

Upward Bound Set

War on Poverty Drive Will Test New Educational Concept

By Gerald Grant
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A revolutionary educational concept will be tried out in the summer of 1966 when the War on Poverty's Upward Bound program moves into high gear. The idea is that the atmosphere of defeat inside many slum high schools can be dramatically changed if enough students are intellectually "set on fire" by exposure to high quality summer programs on college campuses.

This will be a major new thrust of the Upward Bound program as it moves out of the token phase. Designed to prepare slum youths for college, Upward Bound started last summer as a pilot project for about 2000 students.

A total of \$20 million will be pumped into the program this year for projects on about 200 campuses enrolling ten times as many students as last year.

In the pilot projects last summer, a few underprivileged students were selected from each high school, most of whom were seniors. Sent to places like Dartmouth and the University of Oregon, they were given intensive remedial training and ego-building counseling.

After the summer sessions, 1340 enrolled in college and those who had been juniors went back to high school.

Two things were wrong with this, explained Richard T. Frost, the new director of Upward Bound. The seniors had only "one summer of happiness," not enough in some cases. And many of the juniors who put their nose to the grindstone when they returned to their schools were labeled as sissies. In any event, their changed habits had little impact on their schools.

Thus a key feature of this year's Upward Bound effort will be to select clusters of students from each slum high school. In a big city, this might mean 50 to 60 students from one school.

Secondly, colleges are instructed to do most of their selecting from the sophomore and junior years.

If 60 students are picked from the sophomore class each year, this would mean that there would be 180 students with Upward Bound training by the time the original group become seniors.

Frost argued that this would be enough to change the academic tempo of a big city high school.

In many tough, inner city high schools, said Frost, the teacher announces an assignment and "the kosher thing to do is to ignore her. Maybe if there are 20 Upward Bound pupils in that class, the kosher thing to do will be to do the assignment."

Classroom discussion will perk up as youngsters who enjoyed the give and take of seminar discussions on the campus will want more of the same during the winter, he said.

"And suddenly a noticeable number of youngsters who never talked about going to college will be talking about it, and this will have a ripple effect," he added.

By picking youngsters in the sophomore year, Frost believes that greater risks can be taken because colleges will have three summers to work with deprived youth.

One of the disappointments of the pilot programs was that some high school counselors tended to nominate outstanding students for Upward Bound, showing they thought of it merely as "a prize or reward for seniors," Frost said. They missed the poor performing (and sometimes nasty) students with hidden talents.

Finally, it is hoped that the cluster plan will affect the teachers, who in some cases have low expectations for deprived students. If large numbers of their students succeed in Upward Bound programs, the teachers may begin to look at all students with a different

eye. Frost cautioned, however, that the lower schools shouldn't take all the blame. He said that most colleges, including Oregon's Reed College, from which he is on leave as vice president, have succeeded by "rejecting kids, not by educating the tough ones."

The typical American college is no better at educating deprived youngsters than the high schools, he asserted.

As the Upward Bound program expands, he went on, it will be interesting to see what "happens to the college social system." Will youngsters from Harlem and Watts and Carle Place "put on beanie and join the crowd or will they picket the fraternities?"

In Frost's view, "if all we do is make these kids middle class we will have done the Nation a disservice by squelching some of the marvelous characteristics of the underprivileged — their warmth, their capacity to take failure and keep bouncing, their general lack of a sense of guilt about things."