

PORTLAND OBSERVER

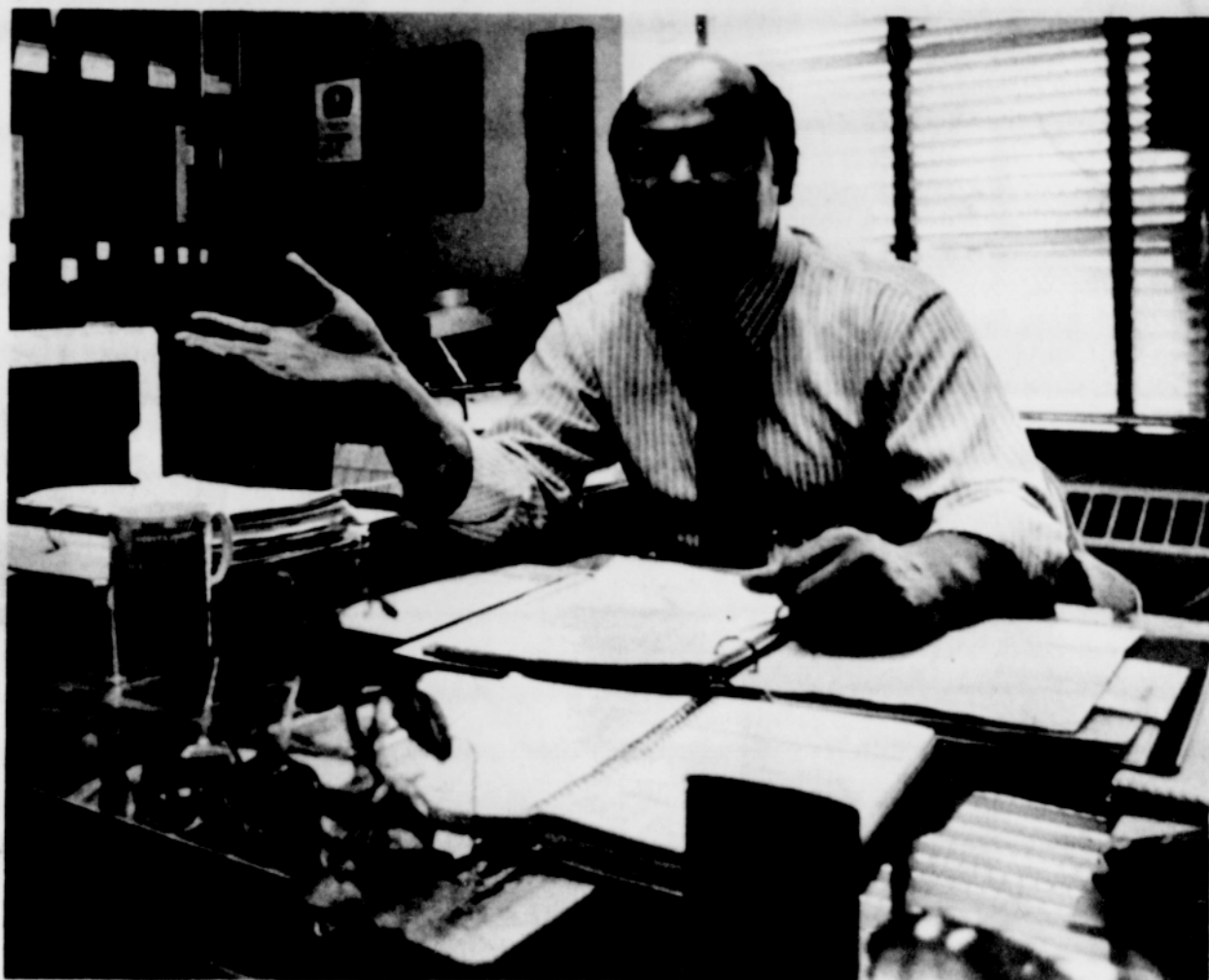
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Two Sections



Miguel A. Salinas, principal at Glenhaven School.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

TAG Administrator Says Parity Possible

by Bob Lothian

The Talented and Gifted (TAG) program in the Portland schools is on its way to becoming the first in the nation to achieve parity between the percentages of minority talented and gifted students and the percentage of minority students in the general student population, according to Larry Fleckenstein, administrator of the TAG program.

"We are moving in this direction," said Fleckenstein. "There is evidence that it is occurring at this time in the Portland Public Schools."

Fleckenstein, who took over as TAG administrator this fall, said the number of minority TAG students has increased this year due to an enrollment drive in North-Northeast Portland schools. A study aimed at overcoming communication problems with parents whose children could qualify for the program should also increase minority enrollment, he said.

If progress continues at the present rate, Fleckenstein predicted, parity could be achieved in the TAG program within three years.

He cautioned that there was still a lot of work to be done to reduce the gap, and that population shifts and other factors could throw the prediction off.

About 3,500 kindergarten through 12th grade students are presently enrolled in the TAG program, which takes the top 7% of "accelerated learners" in each school for specialized classes in three TAG centers spaced throughout the city. TAG offerings include computer science, math, creative writing, journalism and Russian — special offerings not available in the regular schools.

According to school district figures, 231 or 7% of TAG students are black, 284 or 8.6% Asian, 36 or 1.0% American Indian, 33 or 0.9% Hispanic and 2,961 or 82.5% white.

The figures favor white students — minority students make up 26.3% of the school population, but only 17.5% of the TAG population.

To begin closing the gap, Fleckenstein said he made a special effort to contact teachers and administrators in North-Northeast Portland, making sure that they work harder to identify TAG-qualified students.

That paid off with the enrollment of 80 new TAG students, many of them minorities, since the beginning of the school year, he said.

"I rate this as real progress in this end of town," said Fleckenstein, former principal at Applegate and Oakley-Green Schools in North Portland, and former desegregation-integration specialist with the school district.

Just having a new TAG center in North Portland helps, because it brings the program closer to minority students in North-Northeast, Fleckenstein said.

The latest center began operation this fall in the former Columbia School at 716 N.E. Marine Drive.

Meanwhile, over at the new Tubman Middle School on North Flint Ave., the school TAG coordinator backed up Fleckenstein's prediction of minority parity within three years.

Neomia Kendrix, who teaches English at Tubman, said 75 out of 630 students are in the TAG program, about 12% of Tubman's student body.

Kendrix said that 57 new TAG applications from mainly black Tubman students are being considered.

"We're looking toward interesting more black students in the program, and I see that happening," Kendrix said.

TAG is especially important for minority children, she said.

"I think it's a great incentive to encourage children to achieve," Kendrix said. "In order for minority people to make it in society and be competitive when they go out into the job market, they've got to achieve and the TAG program teaches them to achieve."

Hispanic students also need such an opportunity, but "It is very obvious that Hispanics are underrepresented in the TAG program," said Miguel Salinas, principal at Glenhaven School on Northeast 82nd Ave.

Salinas is head of the education committee for the Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement, a group which has made increasing the numbers of Hispanic TAG students one of its goals.

While Hispanics are Oregon's largest minority, with a population of

about 60,000, only 33 Hispanic students are enrolled in the Portland TAG program. That is an increase of five from this fall, however.

Salinas said the Portland school enrollment of 1200 Hispanic students from which TAG students are drawn could be misleading due to a high drop-out rate among Hispanic students and the mobility of some Hispanic families.

He recommended flexibility in TAG admission requirements allowing for special circumstances of minorities.

"A kid who came to this state not knowing English, who now is not only learning it, but doing well in school and going home to teach his family, this kid is talented," Salinas said.

But too often, he said, such students can't qualify for TAG due to culturally-biased requirements.

Salinas pointed out that Spanish is the dominant language of students at certain schools in Marion County.

An interesting experiment, he said, would be to determine how many white students at those schools would qualify for TAG if they were tested in Spanish.

Another problem is trying to communicate the goals of the TAG program to parents who have little American education and who aren't fluent in English, Salinas said.

At Glenhaven, for example, 40% of the students are Asian-American and many of them are on the honor, yet they can't participate in TAG because their parents don't understand the program and its application forms, according to Salinas.

Fleckenstein said that problem may be at least partially solved with a \$30,000 study being conducted now to find ways to increase involvement of parents who aren't fluent in English, possibly through program descriptions and applications in foreign languages. The study will also look at enriching the TAG multi-cultural curriculum, and at developing "culturally appropriate" procedures for judging TAG applicants.

"The real goal is to eradicate cultural and economic bias and put the children in the program who deserve to be in the program," Fleckenstein said. "I see us making a lot of progress in this area."

Professor Analyzes Out of Africa

by Bob Lothian

Could anyone have expected that the film, "Out of Africa," would be anything but a vehicle for Meryl Streep and Robert Redford?

"It exploits Africa," according to Dr. Candice Goucher, a historian in the Black Studies Dept. at Portland State University.

Goucher, speaking at the Albina branch library, said the film uses Africa as a backdrop for the drama about white Europeans, leaving the lives and personalities of African characters undeveloped. That's not surprising, she said, because most "Africa film" do that.

The book by the same name on which the film is based, however, even though it was written by a Danish woman aristocrat who was part of the colonial elite, gives depth to Africa and Africans, according to Goucher.

The author, Isak Dineson, played by Meryl Streep in the film, lived on a coffee plantation in what is now Kenya from 1913-31. She and her husband bought their farm at a time colonial exploitation was at its height. The colonial government of the British protectorate of East Africa and white European

landowners had contrived to seize traditional lands and crowd Africans onto reserves, she said.

"Large sections of the best agricultural land was taken away from the Africans and given to the whites," according to Goucher. The Africans became the servants and workers for the landowners.

That was the setting in which Dineson settled in Africa. But even though the writer's values were rooted in the European aristocracy, and though she was a colonialist, she developed long-lasting friendships with Africans and a sensitivity to their culture, Goucher said.

Some "squatters" continued to live on their traditional land which became her farm. They worked for her, but she set up a medical center and a school for them. She became a spokeswoman for native rights. Because of her activities on their behalf, Dineson became "an enemy of the colonial government" who was vilified as a "native lover," Goucher said.

She was sensitized to the culture, and participated with her African friends in their daily personal and ceremonial life.

That comes across in the book, which describes in detail the traditional practices and ceremonies of the Masai, Kikuyu, and Somali peoples. "These are very valuable historical records," Goucher said.

Even the style of Dineson's writing is in the African oral tradition, according to Goucher.

The book is not without distortions, however, she said, distortions that result from Dineson's inability to completely liberate herself from her aristocratic upbringing and divest herself of colonial values. No matter how close she gets to the Africans and their culture, there is a separation which can be seen in her romanticization of the African experience, Goucher said.

"She really recreates Africa. She equates her experience in Africa as being in paradise. She makes very dangerous generalizations about Africans and African culture, and she talks about the natives in this generalized, romantic, almost paternalistic way."

"She was part of the aristocratic white colonial society exploiting Africans." Keeping these reservations in mind, Goucher recommends the book.

Coalition Enhancing Minorities Voting Rights

by Jerry Garner

In 1965, following the initial passage of the Voting Rights Act, there was a substantial increase in both Black voter participation and in the number of Black elected officials.

However, following the 1968 presidential election, the rate of Black registration and turnout steadily declined. By 1976, 40 percent of all eligible Black voters were not registered.

Recognizing this trend, 35 national organizations came together in 1976 to form the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation, Inc. The Coalition is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt membership organization comprised of 86 constituency-based national organizations. The National Coalition maintains its headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Since its inception in 1976, the Coalition has continued to pursue its goals of enhancing and protecting the right of full political participation by Blacks and other minorities.

During the organization's nine year existence, the rates of Black registration and participation at the polls have steadily increased, reversing the earlier trend.

For example, the 1984 elections saw Black registration up by 6.3 percent over 1980 and Black turnout up by 5.3 percent — a greater increase than for the population as a whole. At the beginning of 1985, over 13 million Blacks were registered, representing 66 percent of the total Black voting age population.

Locally, the Oregon Coalition has been active in voter registration efforts since its formation in 1980. In the 1980

election, the coalition registered 2000 new voters, according to Robert Phillips. Phillips and Judy Knowles Boyer are volunteer convenors of the Oregon Coalition.

Phillips said although the organization has been successful in registering Black voters, they are disappointed by the turnout of voters on election days. "What is the use of registering, if one doesn't exercise one's right to vote?" asked Phillips.

Phillips said the Portland Coalition is focusing on a voter education program. "Some Black voters are not familiar with the voting laws, such as absentee voting, and the re-registering law." "We want to educate them so they can understand the issues, before they cast their vote," said Phillips.



As part of Neighborhood Recognition Week (May 5-10) Mayor Bud Clark and the City Commissioners presented the Second Annual Spirit of Portland Awards for outstanding neighborhood achievement to 6 individuals, 4 groups for their outstanding contributions to Portland's neighborhoods. A special award was presented posthumously to the family of Rev. John Garlington. Among the recipients were (L-R) John Garlington, III, Betty Walker, Martha Burnett and Rev. John J. Jackson, accepting for the Black United Front. The awards were presented during a special Council session Wednesday, May 7, 1986.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

White House Conference on Small Business Held in Portland

by Jerry Garner

The White House Conference on Small Business was held last Friday at an open forum at the Red Lion Motor Inn/Jantzen Beach.

The purpose of the conference was to increase the public's awareness of the contribution of small business, to identify its problems, to examine the status of women and minorities as small business owners, to assist small business

its role as the nation's major job creator, to develop recommendations for government action and to review the status of the recommendations from the 1980 conference.

President Reagan signed the law authorizing the convening of a National White House Conference on Small Business in May 1984.

Small Businesses account for 99.5

percent of all Oregon Business. Small firms in Oregon with fewer than 500 employees generated 54.7 percent of the net jobs added to Oregon's economy between 1976 and 1982. Firms with fewer than 500 employees employed 59 percent of the total workers in 1982. Total employment in Oregon increased 19 percent of the total workers in 1982. Total employment in

Oregon increased 19 percent from 1976 to 1982 to a level of 933,449. This increase was above the U.S. increase of record 635,000 new businesses were incorporated in 1984.

Among the topics discussed at the conference were liability insurance, payroll costs, taxation, finance and capital formation, procurement and innovation, entrepreneurial training and edu-

cation, regulation and paperwork, economic policy, and International 15.6 percent for the same time period.

Black business ownership in Oregon increased 48 percent from 1977 to 1982 to a level of 59 firms. This increase was slightly above the U.S. increase of 46.7 percent during the same time period.

Overall, the number of small businesses have increased steadily

nationwide during the past 30 years. A trade.

Although each of the above are important to small business firms, rising insurance rates is a greater threat to the survival of small businesses. The Reagan Administration is proposing limitations on "non-economic" damages, attorney contingency fees, and punitive damages.