

MEMORANDUM TO FREEDOM SCHOOL TEACHERS

(Provided courtesy of [Education & Democracy](#))

COFO
1017 Lynch St
Jackson, Miss.
May 5

To: MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SCHOOL TEACHERS
FROM: Miss. Summer Project Staff
RE: SUBJECT: Overview of the Freedom Schools

The purpose of the Freedom schools is to provide an educational experience for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and to find alternatives, and ultimately, new directions for action.

Just what forms this educational experience will take will vary from school to school and from teacher to teacher. We will not be able to provide all the facilities, materials and personnel we would like. This is a fact of our whole operation, and we are used to it. But we hope the curriculum will be flexible enough to overcome them.

The Freedom Schools will consist of from 5 to 15 teachers and 25 to 50 students. It does not now appear that we will be able to secure buildings for residential schools, so you will be working in day churches, store fronts, homes, etc.

The kinds of activities you will be developing will fall into three general areas: 1) academic work, 2) recreation and cultural activities, 3) leadership development. It is our hope that these three will be integrated into one learning experience, rather than being the kind of fragmented learning and living that characterizes much of contemporary education. How this integration can occur will be suggested by the materials we will be sending you and by the orientation period.

Since the students' academic experiences should relate directly to their real life in Mississippi, and since learning that involved real life experiences is, we think, most meaningful, we hope that the students will be involved in the political life of the communities. As the day's schedule below indicates, the students will work in various kinds of political activity in the evenings. The way students can participate in local voter registration should be worked out by the teachers and local COFO voter registration staff at a meeting before the opening of school. The teachers will be free to participate in these activities with the students, although you may need the time to prepare lessons, etc., and thus will want the local staff to supervise the students' canvassing, etc. It may also be the case that on some evenings the teachers or students will plan a special event and thus the students will not do political work that night. Or it may happen that the need for canvassing for a special event will cause local staff to ask for part of the students' day for this purpose. It is important that voter registration staff and teachers stay in close touch with each other so these things can be worked out. An average day's schedule might look like this: Early morning (7-9): Concentrated individual work on areas of the students' particular interest or need. Morning (9-12 or 1): Academic curriculum. Afternoon (2-4

or 5): Non-academic curriculum (recreation, cultural activities and some tutoring.) You will have to bear in mind that it is too hot in the afternoon for much concentrated work. Evening (7-9 or so): Work with voter registration activities, or special events (like a visiting folk singer) on evenings when no political work is needed.

The development of a weekly schedule and a daily lesson plan will be left to the teachers and students of the school. All teachers will be at their school's site at least a week before the schools open July 7. This week should be used primarily for planning by the teaching group, as well as recruiting students and making community contacts. We will try to balance the schools' personnel so that various skills will be represented by different members of the teaching team.

The fact that you will do the actual development of a plan for each day means that you will have to be creative, resourceful and flexible. To aid you in your task, we will be supplying you with the following material, either in the mail or at orientation:

1. Curriculum Guide for Freedom Schools, by Noel Day. This document will be your basic teaching material. It contains six units of study centered around values and social change. Each unit contains suggested content materials and teaching methods. It will be possible for you to center some of the writing and reading teaching around the subject matter of the units, and discussion will help students grow in public speaking ability.

2. Case studies are being prepared by various people. Some of these will relate directly to the curriculum suggested by the Curriculum Guide, some can be used as supplementary material. The Case Study Outline will explain how to use these studies of various problems related to civil rights and political change.

3. Papers on the teaching of science, math and remedial reading and writing (also short papers on teaching arts and crafts, dramatics, etc.)

Science will not relate directly to the subject matter of the curriculum guide, but it is important that students receive both a feeling for what real science is (which they do not receive in school) and tutorial help in specific scientific areas of study if they show interest. Any teacher who know this area should come prepared to do some special work with a few students and to handle a class session or two on a general "Wonders of Science" theme. The paper you will receive will give you further ideas.

Math is an area of real difficulty for many students. Try to secure 11th and 12th (and earlier) math texts for use in tutoring. It will be difficult to develop class sessions around this subject, since students' abilities will vary greatly. The paper on teaching this subject will help you see an approach for a classroom situation.

Remedial reading and writing work will be needed by nearly all students. Reading aloud is suggested in the Curriculum Guide as are some theme topics. Students should be encouraged and guided in doing outside reading. Writing should be discussed with students individually with tutorial help directed toward writing improvement.

4. A paper on Leadership Development by Charlie Cobb will contain suggestions of the kinds of skills students should develop and suggest how these can be integrated into daily activities.

5. A paper suggesting recreational and cultural activities for students will be available.

IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT YOU STUDY THESE MATERIALS CAREFULLY AND BRING THEM SOUTH WITH YOU. THEY WILL BE YOUR GUIDE FOR THE SUMMER. YOUR TIME HERE IS LIMITED AND YOU MUST PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. We will NOT be able to replace curriculum materials if you fail to bring them with you.

We are glad you will be with the Mississippi movement and hope that you share our excitement about the possibilities that the summer holds for real growth for you and Mississippi's young people.

[Editors' Note: 'Curriculum Guide for Freedom Schools' became the 'Citizenship Curriculum, Units I to VI']