see practice going on that is translated from knowledge. This middle institution should also have a way of getting this demonstration context out and into the classroom where the action is going on."

—DR. JAMES O. MILLER

"We must develop the idea of continuous readjustment and updating if we are going to retain relevancy."

—PARTICIPANT

**Thoroughly delineate what constitutes accountability, allocate sufficient funds to carry out the responsibility entailed and hold the school accountable for providing quality education for all children.**

**ACTION**—Public school systems should move toward becoming an all-inclusive (zero-reject) educational system.

- School board members, teacher organization representatives and community representatives should develop guidelines for their community on what constitutes accountability.

- Public school systems ought to provide an opportunity for redress of that system by its public.

“A system ought to be developed at the federal, state and local level to provide an opportunity for redress of the system that has failed to provide adequate education for the children.”

—PARTICIPANT

“Several years ago when I started in elementary school they didn't have a term dropout. It is a new term. You simply got out and joined the working class.

“Why are we concerned about it today? Because the society cannot absorb large numbers of unskilled people.

“ . . . There are no dropouts; there are push-outs. The system is calculated to eliminate those who don't make it in the system.”

—DR. WILSON RILES

## **RECOMMENDATION 6**



"Who is accountable to whom for what? And what are the penalties for having failed? Accountability ultimately means that the parent may judge the job that the teacher is doing on the parent's individual child, which may ultimately imply withdrawal of the child from a teacher's class and requesting that he go to another teacher. This poses severe administrative problems, but the rewards would be worth the effort."

—PARTICIPANT

"When something goes wrong, we make convenient administrative shifts and say we have revised the program. Oftentimes it is the same old thing under a different kind of procedure. And that will not work."

—DR. LEO CAIN

"We have traditionally thought of a dropout in terms of the child's failure to succeed in school. But a more realistic appraisal is that dropouts reflect the school's failure to succeed with the child. In effect, the child has not dropped out; he has been pushed out by a school that has ignored his educational needs and by a school program that had no relevance to his aspirations or learning problems."

"Although most of our children come from lower-class families, our schools have been geared to the middle-class child. Our teachers come from middle-class backgrounds and naturally are better able to understand and communicate with the middle-class child. Our curriculum, textbooks and recognized teaching methods are all

aimed at the experiences and values of the middle-class child.

"But the instructional program that is good for the middle-class child is not necessarily good for the child whose background is one of poverty. The child of poverty has not had many of the simple experiences which we assume are common with all youngsters."

—DR. WILSON RILES

"Each school district should have the responsibility of providing a total assessment of each student, including medical and dental services. This comprehensive approach should be utilized to assess the student's strengths so that there can be appropriate planning and curriculum development which focuses on strengths rather than weaknesses."

—PARTICIPANT





## **RECOMMENDATION 7**

### **Involve parents, citizens and citizen groups, students, and general and special educators in total educational effort.**

**ACTION**—Require community commitment to goals and objectives of the total educational process in early education, special education, general and continuing education. Reciprocally involve the school and its community in the total educational effort.

- Substantially involve students in teacher-learning process, using unique talents of students in tutoring other students.

- Consider parents as partners in the educational process, training them not only to work with the children but also, in many cases, to master the task themselves. Involve them in planning, implementation, and evaluation of local education, and provide them with materials that help in educating their children.

- Encourage teachers and administrators to know the community, to participate in its life, as well as in the life of the children in the school.

“Large city school systems must become more responsive to the views of the community and involve parents in the decision-making processes, but this does not require turning over administration of the schools to a community which does not have the same expertise and resources that the central city administration can gather together . . .

“It is significant that the impetus for decentralizing city school systems has come largely from the demands of low-income communities for a larger voice in educational affairs rather than from the middle-income and high-income communities. This is because our school systems have always been able to be responsive to the concerns of the more affluent parents and it was not necessary to turn over the schools to these parents in the process.”

—DR. WILSON RILES



"Why can't the school boards acquaint themselves—or give one person the job of acquainting himself—with what's going on in the inner city? If more did this, they would develop a curriculum that would be effective and relevant."

—PARTICIPANT

"Parental involvement in the educational process is minimal whether we refer to regular education or special education. This wasted natural resource is of even greater importance when we consider the disadvantaged child or the child who functions at a sub-normal level."

—PARTICIPANT

"The schools cannot do the job alone. The parents cannot do the job alone. We must work together."

—PARTICIPANT

"Personally, I think this is unfortunate, but most of the people I know are giving up on the concept of integration and are talking about something else: Community control.

"There is an assumption that community control and effective education are the same. There is a statement that any change might make it better. I am not sure that this is true. I am certainly for change but I am for change that is going to make more effective education for children. I want to see us divide the concept of power from the concept of effective education.

"One thing is power. Who is going to do what? Who is going to control? That's one concept. Another is: How do you make education more effective? That's another concept. And they are not necessarily the same.

"Real control comes with the purse strings—including the power to

levy taxes and allocate the resources. Most decentralization proposals retain this power in the school board, which would determine how much each community district would receive, although the community board can determine the spending of its own share."

—DR. WILSON RILES

"Although group effort is invaluable, we should have our differences among groups. We can often penalize the smaller group by the influence of the larger group. In several of the proposals it would be very easy to influence a program for the Mexican-Americans by a program designed for the blacks, giving the impression that we have many common problems. I think we have one big common problem: Poverty."

—PARTICIPANT



Several days after the conference had ended, one of the members of the Black-Brown Group wrote the following words in a letter to a fellow participant. We present it with their permission as an eloquent testament to the conference spirit.

Members of the group and I departed on an emotional high, with general consensus that this was one of the most satisfying and rewarding conferences ever attended—particularly since I came with such skepticism.

We departed fatigued, but deliriously happy having made a contribution to not only an invaluable conference, but hopefully to a germinating seed that may begin to resolve some of the problems of mental retardation and inner cities, and equally if not more important, begin to fill in the bodies of water that separate different groups with human love, understanding, respect and brotherhood.

This country is in a mess. The gap between the poles, regardless of the indices, is too great. But, we have the know-how, we have the compassion, we have the resources, to make this a multi-racial nation where each individual can realize joy and satisfaction as he moves to the fulfillment of his potential, overcoming internal, not external, obstacles.



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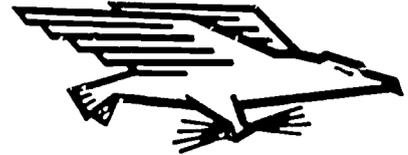
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. . . to advise him on what is being done for the mentally retarded;

. . . to recommend Federal action where needed;

. . . to promote coordination and cooperation among public and private agencies;

. . . to stimulate individual and group action;

. . . and to promote public understanding of the mentally retarded.

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