

Getting Help For Teachers

Panel IIIB

A major portion of the discussion centered on ways of opening schools not only to new ideas but to new people—teacher aides and other paraprofessionals—to relieve the regular staff of clerical and custodial duties. One participant urged that schools must stop acting as closed shops, fearful of community involvement and of the presence of nonprofessionals within academic walls.

Jarvis Barnes, assistant superintendent of the Atlanta public schools, said schools must come to accept the presence of subprofessionals as teacher aides and in other capacities. "We've been keeping them out," he said. "We've been trying to do too much." Such people, it was felt, would not only relieve teachers of clerical and custodial duties, they would also bring to the schools new insights and ideas. The panelists agreed that the social and economic backgrounds of nonprofessionals or paraprofessionals are not as important as a desire to work with disadvantaged youngsters and a training program for preparing them. Panelist Frankel said subprofessionals should be recruited and trained with a career orientation, that they should be carefully screened and evaluated, and that their use requires "the sustained involvement of administrative personnel."

Panel IIB

Panelist Cuban said that next year 30 boys, potential high school dropouts, will be trained as teacher aides at the elementary school level. They will be paid for their morning work, and their academic work in the afternoon will be related to their morning experience.

Panel IA

Perhaps the most unusual proposal came from panelist Pearl: he proposed using students as young as 16 years old as teachers, giving them advanced and professional education as they teach. In this way, he said, education would cultivate more and better teaching talent and at the same time open opportunities hitherto

unavailable to the disadvantaged. Education and the Nation's other "growth industries"—health and welfare—will have to open such opportunities, he added, if the cycle of poverty is to be broken in our modern society.

Panel IIA

The group discussed whether it was best to recruit teacher aides from within the community or from the university. Most agreed it is sound to draw these people from the community. Participants were warned by several speakers, however, that these aides also must be exposed to a continuous program of inservice training if they are to play an effective role. "We run the danger of extending the incompetency of an incompetent teacher," one delegate warned. Speakers pointed out that one must deal with the fears of the teacher in accepting the aide into her classroom. One spokesman commented that teachers "have lived in splendid isolation most of their lives."

Panel IVB

R. C. Beemon, Title I coordinator, Georgia State Department of Education, told the group that paraprofessionals in the field of education lack adequate definition. The line between professional and paraprofessional activity seems unclear. Use of paraprofessionals such as teacher aides is frequently precluded by State certification regulations and policies.

This particular point was emphasized by Norman Brombacher, assistant superintendent of New York City public schools. Dr. Brombacher explained that the term "school aide" is used in New York to avoid possible conflict with the certification board. Even though New York's school aides do not engage in professional activity, there is fear that the certification board would claim jurisdiction if they were called teacher aides.

E. B. Stanley, division superintendent of schools, Washington County, Va., elaborated on his experience with teacher aides during the past year. In his school system, teacher aides were used to take care of bulletin boards, handle rental books, assist in recordkeeping,