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**Report on Interviews of Central Office Staff,
Automobile Tours,
and School Visits and Interviews**

(April 22-23 and June 2-4, 1986)

Herbert J. Walberg

July, 1986

**Report on Interviews of Central Office Staff,
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and School Visits and Interviews**

On April 22 and 23, I interviewed members of the central office staff of the Topeka Public Schools, and toured the city of Topeka with the intention of making of an external inspection of the majority of the schools, and entering a few picked at random. On June 3 and 4, I picked at random and visited an elementary school and a middle school within each of the three areas of the district, and also visited each of the three high schools within the areas. In the nine schools visited, I interviewed the principal (or assistant principal) and other school staff, and made an internal inspection of randomly picked classrooms and other facilities.

The purpose of the tours, interviews, and school visits was to gain first-hand impressions of the actual operations in the schools. Specifically, my intention was to investigate the extent to which the curriculum and instructional materials earlier described to me and that I inspected were actually being used uniformly in the schools. I also assessed the quality of the instructional programs.

Conclusions

1. "Effective-schools" techniques were apparent in the schools. The principals appear to be exerting strong instructional leadership; and there is a strong emphasis on basic skills in the context of a balanced curriculum.

2. The schools appear to be using the curriculum guides uniformly throughout the district: They could be found on teachers' desks and in the offices of the principals. One principal, for example, requires teachers to have the guides open to the points they are teaching so they can check conformity to requirements on unannounced visits, and another evaluates teachers according to their students' attainment of the objectives in the guides.
3. The instructional program is aligned with testing; and staff have high and uniform expectations for all students to achieve explicit requirements.
4. The Adventure Center provides one of the most impressive educational experiences I have seen in public schools while giving maximum exposure of black and white students to one another.
5. The schools provide a great deal of constructive parental involvement including the booklet Elementary Curriculum Foundations, parenting skills groups, symposium series on family issues, and homework tutoring counseling centers.
6. The district has an award-winning Headstart program for younger children and many multi-cultural and ethnic programs.
7. Although a few schools were obviously old, all schools and their grounds appear well-maintained; and staff and students within and outside

the buildings appeared to be hard at work. No graffiti, defacing of buildings, and broken windows--typical of many urban districts--were observed. The climate seemed safe and orderly.

8. The above factors probably account for the district's outstanding achievement test scores which have been high and rising for the past several years.

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Bibliography of Major Studies Relating
Desegregation and Learning
Herbert J. Walberg

Re: Brown v. Board of Education, et al.
U.S.D.C Kansas, No. T-316

March, 1986

Attorney-Client Request: Privileged Information

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David J. Armor, "The Evidence on Busing," The Public Interest, Summer, 1972, n. 28, 90-126.

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Dennis L. Cuddy, "A Proposal to Achieve Desegregation Through Free Choice," American Education, May, 1983, v. 19, n. 4, 25-31.

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**Quotes from and Comments on Curriculum Guides
and Related Materials and Reports on the Education Program
of the Topeka Public Schools**

Herbert J. Walberg

May 28, 1986

Curriculum and Education Program

Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, Educational Performance Audit, Feb. 9, 1982, 112 single-spaced pages.

"an external, objective, and systematic review of the available and retrievable data developed by the school district to determine how well it has introduced educational program and budgetary quality control. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate and comment upon TPS's capability in developing and in putting to use the tools, procedures, and information required for effectively and meaningfully attaining a specified level of pupil learning."

Five audit standards employed.

1. The school district is able to demonstrate its control of resources, programs, and personnel.
2. The school district has established clear and valid objectives for students.
3. The school district has documentation explaining how its programs have developed, implemented, and conducted.
4. The school district uses the results from district-designated / adopted assessments to adjust, improve or terminate ineffective practices or programs.
5. The school district has been able to improve productivity.

Peat Marwick found the Topeka Public Schools closer to realizing the

essential elements of quality control in their educational program than any other district that we have audited:

The District supports the elements embodied in the five standards used in the audit.

The professional staff appears dedicated and positively oriented toward expanding program quality in the schools.

The District makes a concerted effort to meet the needs of all types of students.

The Board of Education and Superintendent demonstrate candor, openness, and a desire for improvement in District operations.

Parents are concerned and supportive of TPS.

There are available planning documents which delineate District-wide goals, improvements for District management and operations.

Substantial time and effort have been dedicated, during recent years, to developing useful curriculum guides in certain areas.

The Board and the Administration have dealt successfully with the recent problems of facilities planning.

The Board and the Administration are concentrating more and more on curriculum/instructional improvement.

Could benefit from increased attention to:

Complete a long-grange curriculum/education plan providing direction to the District over an extended period of time by establishing priorities and a schedule of meeting them.

Develop District-wide, Board-adopted standards for all students in the education program that will serve as a benchmark for determining actual pupil learning objectives and will serve as a realistic base for the design of classroom instructional programs.

Improve the curriculum development and review process by clearly stating learning objectives, directly linking each curricular objective to assessment and providing teachers with specific examples for teaching related concepts, skills, and knowledge.

Establish Board criteria and priorities for the development, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs.

Expand the current assessment program so that all major areas of the curriculum are assessed in order to provide a realistic base for determining pupil achievement.

Require the systematic use of test information in planning, evaluating and changing educational programs so that student learning is the primary focus for program development and is keyed to objective statements regarding program effectiveness.

Improve the budgeting process so the TPS, eventually, can objectively analyze and compare costs to program results.

Recommendations for Improvements

1. Develop a set of comprehensive Board policies which define and maintain control of the educational program.
2. Complete and implement a long-range educational plan for the

district.

3. Develop a comprehensive action plan for internal program evaluation checked by periodic external program reviews.

4. Improve the quality of curriculum documents in the district.

5. Centralized core (basic) curriculum development to promote effective program articulation district-wide.

6. Expand the base of assessment in the secondary schools and key pupil performance to curricular objectives.

7. Expand and intensify efforts to relate program costs to pupil benefits.

Pp. 81-98 Listing of materials consulted: curriculum guides, test reports, internal reports, state publications.

Pp. 99-112 Listing of people interviewed: Board members, central office staff, principals, counselors, instructional specialists, and patron groups.

Curriculum and Program Development Syllabi and Program Guides

(in the order first reviewed)

Freshman English 404, 380, 409

Grammar 421

Kindergarten Language Arts

Grade Two Language Arts

Grade Four Language Arts

Grade Six Language Arts

Grade Five Reading

U.S. Government 812
Geometry 546 Honors Geometry 547
Grade Two Social Studies
Grade Four Social Studies
Grade Six Social Studies
Grade One Science
Kindergarten Health
Grade Two Health
Grade Five Health
Earth Science 712
General Biology 721 Biology 722 Honors Biology 723 AP Biology 733
Kindergarten Mathematics
Grade Six Mathematics
Grade Four Mathematics
Grade Two Mathematics
Mathematics 8 512 Advanced Mathematics 8 513
Algebra Review 544
Algebra II 552 Honors Algebra II 553
Basic Mathematics 7 501 Basic Mathematics 8 511
Grade One Reading
Grade Three Reading
Kindergarten Social Studies
World History 770
Each booklet of the seven-inch stack (most with 1984 or 1985 dates)

contains brief overview and detailed specific objectives for the student such as: identify and name the place of each digit for whole numbers through six digits (Grade Four Mathematics), listen to the teacher read literature regularly (Grade One Reading), locate principal landmarks in the Ancient Far East (World History 770), use correctly the rules governing pronoun reference (Grammar 421), describe three methods used to measure geologic time (Earth Science 712).

Curriculum Syllabi

Lists all syllabi: about 44 for elementary schools, 27 for middle schools, and 94 for high schools. The above set are a sample from these.

Curriculum Development Handbook

Describes "the major role of the Department of Instruction Services - Curriculum Program Development. As curriculum is developed and revised, the Department of Instruction Services is dedicated to producing curriculum documents which serve the needs of students and teachers."

Describes the roles of the Curriculum Advisory Council (central office appointed representative committee of central staff, teachers, administrators, and curriculum directors), Curriculum Task Forces (for specific revisions and projects), Curriculum Review Committees (for selected curriculum areas), Curriculum Directors and Consulting Teachers, Education Division's Parent Advisory Commission (reviews recommendations for curriculum change, suggested areas of study, and task force-developed curricula, and Inservice Education (staff development).

Gives procedures and guidelines; discusses responsibilities, time report forms; defines scope and sequence chart, program description, program goals, major units of study, minimal instructional objectives, library media skills supplement; and sets forth elementary and secondary course syllabus forms with samples.

Gary A. Livingston Memo to High School Principals, April 21, 1986

"Enclosed is a list of course syllabi to be reviewed this summer. An attached form is provided for principal/curriculum coordinator input regarding the review of these documents. It is important that we have your evaluation of the effectiveness of these documents.

Also enclosed are forms for teacher input. This process is imperative if we are to maintain a viable curriculum that continues to meet the needs of our students...."

Lists 12 high school syllabi and five middle syllabi to be reviewed.

Parent-Involvement Programs

Elementary Curriculum Foundations

(for parents of elementary school students)

"We hope that you find this booklet helpful as your child progresses through the elementary program. These curricular foundations ensure that our teaching experiences are sequential and consistent across the district (emphasis added).

Further, these statements of minimal objectives should help you become more effectively involved in the education of your child. Effective school research clearly points to the importance of parental participation in the educational process. From reading aloud to children to volunteering in our VISIT program, you can provide that extra assistance that will help your child meet and exceed the objectives listed in this booklet.

We welcome you into the educational process and invite you to contact your school of other publications and information.

Sincerely,

Gary A. Livingston

Assistant Superintendent,

Education Services

Contains detailed behavioral experiences and goals for art, health, language arts, library media study skills, mathematics, music, physical education, reading, science, and social studies for kindergarten through sixth grade, e. g., recognize common meters (of music) and participate in National

Fitness test and score at a level commensurate to his/her grade level (30 percentile or above), and identify and name the place value of each digit for whole numbers through ten digits.

Also, gives information on instructional computing and related student objectives for sixth grade, outdoor-environmental education, and Topeka Adventure Center.

Why Not Join a Parenting Skills-Building Group?

Times, places, topics, numbers to call of six parenting groups (mostly at elementary schools). "Other groups may be formed as interest is expressed by parents."

(November) Symposium Series on Family Issues

Eleven sessions at Topeka High, Highland Park High, and Topeka West on varied family topics. Also, gives information and telephone numbers for homework and counseling programs.

Homework Tutoring Counseling Centers (Leaflet)

"For students in all grade levels in all U.S.D. No. 501 schools and their parents."

Discussion group topics: "Systematic training for effective parenting."

"Teaming families and schools for student achievement." Etc.

"Students working at home may receive help over the telephone between 6:30 and 8:30 by telephoning..."

Topeka Adventure Center (pamphlet)

Explains history, physical facility, personnel, philosophy and curriculum, scheduling students and visiting teachers, departments (art, computers, creative dramatics, music, science, television studio, and Ventureville - career / consumer education), a typical day at the Topeka Adventure Center.

We've Made Some Changes (to Adventure Center shorter pamphlet)

Schedule for TAC Society

Describes Emulated Society and gives schedule and teacher and student assignments for ten days.

Certificate of Stock

For teaching business operations and finance.

Two memoranda from George M. Rundell, Principal to staff

Illustrates elaborate racial balancing of students across schools and concentrations in Fine Arts, Communications, and Finance.

Achievement Test Results

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills: 1978-1985 Results, March 1985

Shows that average percentile scores for grades Kindergarten through six rose from 68 to 88 in the Topeka Public Schools during the period.

1984-85 Educational Program Audit Report

by Dr. Michael D. Tribbey, Ed.D.

Reviews 1) achievement assessments and 2) educational program evaluations for 1984-85. Many tables and figures. Fifty-six single-spaced pages. Provides support for the following two conclusions and summary:

1) "District students continued to demonstrate high levels of achievement in grades kindergarten through nine on nationally-normed achievement tests, and have risen consistently during the past five school years across all grades tested. Performance of District students on the SMCT (State Minimum Competency Tests) has improved, and their relative standing with other students across the state has also improved with the exception of grades two and four in reading. District twelfth grade students demonstrated improved performance on the SAT in the areas of mathematics and continued to perform overall at higher levels than their midwestern or national counterparts. Performance on the ACT has been consistent during the past five school years" (recent TPS mean higher than Kansas mean, which is higher than national mean). Page 40.

Tests included Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, and Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (with national norms).

2) "Both the K-6 instructional computing program and the K-12 social studies program appear to be consistently implemented across the district; and departmentalization for social studies instruction at the intermediate elementary level appears to be more effective than non-departmentalization. Student achievement levels for social studies did not appear to be comparable with achievement levels for other instructional programs (subjects) as measured by the district's regular standardized testing program. District inservice activities and opportunities appear to be appropriate for both instructional computing and social studies with the exception of social studies opportunities at the high school level.

Audit Summary: Based upon the results of the 1984-85 educational program audit for the Topeka Public Schools, overall student achievement levels were high and have shown consistent improvement during the past five school years. The established curricula, at least for the programs evaluated, appeared to have been implemented by staff as planned and were providing a focus for instruction as intended. Overall, both parents and staff appeared to be satisfied with the K-6 instructional computing and K-12 social studies programs.

As the internal educational program audit function continues to evolve during the coming years, it will be further refined and developed so that, hopefully, it will become an indispensable source of information for decisions related to the numerous educational programs of the Topeka Public Schools.