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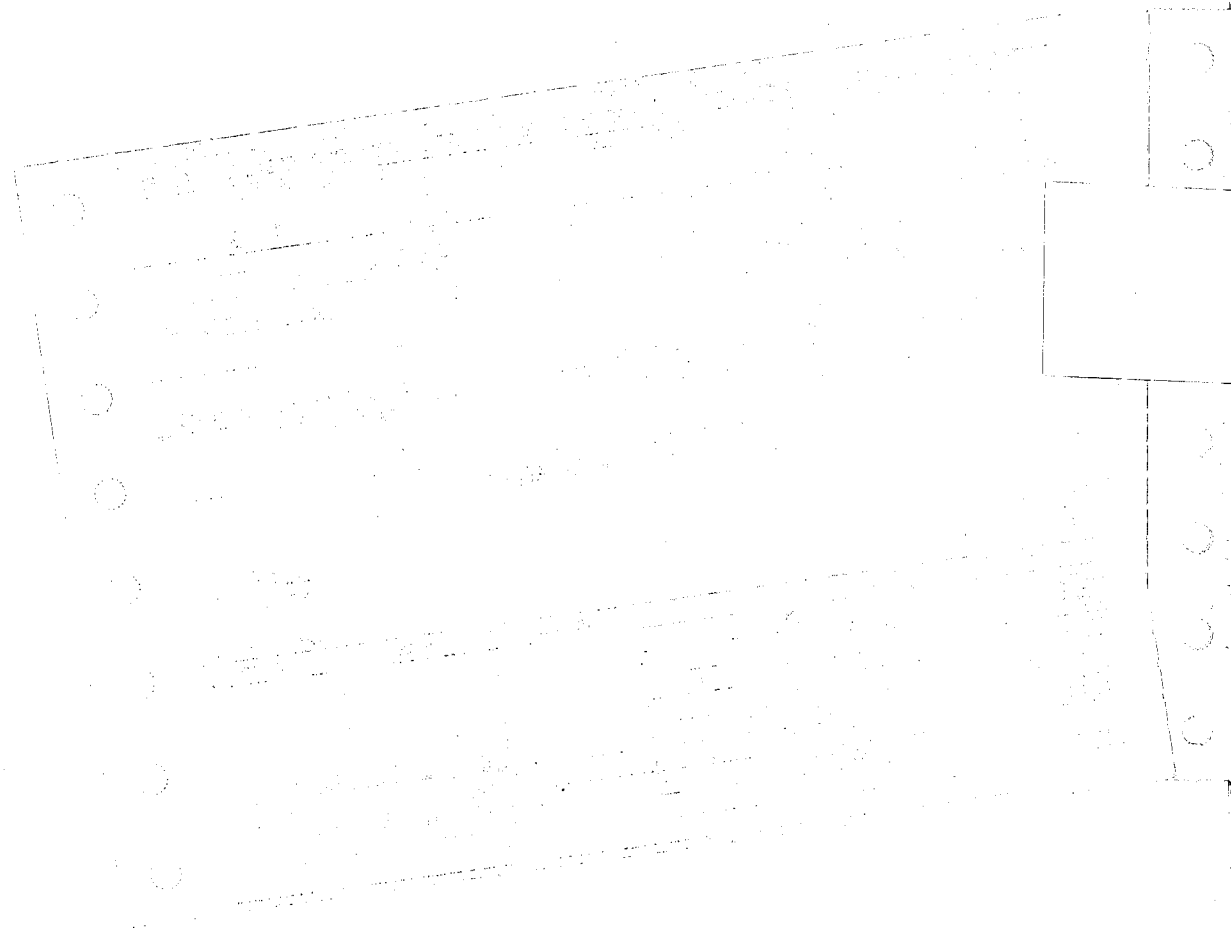
The Frances Nelson Health Center's School Aid Project:

An Effective Approach to
Problems of Black Ex-
clusion from Public
School?

Barbara Rhodes
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Master's Project Committee

Tom Brown
Thom Moore
Louis Wetmore



Q.371.979603
R346f

Acknowledgement

To my committee members:

Thanks for the guidance.

To my beloved husband:

Thanks for the push, baby.

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INTRODUCTION

The deficiencies and inequities of the American public educational system, particularly with regard to its service to racial and economic minorities, are legion. The critical role of public education as both the reflection and projection of American societal trends lends both a sense of urgency and a sense of futility to attempts at amelioration of legally and morally unsatisfactory conditions within the educational system.

However, because people are aware of the singular importance and power of education for societal change, the system's flaws are being attacked on many fronts in communities across the nation. Educators and psychologists are developing better educational tools and methods; parents are grasping the importance of their role in the learning process; experimental schools are to be found everywhere. In response to community demands for input, public schools have been forced to become more a part of the community.

The Champaign and Urbana, Illinois public educational systems are, like similar institutional entities nationwide, going through these changes. Also, like similar systems across the nation, these school systems remain burdened with many problems regarding their relationship with minority students, their parents and their community. At work in the Champaign-Urbana community is the Frances Nelson Health Center's School Aid Project, a black community effort to deal with problems of disproportionate black expulsion and sus-

pension, both of which threaten the survival of black kids in the public school systems. This paper is an investigation into the School Aid Project, the context of the problems it attacks, and possible avenues for improving the program's operation.

The author of this paper, because she also serves as coordinator of the School Aid Project, is in a unique investigative position. She certainly cannot claim to be an unbiased observer, as the objectivity limitations of self-evaluation are obvious. However, her first-hand knowledge of the inner workings of the School Aid Project will, hopefully, add an insightful dimension to the philosophical and practical value of this report.

CHAPTER I
LITERATURE REVIEW

The National Scene

The inability of the American public education system to accommodate the educational needs of those children who do not fit the American white middle-class mold is notorious. Black children, because they represent the largest and most visible "misfit" group forced upon this inflexible system, are the most numerous and most visible victims of the system's rigidity. Inferior black academic achievement, i.e., achievement scores on standardized tests, is the most used criterion of the schools' inability to reach black kids. That black students consistently demonstrate -- and to a greater degree in secondary school years -- lower academic achievement than whites is voluminously documented. (See, for example, Rosenfeld & Hilton, 1971; Patton, 1969; Osborne, 1960) These discrepancies exist in segregated and integrated school systems, though to a much lesser degree in integrated systems, owing to the exposure of blacks to educational facilities and opportunities previously reserved for whites.

This phenomenon of black academic underachievement is multifaceted; economic and educational discrimination are primary influencing factors, as are socio-cultural differences between minority blacks and majority whites. But despite the fact that this complex of contributing factors is not totally comprehended, the reality of black academic underachievement is attributed great meaning

in American society. Rohwer writes:

"Discrepancies between academic achievement of black and white students are distressing enough, but their consequences are even more tormenting. Low grades and test scores in school are associated with high rates of unemployment, arrests for criminal activity, low incomes and all of the appalling side effects that come with these conditions. Thus discrepancies in school success between major population groups can be seen as the source of gross inequalities in opportunities for living..." (1975, p. 4)

School integration, once thought to be the panacea for black educational -- hence societal problems -- has, since its hard-fought realization in many parts of the United States, fallen into grave disrepute with blacks who'd worked hardest for its actualization. A. D. Bell explains:

"Whatever the difficulties of desegregating public schools, they can hardly compare to the hardships endured by black students who have actually obtained their 'rights'. ...Black students are harrassed unmercifully by white students, are suspended or expelled by white teachers for little or no cause (when they are not ignored), are taunted and insulted, segregated within classes, excluded from extracurricular activities, shunted off into useless courses, and daily faced with a battleground of racial hostility, beyond the ability or willingness of courts to rectify. None of this bears the least resemblance to 'equal educational opportunity'." (1972, p. 35)

However, despite the harsh realities of the damage inflicted upon young blacks by a white-oriented school system, Bell insists:

"Education is more than achievement scores on standardized tests. Education should prepare students for living. In integrated schools, whatever the academic value of blacks learning with whites or vice-versa, the two groups are forced to cope with the problems of racial hostility and ignorance which have been imposed upon them by the society in which they will soon take their places. It may not even be too extreme to say that, to the extent that edu-

cation lacks racial conflict, it is insufficient preparation for living in America as it is and as it is likely to be for a long time." (1972, p. 40)

Many persons, including this writer, would take issue with Bell's contention that an integrated public educational system, despite the damage it institutionally inflicts upon black children, is superior to any segregated system; it is certainly superior to the segregated system which was its predecessor, primarily in the fact that black kids now have access to many educational opportunities and facilities that were hitherto denied them. However, racially separate but truly equal educational systems would be the more desirable goal, given the dear price blacks are forced to pay for the "privilege" of going to school with whites.

Realistically, though, such separate systems are currently unattainable, and we are forced to work with the imperfect integrated public school system we have. We really have no choice but to work to eliminate the inequalities and injustices which continue to operate within the public education system, and which continue to educationally and socially handicap blacks.

One of these problem areas is the disproportionately high rate of suspension and expulsion of black pupils from public schools. The school system's rather arbitrary employment of these exclusionary practices is a problem for all students because of their status as "expendables" within the educational system. In fact, the problem of exclusion of children from public school has reached such alarming proportions nationwide as to become the concern of child advocates such as the Children's Defense Fund, which published,

trict's operating policy on disciplinary sanctions. The data clearly indicated that Black students comprised less than 22 percent of the total enrollment in subject schools, but received approximately 40 percent or more of the aggregate total of student suspensions in each..." (1973, p. 66)

In an historic and hotly contested decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in January of this year that:

"...unless their presence poses a physical threat, students cannot be temporarily suspended from school for misconduct, without some attention to due process. At the very minimum, students facing suspension...must be given some kind of notice and afforded some kind of hearing." (Hill, 1975, p. 8)

Conservatives' furor over even such a milk-toast statement -- which does not touch on the even more sensitive issue of imposition of suspensions in retribution for very minor infractions.-- is, perhaps, indicative of the traditional regard afforded students' rights in cases of suspension. The meaning of the decision is merely that:

"A state that has guaranteed its residents free primary and secondary education may not withdraw that right without allowing fair procedures to show that misconduct actually occurred." (Hechinger, 1975, p. 45)

It is, of course, most disconcerting to realize that such minimal safeguards of students' civil rights have not been generally observed, as indicated by the furor generated within the public education community by the Supreme Court decision.

So we are aware that arbitrary and discriminatory exclusion of students from public school is a problem of national proportions. The following description of one community's approach to this problem is herewith set in perspective.

The Local Scene -- One Community's Approach

Description of the Frances Nelson Health Center's School Aid Project

The following description is excerpted from the School Aid Project's first semi-annual report, January, 1975.

Each year, a great number of young pupils, a staggering proportion of them black, experience conflicts within the school system, conflicts which result in the pupils' expulsion or suspension from school. In the Fall of 1974, the Frances Nelson Health Center implemented, on a pilot basis, the Frances Nelson Health Center School Aid Project. This program is designed to intervene into some of the student-school system conflicts in order to reduce the probability that these problems will eventuate in a destructive disruption of the academic process. The Project's involves: 1) developing a sound, positive relationship between the target student and a Project worker; 2) working as an advocate for the student, facilitating changes of unjust school system conditions which hamper the target student's development and maintenance within the school system; and 3) teaching the student skills which enable him to cope within the school system as it exists.

Auspices and Resources. The School Aid Project is, again, a venture of the Frances Nelson Health Center. The Frances Nelson Health Center is a free clinic located in the predominantly black north end of Champaign. The Health Center's philosophy of dealing with all the health problems of the individual -- mental, economic, and physical -- orients it towards community activity in many areas.

A program such as the School Aid Project is a logical and necessary adjunct to the Health Center's "total" health program.

Thom Moore, Ph.D., University of Illinois Department of Psychology, is the Project director. University students who work in the School Aid Project under Dr. Moore's supervision receive psychology practicum credit. In that the School Aid Project is an attempt to utilize community and student manpower resources to tackle a long-neglected community problem, the Project idea is of universal benefit -- black public school students and parents receive much needed help with school related problems; the public school system gets help in one of its most difficult problem areas; and college students earn much desired practical experience while deriving the satisfaction of engaging in meaningful community work.

Project Organization, Procedures and Staff Roles. Directly responsible to the Project director are the Project supervisors: Jules Harrell, M. A., Frances Nelson staff psychologist; Warren Rhodes, M. A., graduate student in clinical psychology, University of Illinois; and Melvin Mitchell, a Department of Mental Health employee whose area of specialization is adolescent services.

The individual caseworkers, who are directly and strictly supervised by the project supervisors, are graduate and undergraduate students from the University of Illinois. They are selected by virtue of their professed interest and desire to work in the School Aid Project, even with full knowledge of the great demands to be placed upon them -- they are to be available to clients at all times, particularly through crisis periods; they

must put forth, in the judgment of supervisors, a 100% effort, for anything less merits a failing grade for the course.

Pupils are referred to the School Aid Project by their parents, by Frances Nelson Health Center staff, or by school personnel. Upon receipt of a referral, a project supervisor and the caseworker to whom the case will be assigned, obtain parental permission for intervention and release of information, and confer with parents, teachers, the student and significant others to define problems to be tackled and approaches to be used. Thereafter, the caseworker is solely responsible for contacts with his client, and must report on these contacts in very frequent consultation with his supervisor. These consultations are occasion for evaluation of caseworker performance, evaluation of client progress, and discussion of problem situations and possible solutions. Each case is also presented and discussed at weekly staff meetings.

Project supervisors meet weekly with the Project director to discuss project activities, caseworker performance, client progress, and administrative difficulties in relating to the Champaign and Urbana school systems. The Project supervisors and coordinator hold necessary meetings with school administrators. The function of the Project coordinator is to maintain records of client contacts, handle correspondence, write project reports, etc. This position is currently filled by Barbara Rhodes, graduate student in urban planning, University of Illinois.

Long-Range Goals. The Project's long-range goals include the effort to entrench the kind of student advocacy proposed by the Project within the community so as to 1) militate against perpetu-

ation of school system conditions which disadvantage black students, and 2) offer the student labeled as a problem by the school system more objective counseling than perhaps either parents or school personnel could give, considering their often heated entanglement in the child's school related problems. Frances Nelson Health Center, a firmly established community institution, is envisioned as the base of operations of the community-entrenched School Aid Project. Once the Frances Nelson Health Center staff have become sufficiently trained in Project functions, the Health Center's sole auspice of the Project will have two advantages: 1) it will provide continuity despite migrating university students; and 2) it will provide continuity despite loss of activity or interest of parents whose children outgrow the Champaign and Urbana school systems.

Parent organization and activism is viewed as a major long-range goal of the School Aid Project. It is often the case that parents of students who are in disciplinary trouble in school are intimidated by the school system, ignorant of the problem situations, or ignorant of their rights and powers as parents. And yet, as the benefactors, so to speak, of the school system, organized parents can be very powerful movers within the educational system. For this reason, it is the Project's plan to work, initially on an individual case basis, to make the parent aware of problem school situations, and the actions he can take to alleviate them. Eventually, the common interests and problems of these parents could be utilized as a lever to achieve their powerful organization

and activism.

Relationship with Champaign and Urbana School Systems. In general, the School Aid Project has encountered much cooperation from school personnel in the search for information concerning alternative education, school policies, etc. There have been, as anticipated, several conflicts between the interests of school personnel and administration and those of the School Aid Project. Not all of these have been resolved. There is the problem, for instance, of the Project's image to school personnel and administrators; some view School Aid as a valuable resource which certainly should be tapped, especially considering the school system's despicable track record in dealing with the school related problems of black students, while others see the Project as a militant threat to the integrity and value of the school systems. There is also the problem of credibility -- not ours, theirs; in the Project's interaction with some school personnel, Project representatives were deliberately deceived concerning the school's intentions and plans involving Project clients. However, communications between the Project and the school systems do remain open, and difficulties such as those described are the exception rather than the rule. There is hope that, in the Project's immediate future, these difficulties can too be overcome.

Case Outcomes and Sample Cases. Table 1 outlines the outcome distribution of the cases handled by the School Aid Project during Fall semester, 1974.

Table 1

Case Outcomes

Number Cases Initiated	10
Number Cases Still Active	7
Number Successful Terminations*	3
Number Unsuccessful Terminations	0

*(Successful terminations encompass outcomes such as high school graduation, placement of student in an educational environment more conducive to his proper development, etc.)

Witness to the potential effectiveness of the School Aid Project approach are the positive results achieved in the individual cases in which the Project has intervened. Brief summaries of a few cases follow.

Case 1: At the time of his referral to School Aid, this client was being staffed by Champaign school personnel, many of whom had concluded that his increasingly uncontrollable school behavior and so-called destructive home environment warranted placement in Adler Zone Center, despite the Center's proven ineffectiveness in dealing with the problems of young black males such as this client. The School Aid Project intervened by :

- 1) forming a very constructive, positive relationship between the client and a project worker;
- 2) demonstrating, in a cooperative program involving school personnel, that the client's undesirable school behaviors could be brought under control;
- and 3) protesting the plans for the client's placement in Adler, and urging the school administration to consider some realistic, more acceptable alternatives. As a result, the client has been given a fresh start, so to speak, in another school, under the supervision of school personnel more capable of dealing effectively with his difficulties, and has, to date, encountered no further problems.

Case 2: This 17-year old student, at the time of her referral to the School Aid Project, had virtually no high school credits, despite her 2 years of high school enrollment, and had, for the Fall, 1974 semester, not attended school at all. Also, the student was pregnant and antagonistic to the school environment, and was entertaining no prospects for completing her high school education. The Project worker, after working with the student to awaken some initiative and motivation, aided the student in identifying and investigating the educational avenues

open to her. At this time, the client is undergoing placement tests for OIC entrance.

Case 3: This 17-year old, a bright student, was in disciplinary trouble with the school system because of his difficulty in relating to school personnel in a non-hostile manner. Also, the student, though a senior, was becoming restless with his school situation and feeling the need to earn money, though he'd been repeatedly frustrated in his search for a part-time job. He was being threatened with expulsion from school because these personal dissatisfactions were manifested in his rapidly deteriorating relationships with school personnel. The School Aid Project worker was successful in building a constructive and supportive relationship with the client, in helping the client to plot and complete a course for graduation from high school by the end of January, 1975, and in helping the client find a good part-time job. This client has been successfully terminated from the School Aid Project.

CHAPTER II
PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Statistics provided by Champaign Unit 4 Schools indicate that, for the 1973-74 school year, 100% of the 5 expulsions and 50-60% of the 775 suspensions (representing about 400 students with at least 1/3 repeaters) involved black students. Urbana School District 116 reports no expulsions and 110 suspensions for the same time period, 34% of the suspensions involving black students. Though figures for the 1974-75 school year are neither complete nor available, this trend is, on reliable estimate, continuing. Black students in both school systems total less than 20% of the total student population: 18.6% in Champaign; 16% in Urbana.

This problem of disruption of the educational process for a disproportionately large number of black public school pupils was the impetus for initiation of the Frances Nelson Health Center's School Aid Project. The particular purpose and problem of this investigation is to more fully evaluate the context of black suspensions and expulsions; that is, to 1) look beyond the statistics on black suspensions and expulsions to gather informed and relevant opinion on causes, possible cures for the situation, and more effective and meaningful functioning of the School Aid Project; and 2) examine the two school systems with which the School Aid Project deals with reference to differences in problem manifesta-

tion, attempted solutions, and receptivity to the School Aid Project approach.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

A. Measurement Tools Used

Personal Interview. The tape-recorded personal interview was used to gather much of the data for this report. The interview was based on 8 questions which, in the judgment of the investigator, reflected the appropriate informational needs of this report. (These questions are presented in Appendix A.) The interview ranged in duration from 50 mins. to 2½ hrs., depending on the degree of respondents' elaboration on responses to questions, and was administered to three subjects.

Questionnaire. A 1-page student opinion questionnaire, formulated by the investigator and edited by Matt Houck, Survey Research Laboratory, University of Illinois, was the other principal data-gathering tool utilized in this report. (The questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix B.) The questionnaire consisted of 4 questions and was administered to a total of 47 black high school students.

B. Subjects

Personal Interview. Subjects for the personal interview were three black school administrators--two with the Champaign system and one with the Urbana system--who were selected for interview because of 1) their race; 2) their positions of influence within their school systems; and 3) interaction with the School Aid Project. The interview subjects were:

- 1) Mr. Taylor Thomas, Director of Student Services for Urbana School District 116. It is through Mr. Thomas' office that administrative consent and cooperation for in-school operation of programs such as the School Aid Project is channelled and communicated to students, staff, and the community. He is, therefore, the School Aid Project's first line of contact within the Urbana school administration.
- 2) Mr. Kenneth Stratton, Director of Community Services and Pupil Accounting, Champaign Unit 4 Schools. As disciplinary officer, Mr. Stratton reviews all disciplinary decisions involving expulsion or suspension, and is, therefore, the principle school administrator with whom the School Aid Project must interact.
- 3) Mrs. Kathryn Humphrey, Member, Champaign School Board. As a school board member, Mrs. Humphrey is required to "hear" all disciplinary cases involving expulsion, change in a disciplinary decision (e.g. extension/revocation of suspension, etc.), etc. Mrs. Humphrey has also, via her attendance at School Aid Project sponsored parent organization meetings, offered the Project informal feedback on aspects of its operation.

Questionnaire. Subjects for the student opinion questionnaire were 47 black high school students: 21 attending Urbana High School, 14 attending Champaign Central High School, and 12 attending Champaign Centennial High School. The Urbana High students were all

members of the school's Black Students Association. All Champaign high school students were randomly selected from the school bus-stop populations.

C. Problems and Limitations

Interview. The tape-recorded personal interview, while perhaps providing for maximum credibility of the investigator and a fluid exchange between interviewer and subject, disallowed total candor on the part of the subject. This shortcoming must be weighted heavily in light of the fact that subjective, intuitive subject matter is the crux of this entire investigation. Also, the persons interviewed, though very important actors in the situation studied, are certainly not -- and may not be representative of -- all the important persons whose views and roles need to be understood if a total understanding of the subject matter is to be gained.

Questionnaire. Questionnaire methods, while allowing a degree of uniformity of data-gathering process across individuals, are subject to the idiosyncrasies of personal interpretation, and certainly cannot be a vehicle for fluent expression on the part of the subject. Also, the random selection of students who responded to the questionnaire cannot, at least numerically, be considered a representative sample of the black high school populations from whom information was sought.

In addition to these limitations on the principal investigative tools used in this report, much of the statistical information necessary to an investigation such as this was unavailable. For instance, racial breakdowns of the student populations in the

various curricula were unavilable from the school systems.

D. Procedures

Interviews. For all three interviews, the investigator arranged, in advance, an appointment with the subject, explaining the rationale behind the request. At the interview session, the researcher simply reiterated the purpose of the interview, set up the recorder, verbalized the pre-formulated questions, and listened to the subject's response, asking for clarification or elaboration of remarks, if necessary.

Questionnaire. Urbana High School. It was arranged with the faculty advisor to the Black Student Association that the investigator would attend the regular weekly meeting of the BSA for the purpose of explaining and administering the questionnaire to the group. The students themselves had only a vague idea of the purpose of the researcher's visit. At the meeting, the investigator explained in full the purpose of the investigation and the need for the students' input. The questionnaire was then administered, allowing individuals as much time as needed for completion.

Champaign Schools. Because the investigator was unable to obtain administrative permission to administer the questionnaire within the school setting, it was necessary to solicit -- from an off-school-grounds position -- students to respond to the survey. In order to do this, the researcher attached a sign reading, "Black Students Please Stop Here", to her truck, and parked the vehicle across the street from the school buildings. during the periods between close of school and arrival of the school buses.

Students who responded to the sign were informed of the purpose of the researcher's endeavors and asked to complete a questionnaire form while sitting on or in the truck.

E. Data Analysis

Questionnaire. A percentage distribution of subjects' questionnaire responses is the only statistical analysis undertaken.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this section, the results of investigative efforts are presented in an effort to clarify the current situation in Champaign and Urbana schools in regard to the following issues.

- A. Desegregation
- B. Racial atmosphere in the high schools
- C. Differential suspension rates of blacks and whites
- D. School systems' approaches to suspension/expulsion problem.
- E. Black parent and community involvement/interaction with the school systems
- F. Criticism of the School Aid Project

A. Desegregation

Urbana. Urbana School District 116 implemented a school desegregation plan in Fall, 1966, and was the first central Illinois educational system to do so. As Urbana had only one high school, desegregation at the high school level was really a moot issue. The real purpose of desegregation at the lower educational levels was to eliminate the tremendous adjustment demanded of high school students by a suddenly desegregated educational environment. Each school in Urbana thus received enough black students to constitute at least 13% of its student body. (Blacks comprise 16% of Urbana's school population.) Bussing of black students has been used to

achieve and maintain this criterion of integration.

Integration of teaching and administrative staff, however, has been less complete; black teachers and administrators total less than 7% of the district's teaching and administrative employees.

Champaign. Champaign Unit 4 Schools implemented its school desegregation program in Fall, 1968, utilizing total bussing to achieve its integration criterion: no. blacks per building = 9% of school's total student body. (Blacks comprise 18.6% of Champaign's school population.)

Black teachers and administrators constitute about 10% of the unit's teaching and administrative personnel.

B. Racial Atmosphere in the High Schools

Urbana. According to Mr. Taylor Thomas, Director of Student Services for Urban District 116, the racial atmosphere at Urbana Senior High School is purely "...reflective of that in the larger society: no better, no worse". Contributing factors in this situation, in Mr. Thomas' view are: 1) the fact that many faculty and school personnel are simply ill-equipped to deal constructively with the racial situation; personal deficiencies and prejudices, many of them unconscious, are impediments to progress in race relations, and prevent development and implementation of system-wide policies to deal constructively and effectively with racial tension and other problems; 2) insufficient numbers of black administrators, teachers and school personnel; 3) social problems

of blacks, specifically, the problems of poverty and the "minority complex".

The responses of 21 Urbana High School students to the questionnaire item asking them to describe race relations at their school are presented in Table 2. In large measure, they support Mr. Thomas' emphasis on the tension in black student-white staff relationships; that is, black student-white student relationships are generally described as good or fair, black student-white teacher relationships are generally described as fair, and black student-white administrator relationships are generally described as fair to poor.

Champaign. Students in the Champaign high schools "...do not react racially to incidents", in the view of Mr. Kenneth Stratton, Director of Community Services and Pupil Accounting, Champaign Unit 4 Schools. This significant change from recent years has been wrought, in Mr. Stratton's opinion, more by the passage of time than by anything else. Relationships between black students and white teachers, however, are strained, mostly because of teachers' racial hang-ups, many of which are unconscious.

Champaign and Centennial high school students' responses to the questionnaire item eliciting description of school race relations are also presented in Table 2. Central High students' descriptions of black student-white student relationships ranged good-fair-poor; their descriptions of black student-white teacher

Table 2

Questionnaire Respondents' Ratings of High
School Race Relations for Current School
Year (1974-5)
(%)

Relations between black students & white students:

<u>School</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
Urbana High (n=21)	4.8%	38.1%	57.1%	0%
Champaign Central (n=14)	0%	28.6%	35.7%	35.7%
Champaign Centennial (n=12)	0%	33.3%	66.6%	0%

Relations between black students & white teachers:

<u>School</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
Urbana High (n=21)	0%	14.3%	71.4%	14.3%
Champaign Central (n=14)	0%	7.1%	64.3%	28.6%
Champaign Centennial (n=12)	0%	8.3%	75.0%	16.6%

Relations between black students & white administrators:

<u>School</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
Urbana High (n=21)	0%	4.8%	57.1%	38.1%
Champaign Central (n=14)	0%	21.4%	21.4%	57.1%
Champaign Centennial (n=12)	8.3%	16.7%	41.7%	33.3%

relationships generally ranged fair-poor, while descriptions of black student-white administrators relations generally ranged fair-poor. Centennial High students generally evaluated student-student relationships good-fair, student-teacher relationships fair-poor, and student-administrator relationships good-fair-poor.

C. Differential Suspension Rates for Blacks and Whites

Urbana. Black students constitute about 16% of the student population in Urbana District 116; yet 34% of the 110 suspensions for the 1973-74 school year involved black students (no expulsions reported for this time period). This disproportionately large representation of blacks among suspended students continues through the current school year, according to reliable estimate.

When queried concerning this trend, Mr. Thomas gave what he believes to constitute the primary determinants:

1) Too few black teachers, administrators, and personnel. Black personnel total less than 7% of District 116 administration, teaching and building staff, offering very few persons with whom black students can identify.

2) Social problems related to poverty, e.g., acts of aggression against symbols of affluence (vandalism, theft, physical abuse, etc.). These are very often the kinds of behavior exhibited by blacks, and the reasons for disciplinary intervention.

3) Social problems related to a "minority complex". In most cases of black suspension, it is not the act for which the

suspension is levied, but the black student's handling of the confrontation with authority which follows. Unlike white students confronted with their own misconduct, blacks will most often verbally abuse authority, or in other ways blatantly exhibit total disregard or insubordination towards the authority figure. As a result of such personal attack, the authority has no choice but to levy a more severe punishment (suspension or expulsion), even though the original offense would have merited only a verbal reprimand, for example.

Mr. Thomas feels this phenomenon to be indicative or reflective of blacks' determination to be totally non-submissive to "whitey". For many black youth, to succumb to intimidation by white authority, regardless of issues of right or wrong or power, is a denial of black virility. Because white youth don't share this hang-up, they can, when confronted by authority, feign contrition without compunction. This is certainly not to say that blacks' reactions are unfounded or unjustified; only that black youth have not acquired the art of "stooping to conquer".

Champaign. Black students make up about 18.6% of the Champaign public school population, but represent 100% of the 5 expulsions from public schools in 1973-74, and 50-60% of the 775 suspensions (representing about 400 students with at least 1/3 being suspended more than once) for the same time period. Reliable estimates indicate a continuation of this trend in the current school year.

Mr. Stratton explains this phenomenon of differential suspension and expulsion rates for blacks and whites in much the

same way as did Mr. Thomas:

1) Black kids' reactions to administrative confrontation -- "jumping bad", insubordination -- are more often the reason for expulsion or suspension than are original offenses. Again, black kids won't stoop to conquer.

2) Problems of poverty. Blacks, because they are more often economically deprived, are more likely to exhibit such behaviors as aggression against symbols of economic affluence.

3) White kids who would tend towards these kinds of behaviors are, for some reason, more likely to drop out of the educational system completely at an earlier time, while blacks remain in the system.

Mrs. Kathryn Humphrey, Champaign School Board member, must, as part of her Board responsibilities, participate in expulsion and suspension hearings. She concurs that, usually, it is the follow-up verbal confrontation between black student and white authority figure, rather than the original offense which merits the disciplinary decision. White kids commit the same offenses, but because they're better prepared to deal with the confrontation, disciplinary action, such as suspension or expulsion is less often taken against them.

D. School Systems' Attempts to Deal with Suspension/Expulsion Problem

Urbana. According to Mr. Thomas, the ameliorative efforts made by District 116 are aimed at curbing suspensions in general,

not just black suspensions. These measures include:

1) Elimination of compulsory study halls. Because study halls are unstructured, students find themselves having large amounts of idle time, and are faced with numerous opportunities to utilize it in less than constructive fashion. To help avoid this kind of temptation, study halls have, for all practical purposes, been eliminated. Students are encouraged, if they have no intention of studying, to leave school grounds during their designated study hall.

2) Suspension hearing. In light of the recent Supreme Court mandate, all suspension cases can be heard by the hearing officer. However, the hearing officer has no power to change the suspension; the hearing merely allows parent and pupil to air their views. Suspension changes can be accomplished only via legal review by the School Board.

3) The District now operates suspension rooms. The major complaint against the schools' traditional suspension policy has been that students have no opportunity to utilize their suspension time in educationally constructive ways. Under the new system, suspended students report to school as usual, but, rather than going to regular classes, spend the school day under supervision of teachers who work with the students to keep them abreast of activities in their regular classes.

4) Alternative education projects. Many students simply will not fit into the traditional public education mold, and their discomfiture results in restlessness and suspension or even expulsion.

Such programs as Education II, an experiment in "storefront" education is aimed at these students.

In Mr. Thomas' evaluation, none of these measures can be really effective. They are all after-the-fact, stop-gap attempts to deal with problems demanding progressive, life-long, developmental solutions. In addition, individual idiosyncrasies make universal efficacy of any one measure impossible.

Champaign. As related by Mr. Stratton, Unit 4 attacks on problems of suspension, in general, include:

1) Active social casework in the schools

2) Vocational programs. Programs designed to give students actual work experience (though the value of that experience may in some cases be questionable) and allow them opportunities to earn regular income are seen as important alternatives for many students, many of whom, because of financial need, disenchantment with school, etc., would otherwise become casualties of the public educational system.

3) Remedial education programs. Often, unacceptable school behaviors are a shield for students' feelings of personal inadequacy in competition with peers who are better educationally prepared. Remedial programs are designed to allow the educationally disadvantaged a chance at educational success.

4) Expanded manpower. By supplementing professional staff with para-professionals -- parents, college students, other community members -- who act as teacher aides, more individual work with students is made possible, thus facilitating maintenance of

student interest and constructive effort in education. Developmental teachers offer even more individual attention to those students seriously deficient in some educational areas.

5) Staff development. The Unit is "moving toward" sensitivity training of staff in order to improve school personnel's capacity for constructive inter-personal interaction with socially, culturally or racially different students.

E. Black Parent and Community Group Involvement/Interaction with the School Systems.

Urbana. Mr. Thomas, who in his position as Director of Student Services often functions as the public relations officer for the school district, states that black parent and community involvement in the Urbana public school has, until very recently, been infinitesimal; black parents are just now beginning to grasp the importance of their perpetual presence in the school buildings, at PTA meetings, at school board meetings. Prior to this new trend, what black parent involvement there was existed only because of an immediate crisis situation; once the crisis passed, the involvement ended. Mr Thomas views many problems of black students as soluble only in the context of very basic, progressive work on construction of positive self-image; the roles of black parents and community in this kind of work are mammoth.

Some community parents, in groups and as individuals, are making their presence felt within the school system. A black mothers' group, for example, led by Mrs. Lovie Carter, was organized in 1974 on the basis of common problems faced by their

high school kids. Besides maintaining a close working relationship with Mrs. Evelyn Burnett, Secretary of the Urbana School Board, the mothers' group has a number of school projects underway, such as serving as teacher aides, visiting classrooms, securing tutors, volunteering services wherever needed in the schools, etc.

Champaign. Mr. Stratton indicated that interaction between organized groups of black parents or community members and Unit 4 schools has been non-existent because there are no such groups operative in Champaign. More interactions do occur, however, on an individual basis. Mr. Stratton feels that black parents are more willing than in previous years to confront school personnel concerning students' difficulties. Also, in Mr. Stratton's opinion, Champaign school personnel are attuned to the need for parental inclusion in deliberations concerning students and encourage parental involvement. Despite these encouraging circumstances, however, black parent involvement with the school system remains grossly insufficient. Mr. Stratton states that many parents, black and white, will not go to school, confront individuals, and hash out problems. They place much more confidence in the school system than they should, and do not demand accountability for actions affecting their children.

Mrs. Humphrey would agree with these assertions, and would add that black parents are ignorant of school functions. Bussing is, perhaps, the culprit here, in that parents' access to the schools their children attend is limited. She sees the need for

much more involvement of black parents in the school system, and suggests that parents' offering of service around the school -- as teacher aides, library aides, etc. -- is an excellent tactic for keeping abreast of what's happening in the school. She also suggests that parents reduce dependence upon the schools for their children's learning; if they become active and interested in the educational process, so will their children.

F. Criticism of the School Aid Project

Mr. Thomas. Mr. Thomas has had very little interaction with actual School Aid Project operation, but could offer this critique of the Project's philosophy:

The School Aid Project is again a stop-gap measure. The program would more profitably be aimed at intervention at the pre-school and elementary school levels -- long before disciplinary problems arise -- when a positive effect on developing self-images can be easily achieved.

Mr. Stratton. Mr. Stratton has had a great deal of interaction with the School Aid Project, since the Project's activities have been, by happenstance, concentrated in Champaign as opposed to Urbana. His critique of the Project includes the following elements:

- 1) The Project currently has a two-pronged approach -- therapy and advocacy. If any efficacy is to be achieved, the Project must choose between the two "conflicting" goals. Therapy is the function the Project is best qualified to perform.

- 2) The literature distributed to the community in the Project's

forts to deal with "problem" students, even though the school system has dealt with a particular child for years, and the Project worker knows, in many cases, nothing of the child's school history.

3) The Project often ignores the opinions of those older and more experienced in working with the school and community. Such persons should be invited to attend School Aid Project meetings; their input should be sought.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While the facts and opinions presented in this report are intriguing, the truth is that this investigation raises more questions than it answers, and leaves unanswered many of the questions it set out to answer. For instance, why -- since the problems facing the two school systems are practically identical, as identified by important actors within those systems -- does the problem of black exclusion from public school remain more pronounced in Champaign than in Urbana, as reflected in their differential suspension and expulsion data for 1973-74? What are the other variables -- e.g. system orientation, administrative personalities, etc. -- which maintain this difference between the two school systems? What implication does the two-year difference in the two cities' school desegregation dates hold for the current racial problems faced by each system?

Why, given the statistically greater problem of black exclusion from school in Champaign, does no organized black parent or community group -- designed to act as intervener, system check, or demander of accountability -- exist in that city, though parent organization has taken place, at least to some degree, in Urbana? To what degree do black parents in Champaign and Urbana differ in their feelings of exclusion, power, etc. with reference to the two school systems?

patterns, others philosophical debate and reorientation.

Recommendations directed to the Champaign and Urbana school systems.

1. Reconsider the punishment philosophy behind the exclusionary disciplinary procedures of suspension and expulsion. Is exclusion from the educational process -- whether short-term, long-term, or indefinite -- really the appropriate response to an individual's socially "unacceptable", though non-violent, behavior? Do the infractions for which suspensions are imposed really merit the individual's removal from the school environment? The overrepresentation of blacks in the ranks of suspended students would suggest institutional conflict between the school system and the black population which that system is supposed to serve. Such a conflict should be resolved via system modification -- not via population exclusion.

2. Evaluate, individually and as a group, the system modifications implemented by the school systems as measures to deal with the problems of exclusion from school. To what extent have elimination of study halls, suspension rooms, remedial education, etc. actually aided in curbing the suspension problem? Based upon these results, which of these system innovations should be maintained or expanded? What other effective innovations should be implemented?

3. Seriously evaluate the alternative educational programs provided for students for whom the traditional academic curriculum is "irrelevant" or "inappropriate". To what degree are "problem" black kids shunted off into some of these academically useless programs simply to avoid the necessity of confronting and dealing

with their academic problems and needs?

4. Initiate programs to improve interpersonal relationships between students and staff, particularly between black students and white teachers and administrators.

5. Reconsider the school system's reluctance to share information about itself. It was the experience of this investigator that some system personnel seemed particularly hesitant to provide racial breakdown data, often insisting that racial breakdowns of such important issues as curriculum enrollment do not exist and cannot be derived. The school system is, after all, a public institution, subject to public scrutiny.

Recommendations directed to the Frances Nelson Health Center's
School Aid Project

1. Clarify the philosophy of the School Aid Project: Is the goal of Project intervention institutional change, individual change, or both? problem prevention or crisis intervention? confrontation or cooperation with the school system? Selection of clients and problem approach strategies will depend upon this definition.

2. Reassess the contextual value of the School Aid Project approach. To what degree do other problems -- familial, self-image, financial, etc. -- affect the school-related problems with which the School Aid Project attempts to deal? To what degree is the Project's intervention doomed to failure because the basic problem-generating situation remains unchanged?

3. Form strong alliances with key educational system actors, such as school board members, so as to effectively lobby for

institutional level changes in conditions which encourage development of the individual and group problems with which the School Aid Project deals.

4. Reassess the Project's conception of parent organization. The School Aid Project has failed in many recent attempts to foster a viable black parent organization in Champaign; and yet, the need for a parent force -- which would be more respected by the school systems than would the School Aid Project -- is painfully evident. Perhaps a hitherto untried approach can now be utilized: Write into School Aid policy that Project intervention is contingent upon parental assertion of parental rights, i.e., confronting school personnel concerning students' problems, demanding accountability of school personnel concerning decisions relevant to students, attending meetings with teaching and administrative staff which have relevance for students, etc. The parental power and confidence thus gained could be used as an effective organizational lever.

5. Because the lack of program continuity resulting from reliance on student manpower is severely damaging to both our image as a serious community endeavor and to our efficacy in working with and for our clients, it is recommended that the School Aid Project move immediately to devise some mechanism by which uninterrupted service to clients can be maintained, or to achieve principle reliance on a more stable manpower source, i.e., the staff of Frances Nelson Health Center. Identification of funding sources enabling the supplementation of Frances Nelson Health Center staff would eliminate the overburdening of an already overworked work force.

6. Because the students who are attracted to the School Aid Project are, generally, by nature, idealistic, impatient and outspoken, institute an orientation/training program for Project workers defining acceptable public relations tactics given the hypersensitivity of school personnel to scrutiny by non-parental community members.

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Administrators' Interview Questions

1. How would you evaluate race relations within the school system at this point? (student-student; student-teacher)
2. Blacks are overrepresented in Unit 4/District 116 figures for suspension and expulsion. Why does this situation exist? What do you feel is the problem underlying this situation?
3. What measures have been employed by Unit 4/District 116 to help stem the disproportionately high rate of black exclusion from school? How would you evaluate these measures? What more do you think could be done, at this point in time, to deal with this problem? On the part of the school? of students?
4. How interested is Unit 4/District 116 in black needs? Specifically, what efforts have been made by the system to assess demands, needs of blacks concerning the public educational system? (studies, fair assessment of academic potential, liaison with student and community groups) What actions were taken on findings?
5. How do you view your own position in the school system? Why were you hired?
6. As a school administrator, what's been your experience with black parent and community groups? With what groups have you had contact? Over what issues did the group and the school system come in contact/conflict? What was the school administration's response to the group? How would you evaluate the group's success? Why?
7. How do you feel about the current degree of black parent/community involvement and interest in the schools? What would you like to see with regard to black involvement in the schools?
8. What kind of constructive criticism can you offer the School Aid Project? How would you evaluate the approach utilized by the S.A.P.? How do you think we can become more effective?

Student Opinion Survey

School: _____

At your high school this year, are relations between black students and _____ (Circle one code number for each item.)

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
a) white students	1	2	3	4
b) white teachers	1	2	3	4
c) white administrators	1	2	3	4

How well is your high school education preparing you for the life that you, as a black person, want to live? (Circle one code number.)

- Very well.....1
- Somewhat well.....2
- Not very well.....3
- Not well at all....4

Following are some changes that could be made in your high school. How important is each to you, personally? (Circle one code number for each item.)

	<i>VERY IMPORTANT</i>	<i>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT</i>	<i>SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT</i>	<i>VERY UNIMPORTANT</i>
a. More black studies	1	2	3	4
b. Teachers more interested in the needs of black students	1	2	3	4
c. School administrators more interested in the needs of black students	1	2	3	4
d. More black parent interest in school	1	2	3	4
e. More black parent involvement in school	1	2	3	4
f. More black teachers	1	2	3	4
g. More black student interest in school	1	2	3	4
h. More black school administrators	1	2	3	4
i. More black community involvement in school	1	2	3	4
j. More school activities directed toward blacks	1	2	3	4
k. More student power in making decisions	1	2	3	4
l. More black students	1	2	3	4

What additional changes in your high school would be important to you?

Appendix C
Data Tables

Table 3
Students' Responses to Student Opinion Survey
Item #2

<u>School</u>	% of Students responding:			
	<u>Very Well</u>	<u>Some-what Well</u>	<u>Not Very Well</u>	<u>Not Well At All</u>
Urbana High (n=21)	14.3%	52.4%	23.8%	9.5%
Champaign Central (n=14)	14.3%	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%
Champaign Centennial (n=12)	16.7%	58.3%	25.0%	0%

Table 4
Students' Responses to Student Opinion Survey
Item #3

<u>Change</u>	% Students rating change as:	
	<u>Important</u>	<u>Unimportant</u>
Urbana High, n=21 Champaign Central, n=14 Champaign Centennial, n=12		
a. More black studies		
Urbana	90.5	9.6
Central	100.0	0
Centennial	100.0	0
b. More interested teachers		
Urbana	90.5	9.5
Central	92.9	7.1
Centennial	83.3	16.7
c. More interested administrators		
Urbana	95.2	4.8
Central	85.7	14.2
Centennial	66.7	33.3

Thank you very much.

Table 4
Cont'd

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Unimportant</u>
d. More black parent interest		
Urbana	100.0	0
Central	85.7	14.3
Centennial	83.3	16.7
e. More black parent involvement		
Urbana	100.0	0
Central	92.8	7.1
Centennial	91.7	8.3
f. More black teachers		
Urbana	95.2	4.7
Central	100.0	0
Centennial	91.7	8.3
g. More black student interest		
Urbana	100.0	0
Central	92.8	7.1
Centennial	91.7	8.3
h. More black administrators		
Urbana	100.0	0
Central	85.7	14.3
Centennial	100.0	0
i. More black community involvement		
Urbana	95.2	4.8
Central	100.0	0
Centennial	91.6	8.3
j. More black school activities		
Urbana	95.2	4.8
Central	92.9	7.1
Centennial	100.0	0
k. More student power		
Urbana	95.2	4.8
Central	92.8	7.1
Centennial	100.0	0
l. More black students		
Urbana	90.5	9.6
Central	92.8	7.1
Centennial	100.0	0