

FREEDOM SCHOOL PROSPECTUS

FOR

NEW ORLEANS PROJECT

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BY

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I. The basic purpose of our Freedom Schools will be to:

1. Offer a framework that allows students to make more critical and constructive use of their regular education, and
2. Supply and create educational needs that are not met within the educational system which the average child attends.

This will be done through a program of two formally distinct but in actuality inextricably fused, curricula. One, supplementary education - such as reading, languages, the new math, etc. - corresponding to some degree with what the child is actually or supposedly learning in school. Two, and more fundamentally, the Freedom curricula - Negro History, Civil Rights Movement, the philosophy of non-violence, etc.

These two formally distinct curricula are largely fused in practice because of the basic presupposition of the Freedom School - that a Freedom curriculum consists most basically in an approach, rather than in its materials. That to have a freedom approach implies that both teacher and student are free to participate and to explore. So that, for example, if no one wants to study a foreign language - a foreign language - a foreign language will not be taught, or instead of introducing reading as a formal discipline - reading is almost surreptitiously introduced by the use of Martin Luther King or Uncle Tom's Cabin comic books in the younger childrens study of Negro History.

In order to truly be a freedom school - the school must be the children's. And this means not only do the children have an important voice in determining the curriculum - but that they also have the right to question. The whole concept of the new math for example is an attempt to explain to children why there are numbers and decimal systems, and multiplication tables. But the freedom approach goes beyond that - the student is encouraged not only to question the material, but also to question institutions and persons. For example, one of the assumptions of the Freedom School is that the teacher may be wrong - and that the student has the right to express his reservations about anything the teacher says. It has been our experience that by allowing just such questions to be raised that the student actually learns more material or formal knowledge because HE HAS A REASON TO LEARN, because he is allowed to trust his own mind as well as to be assisted in learning from others. The teacher knows that he or she can learn from the student, and this is the most encouraging prompt for the student to learn that the student can have.

The Freedom curricula is an attempt to provide the student with more truthful information, ideas, and images of himself. While particularly concerned with the Negro child its fundamental purpose transcends considerations of color. The negro child is taught Negro History not

because it is Negro History but because it is his history. And the few white children will be taught Negro History because the history of the Negro is the history of what has happened in his country and to his countrymen - and thus also to him. The primary focus will be to re-discover that part of our history which has been suppressed and distorted in order to support segregation and its attendant evils. Thus attention will be given to the realities of slave trades, to Negro revolts, to Negro participation in the Civil War, to a more honest interpretation of Reconstruction, etc. down to the present time.

While some of the material will inevitably be presented somewhat formally, and every encouragement will be given to students who desire to read further, most of the material will be presented in discussion. Thus, for example, the students will be presented with a few essential facts about Booker T. Washington and William E. Dubois or about Martin Luther King and Robert Williams and asked what they think about the issue of conciliation vs militancy or non-violence vs self-defense. While the teacher may occasionally offer his own insight into such matters his primary purpose will be to elicit the students own feelings and thoughts. Another mode of approach would be to play an Odetta or Bobby Dylan record and see what response the students have to it - do they feel that their experience is akin to the feeling of the one time slave who sang "No More Auction Block For Me"? Do they feel or think that the poor white man is really "a pawn in their game" as the record suggests? When the Free Southern Theater or the Freedom Caravan perform they will be asked what they think of the performance.

II. The following prospectus is an example of the sort of curriculum that will be presented - the actual curriculum will be modified by teachers and students according to their needs and interests.

SUPPLEMENTAL CURRICULUM

To be taught as demanded and to the extent that teachers are available.

1. languages - Spanish, German, etc.
2. new mathematics (plus help in the old math)
3. art & drawing

CORE OF FREEDOM CURRICULUM

1. Negro History
2. Africa
3. Civil Rights Movement
4. Constitution and Democracy
5. Non-violence
6. Freedom Songs
7. Workshops

III. At least two churches have been made available for full time Freedom School teaching, beginning about June 22, 1965. More churches may be sought and used later in the summer, especially if more volunteer teachers become available. Classes will be organized generally by the ages of the children; at this time we are gearing our program to grade and high school children, but a small pre-school (ages 4-6) group may be formed as well. We are not planning classes for adults at this point.

MATERIALS NEEDED for the entire summer include 10,000 sheets of lined paper, 10,000 sheets of unlined paper (these needs could readily be