



COMMITTED TO CHANGE

Missouri Citizens and Public Education

A Report from Public Agenda
to
The Missouri Partnership for Outstanding Schools

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urban Educator

The Nation's Voice for Urban Education

Vol. 5, No. 2

March 1996

Business Is Most Help to Urban Schools

Business rates No. 1 as the most helpful outside group to urban schools, while the U.S. Congress is the most unhelpful, according to a new survey by the Council of the Great City Schools.

Critical Trends in Urban Education: A Poll of America's Great City Schools gives business a "B-" grade and Congress a dismal "D-" in lending support to urban education.

In rating the most and least helpful outside sectors to urban education, the urban school leaders considered 12 groups. The top five helpful groups behind business were local public education funds, colleges of education, advocacy groups and state education departments. The least helpful in addition to Congress were governors, the local press and state legislatures.

Critical Trends report reveals that most urban educators are optimistic about the future of urban public schools.

Critical Trends also reveals that most urban educators are optimistic about the future of urban public schools. "Urban education leaders remain

convinced that not all problems are intractable and that solutions exist," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "however pessimistic others may be."

Most optimistic were urban school leaders in Indianapolis, San Francisco, Houston, Buffalo, Cleveland, New Orleans and Rochester, N.Y.

In the Council's second in a series of *Critical Trends* reports, nearly 180 urban school leaders, including school board members and superintendents, were polled in 46 big-city school districts in December. When asked about their most important current needs, the urban educators indicated that academic achievement and funding, respectively, top the list. Parental involvement was next, followed by public confidence.

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Children's Advocate, Education Secretary To Address Council

Children's Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman will deliver the opening address at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 23-26.

She will be the featured luncheon speaker March 24 at the Mayflower Hotel in the nation's capital, where more than 200 urban school administrators and board members will converge.



Marian Wright Edelman

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley will also address the gathering at a luncheon March 25. He will be among a host of policymakers and legislators to participate in the conference focusing on "Urban School Needs and Election Year Politics: Making Them Meet."

Edelman founded the Children's Defense Fund in 1973, which has become a national voice for children and families. "We don't have a child to waste," she said in a *Parade* magazine article. "We will not be a strong country unless we invest in every one of our children."

Before launching the CDF, she had served as the director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard

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Freedom School Gives Inner City Children A Summer Of Activity

The Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist church, 2200 Olive, in collaboration with the Children's Defense Fund, KCMC Child Development Corporation and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, created a local Freedom School in the heart of the inner-city to provide summer enrichment programs for children and youth.

The Freedom School provided seven weeks of programming and activities for 95 children, ages 5 to 15 who are predominantly African American.

The Freedom School culminates today, Friday, Aug. 4, with an evening finale of student performances at the Paseo Academy.

Programming was led by 10 college-age interns, seven whom are post-secondary students in the Project Choice program, sponsored by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

The Freedom School gave children and youth a safe place to go, providing them with food and shelter during the summer.

Daily activities were designed to help children and youth build self-esteem and learn how to resolve conflict creatively.

Social issues also were explored as program participants and leaders discussed ideas for dealing with or solving social problems. In addition to a full daily program of activities, children and youth received breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack.

Reading was strongly encouraged throughout many aspects of the summer program.

For example, during the daily DEAR time, which means to "Drop Everything And Read," every-

one at the school took this time each day to read.

Each child or youth also received one or two books per week to read and keep for their personal libraries. Time was also used each day for participants to discuss the books they are reading each week.

Afternoon activities to build the mind, body and soul of the children and youth were also included in the program.

Activities ranged from learning African and African American history, to playing games and sports to performing dance and drama.

In addition, weekly field trips included visits to places like the Kansas City Zoo, the Black Archives, the Negro League Baseball Museum.

In addition to the programs designed for the children and youth, the Freedom School also is

offered four evening workshops for parents. These workshops taught many of the same skills and principles that children and youth learned during their daily programs, such as dealing with conflict creatively.

The overarching goal of the program was to:

Increase participant academic success;

Prevent self-limiting behavior, such as teen pregnancy, drug use and violence;

To provide children with alternatives to the streets; and

To present an array of life options; and to offer a continuum of adult support and enriching activity ideas for their leisure time.

Operating expenses for this local Freedom School are funded by the Kauffman Foundation and the

Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church.

The Kauffman Foundation provided a \$50,000 grant to fund operating expenses.

The Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist church contributed more than \$24,000 in financial assistance and in-kind services to cover meals and additional costs associated with sponsoring the program.

"This Freedom School is a true example of the Kauffman Foundation's engaged grantmaking strategy," said Tom Rhone, Project Choice director. "Mr. K would be proud of our involvement with these children, especially as such an early age."

Service Arm Of Black Community Crusade For Children
Freedom Schools are a



FORMER SENATOR TOURS FREEDOM SCHOOL . . . Former U.S. Senator John Danforth of St. Louis, recently visited the Freedom School at the Mt. Pleasant Baptist church. Danforth is shown at a briefing session. Shown with Danforth are Tom Rhone, Carolyn Booker, Rev. L. Henderson Bell, Rachel Steele and Phines Smith, seated. — Photo by Rex Purefoy.

service arm of the Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC), which is coordinated nationally by the Children's Defense fund (CDF).

BCCC is a massive

effort to mobilize the African American community on behalf of black children and families.

"Staffed almost entirely by black college aged young people, Freedom

Schools are designed to prepare a cadre of new "servant leaders" to take responsibility for seeing that all children -- especially those in their local communities -- have

opportunities to dream and be nurtured by caring adults who believe in them and who will commit themselves to keeping their hopes and dreams alive," a spokesman said.



A SCENE FROM THE FREEDOM SCHOOL . . . Children at the Mount Pleasant Baptist church Freedom School are shown eating breakfast just before "Harambee time," one of the daily activities at the school. A culminating program will be held tonight at the Paseo Academy of Performing Arts. -- Photo by Rex Purefoy.

Taking it back to the old school

Students learn more than reading at Freedom School this summer



Photos by JILL JARSULIC/TeenStar

Freedom school students participate in the daily harambee.

By MONICA L. ROBERTS
TeenStar Staff

The words to the rap song echoed in the cafeteria of Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church: *We have brilliant*

minds,
we have bright minds,
we have bold minds,
we have all minds in the house.
For the 94 children ages 5 to 14 rapping in the church basement, the singing was a part of their day in Freedom School, a special summer program for kids who need a place to go during the day.

The Freedom School at Mount Pleasant, the first of its kind in the Midwest, is modeled after programs developed during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Back then the schools were designed for the improvement of

minority education.

The schools of today pattern themselves after the '60s Freedom schools but with a new twist. The schools today not only teach the children to read but also to love themselves and where they come from. That includes *harambee* time, an African word used to describe a time in the day when the students spend time together in peace.

"We try to teach the students that there are constructive ways to solve problems and that they are each beautiful," said Shyree Leverett, site director of the Freedom school.

"I've been teaching for 36 years, but I must say that this is a God-given gift. To see children blossom and gain strength that they didn't have," said Carolyn Booker, project director.

The Freedom School is supported from donations from the Mt. Pleasant Church, 2200 Olive St., and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. The school is part of the Black Community Crusade for Children

and is coordinated nationally by the Children's Defense Fund.

Parents who enroll their children in the school must attend seminars the school offers. The meetings inform the parents about the conflict resolution technique the school teaches the students and encourages the parents to use it.

The Freedom Schools usually are government-funded, but the Mount Pleasant Church Freedom School has chosen not to accept government assistance, believing that by accepting government aid, the students would not be able to say grace or participate in spiritual activities.

The students take great pride in the program. One of the students is 13-year-old Jaron Bagsby.

"At first I joined the school be-

cause my grandma made me, but now I think that it's so fun," said Bagsby as he twisted in his chair trying to find the perfect color marker to draw a picture.

Bagsby says his dream of going to college to become a foreign language translator has become a lot more real since he joined the Freedom School. The students participate in mind-challenging games like chess and African games like *mankala*, listen to guest speakers from the community, draw, read and take field trips.

There are times that the staff has to change from the role of teacher to counselor.

Booker described one case in which she tutored a little girl who wouldn't do well in school. Booker decided to take on the challenge of teaching her after others had failed. She said she got to the core of the problem by talking with the girl and realized that she didn't have an extreme attitude problem. She just suffered from a severe case of low self-esteem and needed someone to build her confidence.

Thirty modern-day Freedom Schools around the country are in urban and rural areas.

Thirty-one years ago in Mississippi, three Northern college students who were teaching black students to read in a Freedom School and to register as voters were beaten to death, allegedly by Ku Klux Klansmen, and buried under a dam. Their slayings became the subject of a recent movie, "Mississippi Burning."

The Kansas City Freedom School staff is continuing that legacy of teaching.

If the schools are successful, Booker said, four to six more schools may open in Missouri next year. In the opinions of Booker and Leverett, school this summer has been a success.

Monica L. Roberts is a senior at Paseo Academy.



Tiranee Givhan, 11, draws a family tree during class at the Freedom School.

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