

MISSOURI EDUCATOR

(from page 3)

convince their families that an education is important."

Warned that this was an impossible task, that it was impossible to reach the district's unschooled parents, Dr. Shepard replied: "I don't think we have hard-to-reach parents. We have parents nobody ever tried to reach before."

At first there was only a trickle of interest when Dr. Shepard invited parents to meetings to discuss their children's schoolwork and future. But he kept at it, making the rounds of his 23 schools night after night to talk to parents.

Dr. Shepard hammered away on dollar-and-cents figures showing that a college graduate can expect to earn thousands of dollars a year more than a high school graduate and a high school graduate thousands of dollars more than those who drop out earlier.

AS THE SHEPARD gospel spread, turn-outs at these meetings jumped to four and five hundred persons. Parents asked what they could do.

"See that your children have a time and place to do their homework," Dr. Shepard told them. "Shut off the radio and TV. Look over and sign homework-assignment notebooks each week. And get your kids to school on time every day. People say the Negro is shiftless. If this is true, the place to cure it is at school."

This was a radical program for his listeners. But it took hold. Parents eagerly signed a Pledge of Cooperation to participate in "Operation Motivation." Attendance improved along with scholarship and study habits.

Mass visits to radio and TV studios, the planetarium, the zoo, museums, parks and even city markets were organized to interest and inspire the children. One problem child from a broken home--with four different last names in the family--reported on such a trip for the school paper and never was in trouble thereafter. He became a reporter for his room--for the first time in his life he was somebody.

"Reading Is Fun" programs for advanced students were inaugurated and the gifted were encouraged in mathematics, science, music and art. But Dr. Shepard also insisted that his teachers not neglect pupils with low IQs. He also urged them to abandon their condescending attitude toward slum kids "just because you've earned a degree or two and live in a better part of town." Teachers were told to arrange for

visits to their pupils' homes.

Finally, Dr. Shepard organized teams of successful St. Louis Negroes to tell their stories at special assemblies in the Banerker schools. Among these were the St. Louis director of welfare, first Negro in the mayor's cabinet; a design engineer for the Gemini project at McDowell Aircraft; a technician in charge of quality control for a soft drink company; a leading millinery designer; a securities salesman; an aerial map-maker. "Here is evidence of dreams come true," Dr. Shepard would say in introducing them.

Dr. Shepard, perhaps, in his own best example. Reared in poverty in Kansas City, Mo., he worked his way through high school and educated two sisters as well. He won his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Michigan while washing pots and pans on the side and now holds a doctorate from the same institution.

THE STARTLING RESULTS of Dr. Shepard's six-year campaign in St. Louis has earned him many honors, including the "Page One Award" of the St. Louis Newspaper Guild. The citation salutes him "for service rendered through the public school system to the cause of democracy in the United States."

Disclaiming any miracles, Dr. Shepard feels that his work has only just begun. His two big concerns now are (1) that the children's interest and perseverance be maintained through high school and (2) that they are able to obtain jobs commensurate with their training and ability when they are thrust on the employment market.

Friggens points out that Dr. Shepard's achievement in St. Louis could prove the salvation of many American cities with burgeoning Negro communities and an attendant increase in unemployment welfare costs, violence and crime.

In Dr. Shepard's well-considered opinion, we are confronted with inescapable question: Is the white man going to abandon these cities to culturally deprived Negroes--with resultant chaos--or is he going to help educate them and save the country from disaster?

CLEANUP (from page 1)

the cost of cleaning up comes out of OUR pockets in the long run.

Particular attention is directed to the city ordinance requiring

each residence to place garbage in proper containers for collection. And be sure lids are placed on the garbage cans so the contents cannot be strewn around by dogs and cats.

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