

State of Washington
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Olympia

May 10, 1968

BULLETIN NO. 74-68

TO: County, Intermediate District, and School District Superintendents,
Elementary and Secondary School Principals

FROM: Louis Bruno, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Intercultural Relations

In December of 1966, the State Board of Education approved a general policy statement related to the broad field of intergroup and interpersonal relations. The policy statement recommended action on the part of school districts to assure equal opportunities in education to all children and youth in our schools. These recommendations were transmitted immediately to the local school districts and superintendents by the State Superintendent. District superintendents and boards of education were directed to take steps appropriate to their immediate implementation.

The State Board of Education recognizes that racial imbalance in Washington schools is closely related to residential segregation patterns. However, creative efforts by local school districts can do much to reduce or eliminate segregation.

The State Board of Education is aware that local school districts are moving affirmatively to assure equality of educational opportunity. However, much more needs to be done.

One of the proposals of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction given to the State Board of Education (December 4-5, 1967) is to give leadership, consultant service, and technical assistance to school districts seeking solutions to the problems related to racial imbalance and de facto segregation, and to encourage more productive liaison between educational and community agencies. This is being accomplished under Title IV, Civil Rights Act of 1964. As of May 1, a new section on Intercultural Relations has been established in our Division of Curriculum and Instruction. Mr. Warren Burton, formerly of the Seattle Public Schools, has been assigned the responsibility of supervising this program. Mr. Burton will be assisted by an Associate Supervisor to be named in the very near future.

The responsibility for finding solutions to the problems of intergroup and interpersonal relations incident to segregation must rest primarily on local boards of education and their administrative staffs. Under existing law in the State of Washington such matters as the establishment of district boundaries and attendance areas; the selection of school sites; the solution, assignment, and promotion of personnel; the adoption of instructional materials and the determination of program; and the determination of pupil-personnel policies and procedures fall within the authority of the local school district.

The factor of local autonomy is an important one in finding solutions to the problems of desegregation. Many local boards and their administrative officers have had limited experience in handling problems of minority groups. There are no "pat" solutions to the emerging problems and local boards must search for answers applicable to local situations.

With a competent staff, we hope to be able to render assistance - valuable assistance - in a number of ways:

1. To provide leadership to districts in analyzing issues in the area of interpersonal and intergroup relations.
2. To provide assistance to local districts in re-examining pupil personnel practices and procedures relating to minority groups.
3. To give leadership to school districts on a statewide basis in a curriculum development program to the end that more adequate recognition be given at all levels to the contributions of minority groups to our total culture.
4. To stimulate dialogue at the local level between the schools and other public and private agencies concerned with minority group relations.
5. To assist districts in assaying in-service needs of teachers in coping realistically with human relations problems.
6. To assist local school districts in developing personnel practices and employment procedures which assure equal opportunities to all.
7. To stimulate the study of interdistrict and intradistrict organization as it relates to the solution of problems of de facto segregation.
8. To consult with teacher-education institutions in the evaluation of existing programs in interpersonal and intergroup relations.

The Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction recognizes the paramount importance of this issue. It is prepared to cooperate with local school districts in their efforts to provide equal educational opportunity.

We would like to learn from you what courses of action taken in your district have been found to be especially effective and what types of assistance are needed. Finally, we would appreciate your opinion with reference to further action that should be taken -- at either the local, state, or federal level -- to fulfill our legal and moral obligation to provide equality of educational opportunity.

The State Board of Education knows full well that this request adds to your already heavy work schedule. However, your cooperation and assistance will enable all of us to discharge more effectively our respective responsibilities. If questions occur to you, please feel free to contact my office.

Chester D. Babcock
Assistant State Superintendent
for Curriculum and Instruction