

Education

Jefferson High School: Reconstruction III

BY-PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

We thought it would be useful to remind our readers that one of the best models in this country for successful inner city education was conceived and developed right here in Portland. We were right, last week.

The "National Association for Schools of Excellence," a concept of Ron Herndon, the director of the Albina Ministerial Alliance's Head Start Program at the time, convened the first session at Gearhart, Oregon in July, 1988. Two dozen of the nation's most successful principals at "turning bad schools into high academic achievers" were involved in this developmental process.

It is almost impossible to describe the impact of meeting face-to-face with these academic all-stars, previously known only through television and by glowing media accounts. As I detailed last week, they are here, then and now, these gifted minority teachers! Why is it allegedly so difficult to find them that prolonged and expensive searches always seem to be required? These administrators had been hailed for strong leadership and staff development, high expectations, community support.

The privilege of being invited to

witness the initial development was followed on by further strong impressions at the first annual meeting, November 11 & 12, 1989. Again there was that remarkable opportunity to exchange viewpoints and experiences with the very best. More about "appropriate curriculum, clear vision and parental support." Are we seeing that approach in Portland?

These are the kind of encounters that brings one's expectation to the level of the education process as practiced not just talked about. Exactly what it is that is going on with Jefferson High School cannot be fully determined in the first month of the school year. However, that facts calls for no relaxation of vigilance. And certainly, this community shows no sign of that stance. Rather, "Northeast" seems alert and suspicious and determined.

The Portland power structure needs to fully understand that Portland's minorities are not helplessly isolated on a chain of plantations like blacks during another "RECONSTRUCTION" period after the Civil War. It is said that history repeats itself. Many blacks are ready to believe that upon seeing their hopes and aspirations of educational and economic equality dashed against the rocks of American reality.

But the reality is that minorities are coming more to understand how important networking and solidarity is to the process. There is feedback and support from organizations and individuals like the ones we've described this week. And this summer I met both black and white educators on vacation-brought here by community people for their input, and not controlled by the "structure;" science, education, curriculum, administration. "We" are learning.

It was suggested, and only half-jokingly, that "if we wise up completely it may not be necessary to have a special affirmative action program for high school principals." It should be noted that the 1989 first annual conference of the "National Association for Schools of Excellence" was followed by the huge second annual conference held here in October, 1990, 172 principals and administrators by that time. "Northwest Regional Education Laboratory" was a co-sponsor. The successful process continues.

Next week: The critical importance of "feeder schools"-The Science and Technology arm of the Jefferson Trinity (Has Congress halted visas for foreign technicians?).

Portland Public Schools-New Chief Financial Officer

Jim Scherzinger will become the new Chief Financial Officer for the Portland Public Schools effective October 1, 1998. As CF he will direct the financial operations of the District and be responsible for the accounting, budget, payroll, purchasing, information services and warehouse departments.

For the past fourteen years, Scherzinger has served as the Director of the Legislative Revenue Office for the Oregon Legislature where he assisted the Legislature in developing the current statewide school funding system. His office also analyzes the revenue impact of state funding allocations on local school budgets. His estimates are heavily relied on in public policy discussions on school funding initiative and formula based state allocations.

Mr. Scherzinger was born and raised in Portland and graduated from the University of Santa Clara in 1970 with a degree in mathematics. He is currently President-elect of the Western State Legislative Fiscal Officers Association.

Superintendent Ben Canada said, "We feel very fortunate that Jim Scherzinger has agreed to join us. His knowledge of school funding in Oregon is simply extraordinary. My conversations with Jim also revealed to me that he is eager to join our management team and help us create a learning-centered, standards-based and accountable school district."



Chief Financial Officer: Jim Scherzinger

Big Sees Affirmative Action Showdown

Pointing to fraudulent and deceptive practices used in efforts to pass an anti-affirmative action law in Washington State, the president of Blacks in Government (BIG) warned that plans are underway to use similar practices in other states. Oscar Eason, Jr. told delegates attending the 28th Annual congressional Black Caucus legislative Forum that "if they are successful in passing the law on the November 3rd ballot, your state may be next."

"Having failed to persuade the Congress to pass an anti-affirmative action bill, they are now concentrating on the states. They succeeded in California and have not been able to win elsewhere. Now they see the possibility of

a victory in Washington State that could reinvigorate their campaign in other states," Eason said.

Proposition 200 was placed on the ballot when the backer obtained the necessary signatures. Like its California prototype, it would prohibit states from considering race or gender in hiring, promotion, contracting, and other state business. Despite efforts in other states, only Washington State has an anti-affirmative action initiative on the ballot in 1998.

Eason, a resident of Seattle, WA, said many people who sign the petition were confused by language which gave the impression that it would expand rather than curtail affirmative action. The initia-

tive stated that "the state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment, to any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education or public contracting. "This is an effort to conceal the true nature of the measure," he said.

BIG has been a leader in the Washington State fight along with a coalition of civil rights, civic, and union organizations. The organization is composed of government employees from federal, state, and local agencies concerned with excellence in government through equality of opportunity.

Kindergarten survey shows preschool important

Children who attend formal preschool are more prepared when they enter kindergarten than those with no preschool training, according to a 1997 survey of Oregon kindergarten teachers.

The teachers said 64% of the children with preschool experience arrived in kindergarten fully ready to learn. However, 51% of those who did not attend preschool were prepared to learn, according to the teacher's perceptions.

The teachers said students who entered kindergarten last school year were less ready to learn than children in 1992. Thirty-nine percent of the teachers said students arrived less ready to learn than those in 1992, 45% said readiness was about the same, and 16% said children arrived more prepared.

"This survey reinforces what we have been saying all along," said State School Supt. Norma Paulus. "The foundation of a child's academic success starts at birth and is enhanced by a preschool experience."

"The system grinds down as more children enter our public schools not ready to learn," she added. "That's why it is critical that we make a greater investment in preschool programs."

This school year about 47% of three and four-year-olds from low-income families will be served by Head Start and the Oregon Prekindergarten Program.

More than 800 teachers responded to the survey. "We are delighted that nearly two thirds of our kindergarten teachers found our survey important enough to answer," said Anita McClanahan, early childhood education coordinator for the

Oregon Department of Education.

The Oregon Progress Board, which co-sponsored the survey, established school readiness as a benchmark to measure Oregon's

quality of life. "Readiness for kindergarten is a critical benchmark, because it has a domino effect on many other measures," said Jeffrey Tryens, executive director of the Progress Board.

Brooke Hohnstein

Looking for a career

Brooke "wandered" in high school, not sure what she wanted to do. Then she had a talk with her uncle, an optician. "Opticians work with glasses, and that wasn't too interesting to me," she says. But an ophthalmic medical technician—whose duties include diagnostic testing, patient teaching and assisting in surgery—was worth a second look.

In PCC's program, she progresses from course to course with the same small group of teachers and students. "Everyone is really supportive," she says. "The instructors understand you have a life outside of school—I work three days a week—and they're willing to help you in any way they can."

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