

Dr. Alan R. Bladner Office Copy 8/20/64
I Over-all Impression.

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AN OVER-VIEW OF
CERTAIN SUMMER HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

I visited the following programs:

1. The School-College Orientation Program of Pittsburgh.
(The Pittsburgh Public Schools and Carnegie Tech).
2. The Princeton Summer Studies Program.
3. Dartmouth's ABC (A Better Chance).
4. Oberlin's Special Opportunities Program for Secondary School Students.
5. Hampton Institute's Programs for Pre-College Students.
6. The Yale Summer High School (in cooperation with Hampton Institute).

Here I shall try to bring together certain impressions and questions about these summer programs for the disadvantaged. What I have in mind is not at all a summary, of use to one who had not read my separate reports on the projects listed above. It is rather, perhaps, speculation about them.

Over-all Impression

It is tempting to construct on paper an "ideal" summer school for the disadvantaged by selecting the best features (in my view) of those I visited. I might try this some day. Such a game is not worth the effort now, however, since these different, excellent features consist of details, not fundamentals. One remarkable thing about these programs is their similarity in selection of students, staffing, curriculum, living arrangements, and cultural and recreational opportunities, - astonishing in view of the limited amount of joint planning that appears to have been done.

I must say at once that all the programs I visited were very good indeed, as I saw them. The students, with few exceptions, were eager and enthusiastic; the staff of each was committed to the hilt. I have rarely seen such dedication. Both students and staff in these summer programs will undoubtedly fill out questionnaires on leaving. I wish that I could see the answers. I would anticipate, in the main, glowing tributes, coupled with good practical suggestions for improvement of details.

The conduct of these "deprived" kids, turned out, in general, to be very good indeed compared with that in any normal boarding school situation. Disciplinary problems were few and rarely serious. I gather that the inter-racial feeling was everywhere excellent.

Aims and Selection of Students

Another year I expect the process of recruiting and of selection of students to be more sharply focused, with criteria more clearly spelled out and more closely followed by both those nominating candidates for admission and by the schools, in the sense of greater firmness in refusing students who do not meet the specifications. It is impossible to plan a program of studies without good knowledge of the kinds of youngsters who will take it.

Except for the reading and study skills programs at Dartmouth and at Yale (and they are really for average, normal students), I saw little or nothing that I would call "remedial" in any technical sense. Whether the students were regarded as not in need of special remedial techniques or whether the teachers were not familiar with such techniques (or thought them useless for anybody) I don't know. I suspect one or both of the latter alternatives. The whole question is worth further inquiry.

In the selection process, little emphasis appeared to be placed on discovering a youngster's potential for leadership. Granted that "leadership" is an elusive concept, not easy to spot in the young, yet we see it clearly in operation in all ages, and I should think it important to discover and educate the kids whose influence will probably be of the greatest possible benefit to others as well as to themselves.

The Problem of Motivation

The question of how best to affect the inner lives of the youngsters in these sessions was the most interesting one of the summer, for me and for the teachers, counselors, and administrators in the programs. It was central to the thinking of almost everyone I met, in some places almost an obsession. Over and over I heard the judgment, expressed with great earnestness, that "motivation" for these kids was much more important than knowledge or skills. More often than not, the implication of this was, "The past hasn't worked. Be new, be exciting, be different." Yet I heard little real, hard-headed discussion of how indeed kids are motivated, whether privileged or deprived. Granted that you can't make progress until you have awakened a desire to learn, how is this best done? Granted past failure. To what due? I doubt it, but maybe the answer is as simple as placing youngsters in the hands of able, vigorous people who obviously care about their welfare, almost regardless of what is taught or methods used. Perhaps, on the other hand, radically new curriculum and methods are needed, perhaps so old-fashioned, in essence, that they seem radically new. I have often thought so, yet I did not see really new curricula or methods this summer and yet am convinced that

scores of youngsters in these programs found a new interest in learning and indeed learned something. Score quite a bit for dedicated, straight-shooting people, most of whom knew nothing about Negroes or "new approaches to education."

Beyond the questions of new curricula, etc., to what extent should these kids from miserable backgrounds and schooling be teased into an interest in and respect for learning and to what extent challenged directly, of course imaginatively, but unsentimentally with assignments as demanding as their intelligence is able to take? My hunch is to offer a real challenge. I think that kids of any background take pride in meeting serious, relevant demands on them and are difficult to fool with backdoor approaches.

Further Observations on Staff and Students

I hope that future sessions can work towards a more even racial balance (though there are those who believe that they should stay overwhelmingly Negro). In the programs I saw (excluding those of Hampton Institute) the great majority of the students were Negro, the great majority of the faculty white.

I strongly favor continuing the practice of employing college seniors or recent graduates as "resident tutors" or "college counselors", as they were variously called. They were a splendid group of young people, intelligent, concerned, level-headed, fine models for the students. In the future, perhaps more time could be put into their training, prior to the session and during it (Dartmouth excepted). Also, for best results, teachers, as at Oberlin and Princeton, should encourage these counselors to attend classes and participate in discussion in order to see their students in the classroom situation as well as in the dorm and on the playing field.

In several situations, I saw the importance to a summer program of a Negro educator of experience, intelligence, and poise, close to the top administrator (if he is white). The counsel of such a Negro in matters of policy and discipline can be crucial.

I strongly favor a cooperative school and college effort like that of the Pittsburgh Public Schools and Carnegie Tech, with teaching shared equally by school and college people. In any event, in my judgment, a program gains a great deal by the presence of at least one college teacher.

I also believe that greater use could be made of first-rate teachers in the independent schools, many of whom are deeply interested in the disadvantaged and would like to help. These teachers are often better than available college teachers and much easier to recruit.

I give very high marks to the Oberlin idea of bringing a teacher along with half a dozen students from the same school. This insures follow-up and continuity of the best sort.

In regard to the composition of student bodies in these summer programs I urge special attempt to recruit white boys from the South. Their influence, upon return, might be of great value.

The following is a quote from a theme by a Huntsville, Alabama, white boy at the Yale Summer High School:

"This program at Yale has given me my first opportunity for personal contact with an integrated situation. My gradual change from a staunch segregationist to whatever I may be now has given me insight on how the South can change itself. I hope to work among my own people that they may have some of the same experiences I have had."

Setting

I continue to be astonished that so many "disadvantaged" youngsters can be persuaded to do hard, non-credit, academic work in the summer. The appeal is in part, probably, the adventure of going away from home and in part the prestige of being on a college campus. Therefore, whenever possible, these sessions should be held on college campuses (or those of some of the large independent schools, preferably near the cultural opportunities of a city).

Size and Cost of Programs

Although most of the enrollments in these programs were in the neighborhood of 50, I see no reason at all (except financial) why they should not be at least 100, as in the successful Yale program. Perhaps they could be appreciably larger, as are summer sessions at Andover, Exeter, Mt. Hermon, and St. Paul's.

The cost of these programs appears to be around \$1000 per student. From what I gathered, staff salaries did not seem excessive. The ratio of staff to student of never more than, and sometimes less than, 1 to 5 is perhaps higher than is necessary even for the "disadvantaged." Classes were frequently smaller than they need be, in my judgment.

Follow-up Plans for Next Year

Those who have shaped these programs have been too sharply pressed by the task of conceiving and administering good shows to think concretely, to any great extent, about what happens

next. At least, such appeared to be true at the time of my visits. At each college, there was talk of plans to keep in touch with students next winter, but nothing much of a definite nature. Everywhere, the hope was to keep close track of the students' academic progress and of their well being in terms of attitudes and values through reports and staff visitations, perhaps through "alumni" newsletters and the forming of little clubs of kids who had been to the same session.

Many basic decisions regarding next year remain to be taken. What youngsters will they take? The same group or a new batch? What basic changes in program should be made? I hope that staff and the supporting foundations can make these basic decisions early enough to save lots and lots of time for recruiting students and staff.

Long-range Evaluation

I see an urgent need for careful evaluation of the long-range effects of these summer schools for the disadvantaged. We must find valid ways to determine what is being achieved. The needed research is not within my special competence, but common sense would indicate, I should think, the inclusion of measurement of academic gains (skills and knowledge) and attitudes and values in a broader sense to include attitudes towards learning, levels of aspiration, self-image, self-confidence, etc. We would also want to know how the summer students were received on their return to their winter high schools and what impact they made on these schools and their friends. In the case of Dartmouth's ABC boys we would want to discover the long-range effects on these individuals of more or less permanent "uprooting" from their home environments and, if possible, what appears to be their contribution to society as a result of their opportunity.

I don't see how the necessary research can be carried on without control groups of roughly similar youngsters who do not attend a summer high school. To set up such groups takes planning and time. That is why it seems important to me to initiate plans for long-range evaluation well before the start of next summer's programs.

With this in mind, I wonder whether it might be profitable to bring together, in the fall, those in the Summer Sessions already at work on this problem, such as Dr. Wessman for the ABC program, Sheldon Wilcox in the Princeton program, and Professor Leonard Doob, adviser to the Yale Summer High School. A pooling of research and evaluation plans surely should be of help to all.

I have a copy of Dr. Wessman's 20-page plan of research and evaluation of the ABC program, which Dartmouth is submitting to the U.S. Office of Education for financial support.

A Review of Key Questions

I hope that some sort of pooling of experience can be had next fall by means of a conference of leaders of summer programs for underprivileged high school students. Here are possible items for an agenda.

1. Will a combination of good traditional teaching, using traditional subject matter, plus expert individual guidance and real concern for the student do the job? On the whole, this is what I saw this summer.

2. If so, what is the ideal program of studies for these summer sessions? Most of the 1964 programs concentrated on English and Math, but Princeton had no Math and Oberlin did not require English. What is the right number of required subjects? Of electives? What is the place of specialized reading and study skills courses? How much time should be devoted to study outside of class? Should grades be given?

3. If a conventional approach does not work well and a radically new approach both in materials and in methods is indicated, how should we go about getting it?

4. Granting that the teaching must start where the youngsters are, with full recognition of deficiencies in background and poor habits of study and very uncertain motivation, how rigorous and demanding should the program be?

5. Are good attitudes and values best developed directly by exhortation, counseling, rewards and penalties, public recognition, etc.? Or are the attitudes we want students to acquire mainly the by-products of pride in the development of new skills, new knowledge, and new insights gained from the right kinds of experience?

6. With what age group can a summer program make the most progress? I personally hope that more programs can be devised for younger boys and girls. Oberlin is the only one with stu-

dents as young as the 8th grade.

7. Is it better that the enrollments of these sessions be made up of youngsters from many cities and schools so that the "seeds will be widely sown"? Or is it more effective to concentrate on a few schools and a few cities so that the impact will be greater when a group, instead of an individual, returns?

8. Should kids be uprooted "for good", so to speak, as in the program of Dartmouth and the independent schools? Or, on the whole, is a summer experience and return to the home environment better, for society if not necessarily for the individual? What are the criteria for judging? (I understand that Mt. Holyoke College would like to launch an ABC program for girls in conjunction with the independent girls' schools).

9. On which "disadvantaged" geographically is it best now to concentrate? The Director of Dartmouth's ABC is persuaded that his program does more for the southern boy than for a youngster out of Harlem or a northern city. Impressions of other directors would be interesting.

10. How much "before and after" objective testing should be done to measure gains? In some sessions this kind of testing was used extensively, in others very little.

Alan R. Blackmer
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