

Black children can learn to read!

(Continued from page 1 col. 6) tell them what the boundaries are and how to reach them."

Once she had been successful with one class, she decided to try a whole school. She was appointed principal of a new 1400 student K-6 grade school. Sixty percent were poor Blacks from rural Mississippi, in Chicago for less than a year and so ineligible for welfare. "Some of these people were in desperation and poverty like you've never seen." Their language were so different that even the Black teachers could barely understand them.

Most of the teachers were first year teachers, about 60 percent Black. The teachers did not reject the children, but made an active effort to learn to understand them. This school came from the bottom of the district to the 50th percentile (district average) in one year.

"Black children can learn to read and they can learn to read in a reasonable amount of time but it takes a commitment and it takes a dedication in order to do it. In required commitment; it required high expectations; it took dedication to the task.

Taking the principalship of a new high school at the crossroads of four warring youth groups, she got the confidence of the gang members and turned their competition and allegiance to the school.

That school's senior class sent 30 students to the Ivy League colleges and had the nation's only Black National Merit Scholar.

Dr. Sizemore is currently studying schools in Pittsburgh that are Black, poor and high achieving. A school that is entirely composed of public or housing project children is well above norm in all grades but one in reading, where all grades are above grade level in math.

"I'm telling you then success stories because I want you to be convinced when you go back to these schools where little Black children are sitting that they can learn. They can learn if you change the environment in which they sit so that it is conducive to their learning."

Characteristics of achieving schools are:

They all group for reading and mathematics in skill mastery levels. Children are tested and are aware

that by mastering skills they can move to higher groups. A test is given at the end of each unit and this principal is sent the results. If the child is not progressing as the principal thinks he should the teacher is called into a conference and an assessment is made of the problem.

"The school assumes responsibility for skill mastery and sees that it is continuous and that progress is always made for each of these children. When a child comes into the school, that child is assessed in reading and arithmetics and a skill level placement made. Every teacher is responsible for knowing what this is and for making an accurate assessment."

Dr. Sizemore noticed that the Portland school district school desegregation plan's reference to discipline does not define discipline. "We don't want to define discipline. We don't want to define discipline because we do not really want to say what it is we really are talking about. What we really mean when we say discipline is 'command obedience.'"

Dr. Sizemore's definition of discipline is routinized behavior that

is used by an individual in search of a goal. Conflict between students and teachers is a conflict of goals and negotiation is needed. "No matter how you try to force, if you don't consider where the kid is trying to go, what the kid is trying to say, you will keep on pushing and pushing until the kid is out."

Successful "poor Black" schools now being studied in Pennsylvania were unusual in that they did not suspend children or relegate children to the special education classes where Black children are now being dumped. "Some of Portland's scores look suspicious," she said. In 1979, 22 per cent of the children in special education were Black -- that cannot happen by chance. "Somebody has to do this on purpose." It needs to be investigated and the district's practices need to be investigated.

"Discipline problems" are disproportionately Black males. "This problem is persistent because we refuse to take note that we have some dangerously racist conditions going on in our schools which have become policy; and we are using that policy against the children."

"The whole thrust of multicultural education has to do with the eradication of those policies. The first dilemma black boys have in public school is how to conform to institutional standards that oppose those of the community from which one comes, where one must struggle to survive."

For this reason, teachers must let the class know the rules and have no double standard -- whites and Blacks, boys and girls.

Discipline is an integral part of the instructional program. Proper programs with high expectations that take into consideration race and sex in a positive, constructive way are not separate from discipline. It is the responsibility of the teacher to have high expectations of every child, to map a learning program to help him master skills, and to teach the child to respect others though respect for him. "These things go hand in hand and you cannot tear it apart and treat it separately. You cannot have discipline without knowing how to teach reading and math. You cannot ask for discipline when you do not know the learning map for that

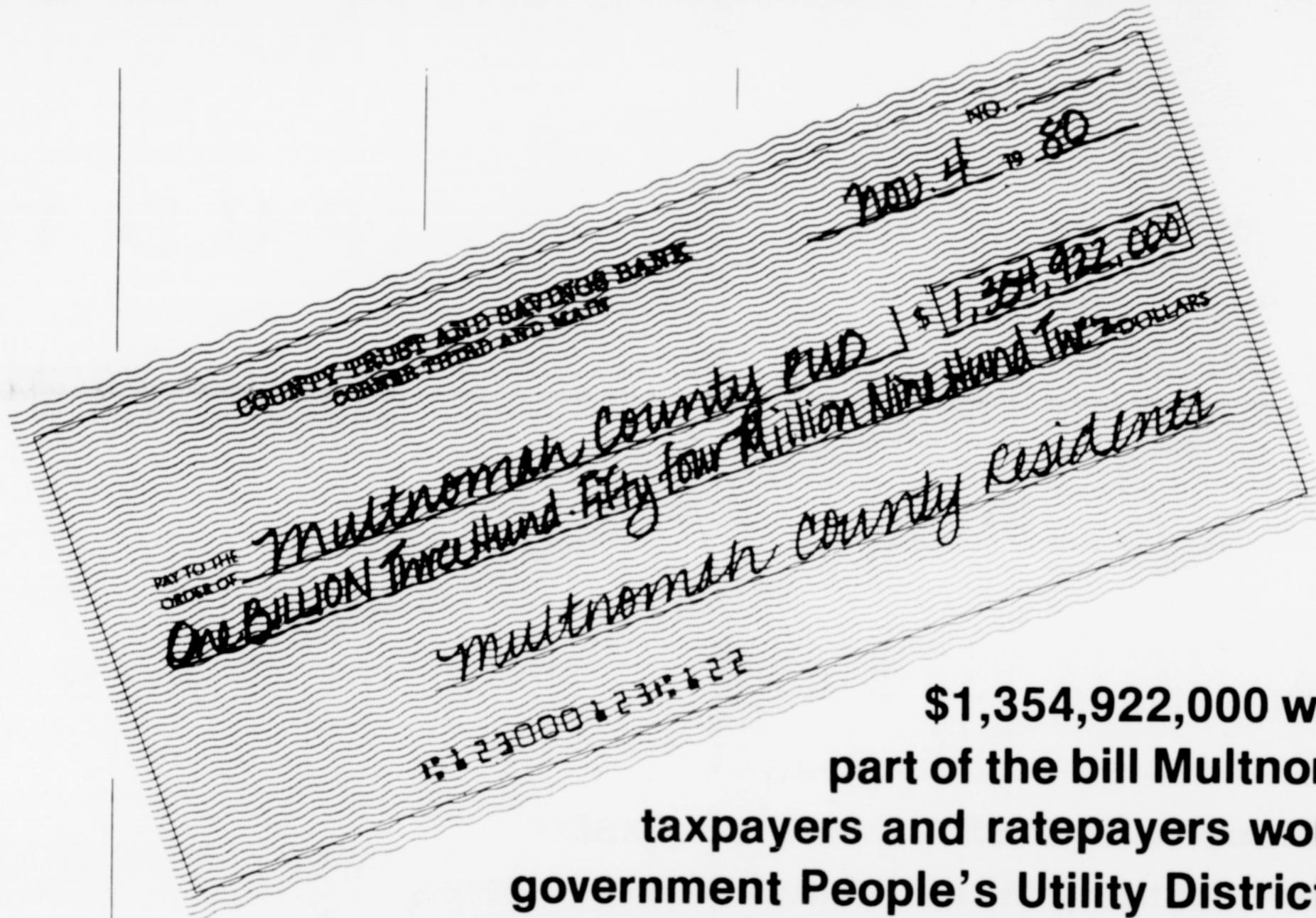
child and know what he needs to learn."

Dr. Sizemore told the *Observer* that current wrongs will be corrected only when someone from the community believes "that children who are Black and poor can learn to read and write and learn. And when that happens, those people can mobilize the bias of the community to improve the schools so they do, in fact, see that that happens.

"The Black United Front seems to be the organization that is organizing the most bias for change in the community, so maybe it is the organization can do this.

Regarding mandatory multi-ethnic training for teachers, Dr. Sizemore said, "I think teachers should be held accountable to teach children to read and if the children are not learning to read, I think that teacher should be held accountable for that deficiency. They should not be allowed to shift the buck to parents or anybody else, or to the children themselves. If teachers cannot teach children who are poor and Black to read, they should be dismissed."

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- Engineer's report
- County election expenses
- Salaries and expenses for politician directors and government employees
- Overhead and operating expenses
- Litigation on property condemnation
- Bond payments
- Bond interest and expenses
- Purchasing electricity or building new generating facilities

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