

Statement by New York *CORE* Chapters on School Integration

January 16, 1964

CORE is devoted to the fight for an integrated society through nonviolent direct action, and for a basic social and economic change in the condition of minority groups—in housing, employment and education. The 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka*, pointed out the necessity for integration in education. The Supreme Court held that segregated schools are inherently inferior and that the education a student receives in the segregated school has a negative effect on his personality. There can be no doubt that the segregated school cannot, even under the best circumstances, overcome the destructive effects which the society outside the classroom inflicts on the individual. The white student in the artificial atmosphere of the segregated classroom is led to think that he is superior because he goes to a separate school; he does not learn how to live with the other people with whom he must share this world.

New York State Commissioner of Education Allen this summer called for local school boards across the state who have a racial imbalance in their schools to attempt to get a 50/50 racial balance. In order to accomplish this and to meet the needs of New York City students, the Board of Education must make integration top-priority, and come up with a positive program for integrating now.

On September 5, 1963 the Board of Education, the City-Wide Committee for Integrated Education and the City Commission for Human Rights, in the presence of Stanley Lowell (chairman of the Commission), signed a written agreement with the Board of Education that the Board would submit a tentative report and plan for integration by December 1, 1963, and that a final plan for integration of the New York City schools would be available by February 1964. The plans, with a timetable for integration, were to be worked out in consultation with the Civil Rights organizations and were to "include provisions for a substantial, realistic and working program of integration in every school district in September 1964." The Board has failed to live up to this agreement.

Even a quick look at the state of education in New York City will show why parents are so angry. It is a dreary picture of a system that handicaps our children and then discharges them into the city streets with little preparation for meeting the harsh reality that they quickly come up against when they try to get a job.

New York City schools are segregated and understaffed; they are overcrowded and under-equipped. Thousands of classrooms are greatly overcrowded. Many of the school buildings are ancient and deteriorated; many are unsafe. Many teachers are inadequately trained and methods are outdated; they are still underpaid and burdened with non-classroom chores. Many teachers are demoralized and fail to understand the problems that children have in the 1960's. Curricula, particularly in social studies and history, do not satisfy the needs of our multi-ethnic group city population.

CORE is deeply concerned that:

30% of all teachers and 50% of those in minority group schools are substitutes.

that in just the last six years the number of almost completely segregated elementary and junior high schools has more than doubled, from 77 in 1958 to 165 presently.

that 239 school buildings currently in use were built before 1910.

that over 70% of junior high school mathematics teaching positions are filled by substitutes and teachers trained in other fields.

that the class size in New York City is the largest in the country, the size of classes in elementary and high schools has continued to rise over the last ten years.

There is every reason for New Yorkers to be dissatisfied with this second-rate educational system.

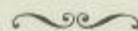
With Negro and Puerto Rican children constituting 41% of public school enrollment, we might expect to find about that percentage in each school. But there are 320 of 581 elementary schools 90% or more segregated and 70 of 136 junior high schools which are 85% or more segregated. Even on the junior high level where children travel to school, 55% of minority children attend schools which are 75% or more segregated.

The effect of segregated schools on Negro and Puerto Rican children can no longer be disputed. The Public Education Association in their 1956 study found that the arithmetic and reading achievement levels of minority group sixth graders were two years behind their white contemporaries; eighth graders were three years behind. More recent studies by Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, the Brooklyn Parents Workshop for Equality in New York City Schools, and the Urban League of Greater New York found that the achievement gap has widened.

In the last six years there has been a 102% increase of almost completely Negro and Puerto Rican schools in relation to the total number of schools. This increase can be only partly attributed to the 34.4% increase in the ratio of Negro and Puerto Rican children to the entire school population. The City administration through the City Planning Commission's placement of public housing in segregated areas is also to blame. But foremost responsible is the Board of Education, for:

- 1) Allowing the City Planning Commission to select the sites for construction which, since June, 1959, produced 38 segregated schools out of a total of 45. Twenty of the 26 schools presently under construction are in segregated neighborhoods. Thirty of the 51 schools included in the 1963-64 Capital Budget for Advanced Planning and/or Site Selection will be in segregated neighborhoods.
- 2) Allowing gerrymandered school district lines which prevent integration.
- 3) Failing to come up with a positive plan for integration.

CORE insists that the education of children in this city be greatly improved, that the basic underlying problems be attacked, and that every child be provided with a decent classroom situation so that he can get the maximum benefits from his education. We believe that this can be accomplished for the children of New York City (black and white) only if the kind of classroom situation is created where all children are integrated without regard to ability-level (as established by artificial tests), and where Negro, White, Puerto Rican, and other minority children begin going to school together in the early grades. To do this the class size must be significantly reduced so that each child can get the personal attention that he or she needs in order to make the educational experience most profitable to him. These programs must be begun immediately on the lower grade levels and where they can be implemented on the higher grades they should also be started this year.



To achieve quality, integrated education in our public schools the Board must develop and implement a dynamic, comprehensive program. The following points should be included in the overall plan:

I. *Timetable*: In an agreement between the Board of Education and the City-Wide Committee for Integrated Schools in the presence of the City Commission on Human Rights, the Board of Education obligated itself to submit a plan for the integration of public schools in New York. This plan must provide substantial integration in every district beginning with the school year of September, 1964. Until the Board presents this timetable as evidence that it is immediately and specifically confronting the task of integration, the civil rights groups of this city must continue to prepare for a boycott on February 3, 1964.

We firmly believe the basic responsibility for implementation rests with the Board of Education, not with local school boards. As a basis for consultation and in order to make clear to the public our position we are submitting what we consider to be the basic ingredients of an effective timetable, the details of which should be developed and approved jointly by the Board and representatives of the City-Wide Committee for Integrated Schools with periodic progress reports presented to the Committee.

II. *Class Size*: In the last seven years average class sizes have increased in elementary and high schools. Integrated, heterogeneous classes of no more than 15 children aid in the full development of each child. If 1 master teacher and 2 assistants are used, then the maximum class size should not be over 30.

The number of classroom teacher's aides and clerical workers must be increased so that trained teachers can be freed and provide personal instruction and guidance.

Full utilization of available classroom space is necessary. Bussing may be necessary to insure proper use of existing facilities, so that every child will have a seat to sit in and so that class size can be reduced in highly populated areas.

III. *School Zones*: The present school zones must be withdrawn to maximize integration. A substantial number of schools can be integrated immediately by re-drawing zone lines. The Princeton Plan must be used whenever possible to begin integration among the young children. (A Princeton Plan pairs two neighboring elementary schools so that all the Kindergarten to third grade teachers and children are in one school and all the 4th to 6th grade teachers and children are in the other.)

Junior high schools and high schools can be better integrated by changing the feeder patterns that determine which elementary schools send their students to the high schools. Most high school students and many of our junior high students already travel long distances. These students should be immediately integrated.

New school sites should be selected by the Board of Education (not the City Planning Commission) to provide for the maximum possible integration. Also, a less bureaucratic and less time consuming method for getting approval for construction of new schools must be worked out by the mayor. Many new schools are needed now.

In working out the details of all these proposals the Board of Education should work in cooperation with the City-Wide Committee for Integration to insure that the plan for integration truly reflects the needs of the minority community.

IV. *Staff*: There should be significant improvements in the training, selection and promotion processes for teachers and supervisors.

The Board of Education should work closely with the Board of Higher Education to guarantee that there will be thousands of additional licensed teachers to effectuate a significant reduction in class size. Many of them should be Negro and Puerto Rican.

The Board should insure that the Board of Examiners no longer uses southern draws or Spanish accents to exclude otherwise capable teachers.

There should be a significant increase in salary in order to provide the incentive for many more people to become teachers.

The Board should actively recruit teachers from every walk of life and ethnic grouping. This is most important at the level of promotion and selection of supervisors.

The Board should offer courses for those willing to become supervisors.

There should be in-service credit courses in Negro history, sociology and in the effects of discrimination on children in order to give teachers a better understanding of the role of minority groups in American life.

Courses in Spanish should be required for teachers in training and should be provided for regular teachers for in-service credit.

V. *Special Services and Staff*: At the present time there must be a significant increase in the number of specialized personnel: remedial reading teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, etc. They should be assigned in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of the students of each school.

Some special services will also be required such as after-school study centers for those children who do not have the space at home to study in.

Guidance counselors should be required to acquaint minority students with the present needs and openings in the school system, and should encourage exploration of new openings and opportunities. They should also be required to take courses in Negro history, sociology and the effects of segregation on the personality. Specialist groups should be integrated with qualified personnel from minority groups.

VI. *Curriculum and Texts*: The Board of Education must keep its promise to revise curriculum and texts so as to accurately show the minority community in its current and historic role in American life.

VII. *Remedial Programs*: Generations of students have passed through the school system and were hindered in their full development by the bad quality of the education which they received. In order to correct these bad effects, there should be a full scale remedial program. This program should provide courses in all basic subjects and skills where needed. These classes should be conducted during the school day and should have special funds set aside for them. Teachers can be provided by training those who are available now. The students who are allowed to take the courses should be chosen on the basis of need and not on the basis of first come first serve.

VIII. *Scholarships*: Scholarships are badly needed and should be provided to children who are potential dropouts because of economic need. We must provide a real alternative for the student who wants to leave school to contribute to the family income.

IX. *School Board Representation*: The Board of Education is supposed to reflect the community it represents, therefore the need is felt for greater participation by Negro, Puerto Rican and other minority group leaders and for those who represent points of view other than the prevailing one. There should be membership on the Board of Education by those who believe in integration of the school system.

X. *Monetary Commitment*: We call upon the Mayor and Governor to cease avoiding their responsibilities to provide the Board of Education with funds ample to carry out the above programs.