

## PART I: ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

### Introduction

It would seem advisable that, considering the special conditions under which the Freedom Schools will operate, some form of the team approach be adopted, to divide responsibility, yet retain an integrated educational approach to the student. The teachers should plan the activities together, so that each subject area correlates and reinforces the others. If, for example, the group of students plans to canvass, the language arts phase of the program could concentrate on an appropriate verbal skill, the social studies area could be devoted to the study of the population to be canvassed in terms of economic, social, religious factors and the implications of those factors, the math area could be given over to statistical breakdowns charts, etc. (This example is a little advanced.) Or, if the students were to publicize a mass meeting, the language arts phase could study the considerations involved in writing persuasive material, the arts and crafts programs could make posters and leaflets, etc. One other advantage of the team approach is that, since students are first of all individuals, a group of teachers working in concert can serve their separate, special needs better. It is not likely that there will be sufficient time or variety of personnel to organize the staff in a detailed manner, but some version of the team concept could probably be implemented.

It is very important that there be cohesiveness and cooperation among the Freedom School personnel. Hopefully, before the opening of each school (there will probably be a week to prepare), the staff can make plans and agree on overall aims and apportion individual responsibilities. Frequent planning conferences after school begins are essential.

The value of the Freedom Schools will derive mainly from what the teachers are able to elicit from the students in terms of comprehension and expression of their experiences. The curriculum should derive from the students' background, and all aspects of classroom activity should be an outgrowth of their experiences. The classroom groups will be small; the social interaction between teacher and students will be as important as academic instruction. The following list of procedures is designed to serve as a guideline, not proposed as any rigid formula. The formal classroom approach is to be avoided; the teacher is encouraged to use all the resources of his imagination.

### Reading and Writing Skills

#### A. Verbal Activities

1. Getting acquainted. It is perhaps better if the teacher initiates this by introducing himself to the class. The students may be reluctant to discuss themselves in a group and the teacher could arrange for private interviews.

2. Informal discussion. The students could report events, summarize the day's activities, discuss issues. The teacher should encourage the expression of conflicting points of view.

3. Oral reading. This could be tape-recorded and played back. The teacher can make a brief factual explanation of dialect differences by pointing out that his pronunciation is different from the students' (if it is) and that speech variations also include Boston (Kennedy), British, etc.

4. Development of competence in real life verbal situations. Skill in asking directions, giving instructions, using the telephone should be developed. The telephone company could be contacted for tele-trainer material (two model telephones) so that the students could practice the social and practical use of the telephone. The telephone directory provides an opportunity to develop skill in alphabetizing.

5. Presenting material in several different ways. For example, saying the same thought in a: 1) formal, 2) informal, and 3) slangy manner.

6. Improvisations. This is usually presented in terms of a real life situation where each participant is trying to achieve a specific goal, to get something from the others.

## B. Writing Activities

1. Writing summaries of discussions. This can entail instruction in spelling, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization; it can provide an opportunity for vocabulary development. Teach attentiveness to which are the main points, which details can be omitted and which are important (such as date, time, and place for a future meeting), accuracy.

2. Writing from dictation. This develops critical listening ability as well as providing an opportunity for instruction in all skills mentioned above.

3. Writing reports of experiences, such as voter registration activities.

4. Writing endings to stories. The teacher could read part of a story, stop before the conclusion is given and ask students to write an ending. Other methods would be to give plot details and ask students to compose a story or to read the complete story and ask for alternative endings.

5. Writing poetry. A number of stimuli are necessary for poetry or creative prose. This activity could follow the reading of poetry to the class. Other incentives are natural surroundings, pictures, recorded music, sounds. (The students could close their eyes, for example, while the teacher crumples cellophane or paper. The students could be asked to "think with their imaginations" and to describe what the sound suggests to them.)

6. Writing reports for newspapers. This involves the accurate reporting of facts and develops the ability to see significant details. There is also an opportunity here to demonstrate the difference between fact and opinion, objective reporting and propaganda.

7. Writing persuasive material, such as a handbill. This could follow a verbal activity where one student had to persuade another student. The activity could begin on a personal level--i.e., one student could ask another for a pencil or a dime--and build up to the point where the student has to persuade his antagonist to accept a different belief about an issue. This kind of activity develops the ability to "think on the feet."

8. Filling out forms such as applications, social security, voter registration forms, etc.

9. Writing social and business letters.

### C. Suggested Reading Activities

1. Reading newspaper reports, magazines, short stories, etc., for comprehension and evaluation.

2. Reading and summaries of activities. New words can be introduced by taking words from the selection and substituting words of similar meaning. This can involve the use of the dictionary. Reading comprehension skills can be employed by having a student derive the meaning of a word from the context of the sentence.

### D. Related Activities

1. Drawing pictures to illustrate poems, stories and experiences.

2. Listening to poems and stories, listening to each other, role playing and activities where students can teach other, problem-solving discussions.

3. Following instructions--a recipe, for example, where the student also has an opportunity to see the importance of weights and measurements in something as specific as cooking (how to double a recipe), or following instructions for a sewing pattern or make-your-own construction.

4. Drawing and reading maps, interpreting tables; using indexes, tables of contents, glossaries, etc.

5. Homework. Simple, easily completed assignments should be made so that the student gains an opportunity to realize his responsibility for his education. Hopefully, this will stimulate independent investigation.

6. Testing. While this is not necessarily endorsed as an educational tool, it is one means of evaluating progress. Also, it is a fact of life--testing is a key factor in the voter registration situation and it is something that college students have to deal with constantly. It should be presented in that context. Teach how to approach a test question--what is being asked? which answers are only partially true, or although true, may be irrelevant to the question?

7. Relaxation activities. The teachers will probably want to teach more than anyone can learn in a six-week period. There will be a danger of making class sessions too concentrated for the students. On the other hand, the teachers may decide that a particular session is going badly and is, frankly, dull for the students. If attention lags for either reason, the teacher should switch to another kind of activity. These activities can continue the teacher's basic educational purpose if they are well-planned and well-selected, and still be reinvigorating for the class. Some ideas are drawing, breaking up for smaller discussion groups, and informal games.

Some ideas for games which can develop verbal skills in students are:

1) Twenty-five. Each youngster draws on a piece of paper a square of twenty-five boxes. Everyone calls a letter in turn. The object is to create words either across or down the columns. (I have found that teen-agers take a strong liking to this game; even those who can't spell well. Many points are scored simply by accident.)

2) Rogues' Gallery. Players must guess the names of people in pictures cut out from newspapers and magazines. A careful selection of pictures results in an interesting learning situation.

3) Observation. Players must list objects which they have seen and are then covered up.

4) Words and Pictures. Words, sentences, or paragraphs must be clipped from magazines or newspapers so as to write a story about a picture taken from a magazine. These words get pasted on a piece of paper. No words are to be written.

5) Sight Unseen. Teams of two. One person describes an object. The other person must draw the unnamed and unseen object as well as he can.

6) Hall of Fame. A letter is suggested (or can be elaborately chosen by the class), time is kept, and everybody puts down as many names, first or last, beginning with this letter as he can remember. Use a general list or else concentrate on certain categories.

7) Word Relations. Each player lists words by association; then the field is reversed. Winner is person who makes least mistakes when order is reversed.

8) Letter Dice. (Individual game.) Five dice marked with letters rather than numbers are thrown and from the letters appearing on the five surfaces the student must make a word.

9) TV Quiz Games. Adaptations of such games as Twenty Questions, Password, Concentration, etc. can be used to bring out points made in discussion, summarize class activities, etc. --or just make a break if a session gets dull.

E. Summary. The resourcefulness of the teacher is a tremendously important element. As material will not be at hand, the teacher will most likely have to proceed on a day-to-day basis--using the rexograph, if available. In the matter of classroom procedure, questioning is the vital tool. It is meaningless to flood the student with information he cannot understand; questioning is the path to enlightenment. It requires a great deal of skill and tact to pose the question that will stimulate but not offend, lead to unself-consciousness and the desire to express thought.

Classroom activities should not be dealt with as fragmented, isolated parts of a program; one activity should flow naturally from another (speaking and listening preceding reading and writing) with the students' experience as the source for the learning material. The relationship between school and life should be reinforced constantly.