

Staff training at PPS

(Editor's Note: This is the second of two articles concerning multicultural education in the Portland Public Schools.)

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As part of the Comprehensive Desegregation Plan adopted by the Portland School Board in April of 1980, a 33-hour staff training program was implemented to provide systematic training in multicultural education, human relations and communication.

This program has been described by the Portland schools' Community Relations Department staff as "an honest effort to improve interracial understanding among students, parents and the community at large."

Two years earlier, however, in response to pressing concerns of the community, a sharp shift in emphasis in staff development programs had already taken place. At the mandate of the community, a more systematic approach to staff understanding of cultural differences among ethnic groups was initiated.

Among the community groups urging this action were the *Portland Observer* and the Parent Advisory Committee of the federal Emergency School Aid Act. In that year an editorial in the *Observer* called for stepped-up training for Portland teachers and other employees in multicultural curriculum, human relations and cross-cultural communications.

As a result of that new emphasis, a departmental survey conducted in 1979 of participation in education programs indicated that 2,269 teachers and 120 administrators had participated in multicultural education programs of one kind or another.

Despite this impressive record of participation, the Community Relations Department began to develop a more orderly program for staff participation and training as suggested by community groups.

The 33-hour training program begun in 1980 was seen as another step toward building a more systematic approach to staff training.

A cornerstone of the 33-hour program is renewed stress on staff training outcomes which enhance the self-esteem and cultural identity of minority students and which improve racial understanding among all students.

Included in the 33-hour staff training program, now in its second year, is the goal to increase staff knowledge and understanding of black history and culture, the history and culture of other minorities and the impact of problems created by social class.

A new impetus to the staff training plan already in place has come from the student achievement policy recently adopted by the Board of Education.

Since its first year, the 33-hour plan has been subject to many changes and improvements. It has been strengthened through the efforts of staff, community members and national consultants.

Asa Hilliard, prime consultant for the comprehensive plan, and a number of consultants he recommended have been assisting the district staff in the development of the plan. Dr. Hilliard, a nationally recognized expert on multicultural education, is a professor at Georgia State University.

Because unique problems and conditions exist in each school, flexibility in training plans permits a building's teachers to address the identified academic and cultural needs of the students in their school.

The 33-hour program has already made impressive inroads in staff training. However, considering the complexity of the staff training effort—that of changing attitudes, changing perspectives and adding to existing knowledge—it comes as no surprise that Portland's idealistic goal has yet to be met.

These efforts and stumbling blocks are well summarized by Darrell Millner, Black Studies professor at Portland State University, who has been involved in staff training in Portland for three years.

"I view the first two years of the multicultural teacher training effort in Portland as a learning experience," Dr. Millner said. "The difficulty in providing teacher remediation in an area that should have been a part of their formal education is formidable. It is made more difficult by the politicized nature of

its birth as an effort here.

"Without a doubt the district has committed substantial amounts of money and staff energy to this effort. The results have not always been either immediate or apparent, but the process has included mechanisms for continuous review and modification. That many people in the district appreciate the importance of this effort and have worked sincerely for its accomplishment is clear.

"It is equally clear that the objective of the multiethnic instruction has not yet been met here, but at least a start has been made. The key ingredients in a program of this kind are unqualified commitment to its success by the policy-making leadership of the district and the understanding in the general community that you don't undo 300 years of negative education overnight."

Teachers who have completed the training support Dr. Millner's com-

ments. One teacher commented, "I didn't know that my education had so many holes in it—I didn't know a lot of the information about African contributions and history."

Another said, "I understand more now why kids learn in different ways. I want more strategies to meet these needs in my classroom."

The district staff directly responsible for the training program recognizes that the sought-for goal of providing a totally positive climate for all Portland school students has not as yet been met. Nor has the goal of facilitating open two-way communication lines between cultures been fully realized.

Nevertheless, the staff training and development component of the Comprehensive Desegregation Plan is moving ahead and the district is committed to its continuous progress. The Portland school district has taken a giant step toward improving interracial understanding among staff, students and citizens.

Salem NAACP reorganizes

SALEM—The Salem Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is in the process of reorganizing and reestablishing its charter here in the capital city.

A membership meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, May 18, 1982 at the City of Salem Housing Authority Community Room located at 360 Church Street S.E. (between Trade and Mission Streets). A get-acquainted "social" at 6:30 p.m. will precede the meeting which begins at 7 pm.

The Salem Chapter extends an open invitation to all interested and prospective members to come out and support us in our efforts to reorganize and reestablish.

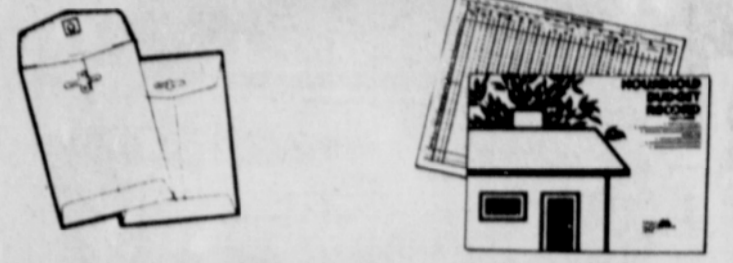
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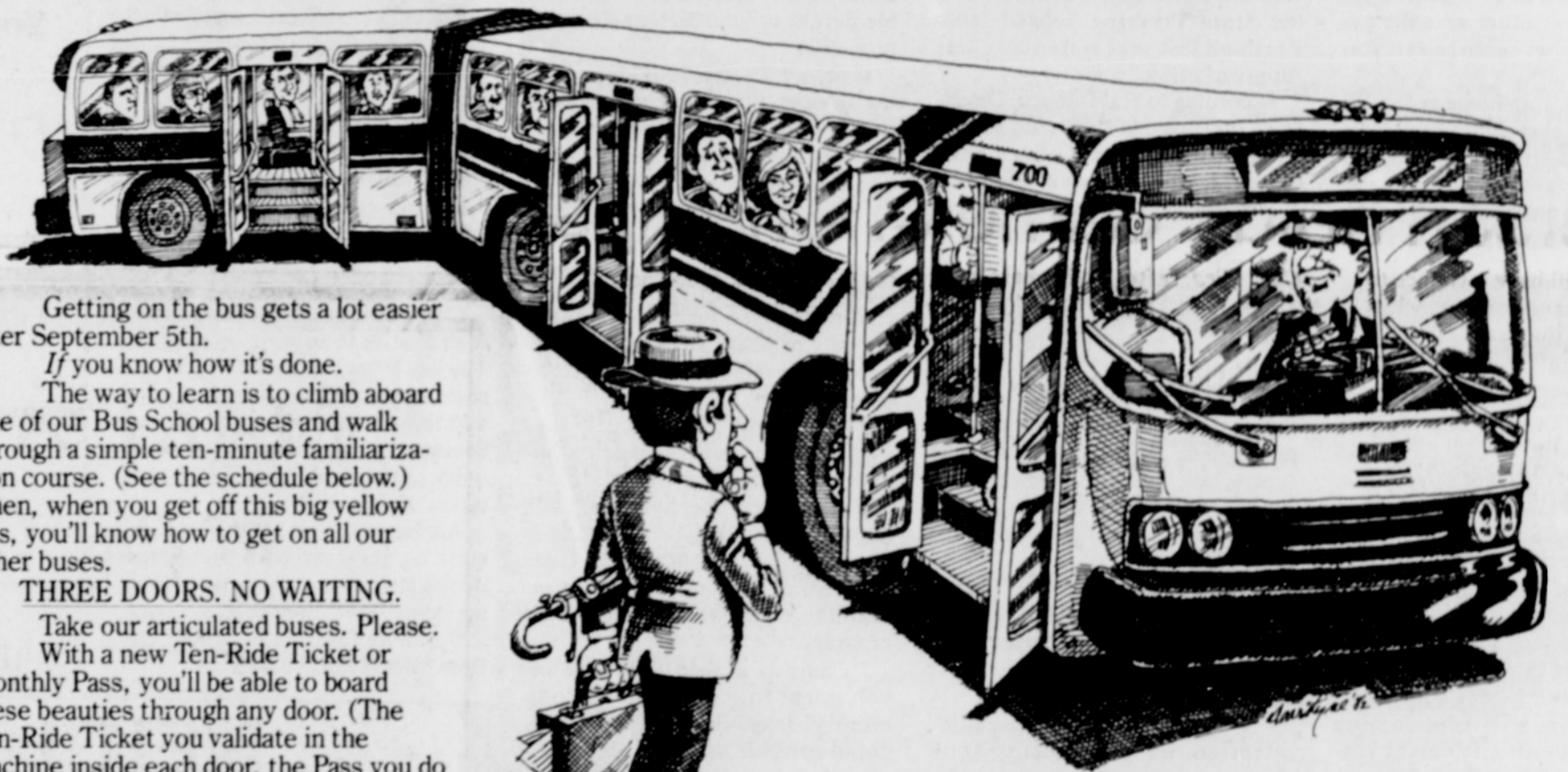
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1. Fred Meyer—Gresham

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