

position in the number of unemployed. (*Demographic Study of Poverty in Illinois*, Illinois Office of Economic Opportunity, 1965). The significance of the last item quoted above is expressed in a recent study which reveals that almost one fourth of all household heads in East St. Louis have no jobs. (*Employment and Unemployment in East St. Louis*, Public Administration and Metropolitan Affairs Office, Southern Illinois University, 1964).

The directors of the Delinquency Study and Youth Development Project had three other facts in mind when the need for family aides came forcibly to their attention, namely, (1) the community leads all others in the state in the percentage of persons over 25 years of age with less than eight years of education, (2) the severe shortage of trained school personnel at all levels, and (3) the need for better communication between parents of disadvantaged children and teachers and social workers.

The Delinquency Study and Youth Development Project was carrying on a Curriculum Development Program for Preschool Aides for the U.S. Office of Education when the present program was proposed. Some of the components of the development program were to be part of the new project. School District #189 and the Economic Opportunity Commission of East St. Louis, in particular the Neighborhood Youth Corps, were to cooperate in the project to train family aides. Great care and effort were taken by the project staff from March 28 to July 7, 1966 to bring about mutual understanding and active cooperation between the agencies and persons who would be involved in the project when it was inaugurated. The superintendent of School District #189 and the social workers of that district were involved primarily. During July and August meetings were held with four principals, four teachers, four social workers and six parents of District #189, to discuss the role and functions of the family aide.

PURPOSE

One clear purpose ran through all the planning and preparation for the projects to train auxiliary school personnel as family aides, namely, to develop better school-home communication and consequent mutual understanding between parents and teachers. That such communication and understanding will aid in the implementation of the school program for socially disadvantaged children constituted a fundamental conviction underlying the whole program.

COMPOSITION OF PARTICIPANT GROUPS

The trainees consisted of 48 family aide aspirants in 8 schools. The original group consisted of 24 trainees from the Neighborhood Youth Corps. They ranged in age from 18 to 21 years. It was decided that the need for family aides was so great that an additional 24 aides should be given the training. The school district requested more mature aides so experienced persons were recruited, especially aides or volunteers from past and current Head Start programs. Of the 24 mature trainees, 13 were from families below the poverty level. All 24 Neighborhood Youth Corps aides were below the poverty level.

SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

The trainees were chosen mainly from the indigenous poor, both from the Neighborhood Youth Corps and from the Title I ESEA group, not excluding high school dropouts. The criteria for selection were adapted from the predictors of success in the Curriculum Development Program. Among the criteria the following formed some of the basis for screening: level of verbal ability, level of reading comprehension, attitudes toward children and family life, attitudes toward peers, and attitudes toward institutions and involvement in community organizations.

Criteria for selection and for training crystalized in part from the assurance that the trainees might find employment within School District #189. Planning was to continue after the abstract for the proposal was drawn up, with administrators, social workers, principals and teachers of the school district.

The project staff consisted of an administrative director, a coordinator-instructor, a process analyst, two process observers, and a secretary. There was part-time involvement of eight school teachers, four principals, and four social workers in developing the program.