

"DROPOUTS" ARE PUSHOUTS"

Most school "dropouts" are in fact "pushouts" and most "pushouts" are minority students.

These are among the principal tenets of educators probing the new problem of student "pushouts". "Race Relations Reporter" magazine reports in its May issue that educators have coined the new word "pushout" to describe the problem even though the word and the problem still lack a precise definition.

The term first described students excluded from school by administrative expulsion or suspension. Now, however, "pushout" has acquired additional meaning to include students prevented from achieving their academic potential through a deliberate denial of opportunity.

The "Reporter" study by Lawrence Wright found that a child does not have to be forced out of school and on to the streets to qualify as a "pushout". It can be the non-English-speaking child who founders in class and repeatedly fails tests written in English. It can be the child who is denied relevant curricula. It can be the black or Mexican-American child whose needs are ignored or misunderstood by the teacher. Or it can be any child terrified by the racial hostility in the classroom.

According to the "pushout" premise, the "Reporter" article states, expulsions and dropping out of school merely culminate a history of rejection of the students' needs on the part of the schools. In other words, low academic achievement, disaffection from school, acting up in class, and severe behavioral problems do not generate each other. They are just stops on the way for a child being forced out of school.

A National Education Association (NEA) conference held in Washington, D.C., earlier this year prompted "Race Relations Reporter" to examine the "pushout" problem. The "Reporter" found these major tenets about "pushouts".

- * Most dropouts are in fact pushouts.
- * Most pushouts are minority students.
- * There is a common and predictable trend in each of the problems connoted by the term. For example, if there is a high suspension rate, one can also expect a high rate of absenteeism and low academic achievement.

* The problems that constitute the term "pushout" are a bundle of symptoms that do not cause each other. Low academic achievement does not cause a high suspension rate or vice versa. Rather, the root causes of pushouts are social in origin--racism, alienation, etc.

* The problems are to some extent ulterior to the process of desegregation, and yet one of the side effects of desegregation seems to be a rise in "pushout".

The "Reporter" studied the schools in Boston, San Francisco, and Mobile and found that the pushout problem manifested itself in different ways in each city. In both Boston and San Francisco, for instance, only one student was expelled last year, while in Mobile, Ala., 67 blacks and 17 whites were expelled. In Mobile, students also can be "indefinitely suspended". Already this year there have been 125 students indefinitely suspended from the Mobile system.

The problem of black suspensions and expulsions in Boston do not compare with the problems found in Mobile. However, there may be as many as 8,000 school-age Puerto Rican children who are not enrolled in the Boston public schools.

Many educators and administrators attribute the failure to the children served, not the schools themselves. Increasingly, others who support the term "pushout" believe that the "all too common progression"-- frustration, unhappiness, dislike for school, discipline problems, and withdrawal from school--is symptomatic of an insensitivity that denies the needs of the students. These educators believe one solution to the problem is greater community control of education.

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JABBERWOCK TALENT



Jabberwock Talent-The Cast of Us-Rancho High School dramatic reading ensemble was the first place winner in the skit category in the recent Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Jabberwock '73. The second and third place winners were Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and Cindy Thomas-vocalist and the Diamonds a dance group. This musical extravaganza was presented to raise funds for the sorority's Teen Lift project, a community travel awareness experience for local youth.

Presenting the award is Soror Barbara Branch to (left to right) Marquetta McKinney, Jackie Parson, Diane Winslow, and Vera Sampson. Not shown is Renee Cooper.

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