

Consent decree desegregates

The Department of Justice negotiated a comprehensive school desegregation agreement with the South Bend, Indiana school system today, the first time that a school district outside the South agreed to consent decree with the government before litigation.

Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti said a civil suit and the decree were filed in U.S. District Court in South Bend.

The decree, which was obtained after 10 months' investigation by department attorneys and discussions with school district officials, requires the desegregation of teaching staffs this fall and the desegregation of students by the start of the 1981-82 school year.

South Bend has 6,000 Blacks among its 27,000 public school students, a 22 percent ratio. Forty-five percent of the Black students are concentrated in eight of the district's 39 schools.

The decree requires school officials to prepare a desegregation plan by next September 1 providing that the percentage of Black students in each school be within 15 percentage points of the total percentage of Blacks in the school system.

Deadline for complete implementation of the student assignment plan is the beginning of the 1981-82

school year.

The decree further requires that all racial groups share as equally as possible any additional student transportation that may be necessary to achieve desegregation.

Other key features of the decree:

-- Any school closings required by the plan will also be designed to spread the impact among all racial groups as equally as possible.

-- The plan must include staff training, curriculum evaluation and revision, comparable facilities, and substantially equal discipline practices.

-- The plan must provide equal educational and extra-curricular programs for each school serving similar grade levels and similar student needs.

-- By the start of the 1980-81 school year, each school's faculty must reflect the average racial composition, teaching experience, and teaching disciplines of all the teachers and staff in the school district.

-- Children of other nationalities shall not be subjected to extreme isolation under the desegregation plan and the plan should not preclude special programs for them.

The suit filed with the decree charged the school board, superintendent, and coporation and their predecessors with violation of the

Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by engaging in intentional acts of racial discrimination in student and faculty assignments.

All public schools in Indiana were segregated by law until 1949.

School officials denied that they had discriminated intentionally and asserted that it is official policy to remove racial imbalance and to ensure equal educational opportunity.

In reaching the settlement, the government and school officials agreed that litigation would require a substantial expenditure of public funds that more appropriately could be used to achieve the educational goals of the school system.

Drew S. Days, III, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Civil Rights Division, commended school corporation officials on their desire to reach a voluntary agreement.

"School desegregation is accomplished most smoothly and effectively when school officials and the community are behind it," he said. "For years, we have urged school boards to desegregate voluntarily."

Mr. Days also stressed that the Justice Department continues to believe that local school authorities can best develop a specific desegregation plan tailored to the needs of the particular community so long as the plan fully meets constitutional standards.



Delta Sigma Theta members Gladys Hedgman and Sherra Neal tutor Patria McCoy and Martin McLaurin at North Branch Library for Delta tutorial project. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

OSU research explains reading problems

Research by an Oregon State University educator has found there are predominantly two types of reading disorders among young students, and they are closely related to the functions of the cerebral hemispheres of the brain.

R.N. Malatesha, assistant professor of education, reached those conclusions after a five-month study of reading problems among 90 first and second graders at South

Shore Elementary School in Albany.

"Results of the study show that children with one type of reading problem predominantly made reading errors that were sequential in nature. The other group made reading errors that were simultaneous in nature," said Malatesha.

An example of a sequential reading error, according to the professor, is when a person writes

"tebl" for table. And, an example of a simultaneous error is "faete" for father.

Malatesha explained it is now known that the two cerebral hemispheres of the brain have different functions.

"Generally, in most normal persons, the left hemisphere is the seat for language and speech, or for information that is sequential.

"On the other hand, the right hemisphere is the seat for music and painting, for information that is simultaneous in nature. However, there is always the transfer of information from one hemisphere to the other."

Malatesha said that in a small percentage of children—for reasons not clearly known—these functions get mixed up, they are differentially represented in the hemispheres.

"This differential representation is supposed to be responsible for learning problems," he said, "particularly in reading."

"But many studies have used only one task like a psychological test, linguistic test or neurological tests to determine their relationship to reading at the first and second grade levels."

The educator also administered dichotic listening tests to assess hemispheric asymmetry. In those tests, two different stimuli were presented to both ears simultaneously with the aid of a stereophonic tape recorder.

"The idea behind administration of dichotic listening tests," said Malatesha, "is that since the neural connections are stronger at opposite directions, those stimuli that come to the right ear mainly go to the left hemisphere and vice versa."

"We found that reading disorders can be better predicted with the administration of both the dichotic listening and psychological tests, and the prediction was more successful with the second graders."

"The education implication of the study," he added, "is that children can be identified as having reading problems at the second grade level, and this in turn is related to their hemispheric func-

tions. So our teaching should be adjusted accordingly."

Malatesha said a follow-up study is planned next year to look at the performance of the same children at a later grade level.

"A previous study has shown that if children are diagnosed as having reading problems at the first and second grade levels, 85 per cent of them were brought to normal classroom levels. But if children are diagnosed at the fifth to seventh grade levels, the success rate is only 10 to 15 per cent."

"This difference also relates to the increase of myelination sheath, the chemical that helps for a faster relay of information," said Malatesha.

The reading study was funded by a \$1,000 grant from the OSU Research Council. Assisting Malatesha in administering tests and several other aspects of the study were graduate students Cheryl Williamson and Pat Champion.



Pacific Power

Citizen of the Week



A recent arrival whose presence is felt in the community is Benjamin Priestley. A native of New Orleans, Priestley attended school at Tougaloo in Mississippi, at the University of Michigan and at Case Western Reserve. He holds a Master of Social Work degree.

After teaching in New Orleans, working in social work administration in Cleveland and serving as review editor of Black Collegian magazine, Priestley came to Portland at the suggestion of a relative. He is presently Associate Director of Metropolitan Family Services.

Priestley is Vice President of the Portland Chapter of the National Association of Black Social Workers; a member of the Sabin Neighborhood Association board; and Sabin's representative to the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods. He is active in the Black United Front.

He is a serious collector of jazz records.

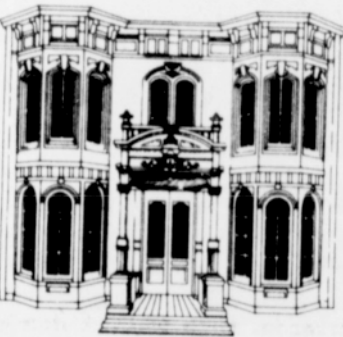
Priestley and his wife, Clara, have two children; Ayinde is six and Nneka is three.

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Regardless, when you call us we will arrange for an initial consultation at your convenience. Cost: \$20. We probably can't solve anything in this meeting, but it is a chance for you to explain your particular problem and for us to give you some idea of what it'll take to reach a solution. If you want us to proceed, we'll give you an estimate of the fees you should plan on. In writing.

