

Elementary Schools Are Key to Learning Smaller Class Size As First Step

"Making classes smaller would permit more individualized instruction and more opportunities to diagnose student learning needs," the president of the 1.8 million-member NEA explained.

"Additionally, we need a fundamental reexamination of elementary education in light of what we now know about how children learn," Futrell continued. "The quality of elementary education often determines students' later success—or failure."

Elementary schooling has generally been overlooked by the educa-

tion reform movement—an oversight that can cost the country dearly in lost human resources, Futrell noted.

"Millions of children have dropped out of school because their special needs were overlooked in the early, formative years," explained Futrell. "It's time to concentrate attention on the pre-kindergarten and elementary learning environment. Children spend 9,000 hours in that environment—more than twice the time they spend in high school, more than the time they spend in high school and college

combined."

Educational research, Futrell added, shows clearly that smaller class size has a positive effect on student attitudes and achievements—especially for low achieving and disadvantaged students.

Futrell noted that current demographic projections on the growth of minority populations make smaller elementary classes more imperative than ever. Tomorrow's schools will face a much more racially and ethnically diverse enrollment. There are already 14 million immigrants in the United States today, representing more linguistic and cultural diversity than this country has ever experienced.

"A growing number of young Americans will be nonwhite, poor, deficient in English, and from broken families in the years ahead," said Futrell. "We have to provide these children with safety nets—smaller class size is one—and give them the full learning opportunities they rightly deserve as American citizens."

Futrell said recent studies have shown that class size affects student attitudes, interests, and motivation. Students in smaller classes, for example, are more interested and involved in subject matter. They also display less apathy and frustration.

Class size in elementary schools currently ranges from 25 to 35 students or more. NEA supports an optimum class size of 15 students at the elementary level.

States, NEA President Futrell also made clear, should help children to a better educational start by providing mandatory kindergarten and making programs for four-year-olds available to all families.

Two years ago, an NEA Task Force on Educational Excellence called on schools to offer developmental education for students at age four.



Overcrowded classes. Where bigger isn't better.

Imagine trying to divide your time equally among 30 or 40 employees a day.

This is the daily dilemma teachers face in overcrowded classrooms. They must spend more time with the low achievers, extra time with the brightest students, leaving little time for the rest of the class.

In most schools, a student gets hours of daily instruction. But when a child needs special encouragement or one-on-one teaching, she or he is lucky to get ten minutes of individual attention a day.

Regardless of grade level or ability, students achieve more as class size is

reduced. A student in a class of 40 will score 10 points lower on national tests than the same student would in a class of 20.

We've also seen that smaller classes decrease discipline problems. And they increase a student's self-esteem while also increasing a teacher's job satisfaction.

Reducing class size is a primary goal of the NEA. We know it is one of the surest ways of getting education back in the picture and on the track of excellence. And that is our goal.

In over 128 years, that's never wavered. We stand for excellence in every classroom, for every child.



National Education Association

THE SUBJECT IS EXCELLENCE

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POIC Needs Help

The first OIC was founded in Philadelphia, Pa. in 1964 and has expanded into a network of comprehensive employment training programs across the nation.

A National Organization Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Inc. (OIC/A) serves the local OIC's in 36 states through an administrative office located in Philadelphia, Pa. providing each affiliate with technical assistance in the areas of programs and fiscal management and program planning and operation.

Locally, the Portland OIC has been operational since 1968 and has provided training and employment opportunities to more than 12,000 economically disadvantaged, unskilled, and unemployed individuals in the Portland Metropolitan area.

POIC offers a variety of programs which impact upon the disadvantaged, encompassing not only employment training but an alternative education system and strives for community economic development.

POIC has been hard hit with severe budget cuts which have almost crippled the existing organization. "We are down, but not out."

POIC is uniquely fortunate in the dedication and commitment of both local and national resources and owes a debt of gratitude to

staff members and volunteers at all levels of the organization.

We call upon those committed individuals to come forward now and help keep POIC as a viable entity in the "grass roots" of our neighborhoods and community.

Where the problems are—where our services are most needed—our goal and reason for being is to do what we at POIC do better than anyone else—FIND THEM, men & women of diverse ethnic backgrounds who have a need, —TRAIN THEM, for every American has held before them "The Dream" of accomplishment, —PLACE THEM—so that they, the formerly disadvantaged, unemployed and unskilled in our community, can become participants in the mainstream of America, here in Portland, Oregon—helping to become stronger individuals and helping to build a better community.

Funds are needed, but also volunteers in every phase of the organization are essential.

For more information, volunteers call Minnie Belle Johnson at 282-4951.

For funding pledges, call Jo Puzi (POIC) at 287-1271. We shall be honored if all the community gets involved in our struggle to maintain a source of pride that Oregonians deserve.

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