## DIALOGUE

## Special Education Cannot Be Allowed To Continue As Is: Its A Matter Of Survival For Black Youth

By Bryant Mason, Senior Fellow Phelps-Stokes Fund (Part 3 of a 3 part series)

"There are too many children of color in special education who have been taken off the express train and put on the local. The local never catches up with the express."

The late Ron Edmonds' efforts in New York City's public schools showed that fundamental to the work in school effectiveness is that school improvement must involve both quality and equity. Stated in a more inclusively specific way, results of school reform must benefit all students, including special education students.

To successfully merge these two groups of students, five factors must exist to achieve quality and equity: (1) high expectations for all students, and staff acceptance of responsibility for students' learning; (2) instructional leadership on the part of the principal; (3) a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning; (4) a clear and focused mission concerning instructional goals shared by the staff; and (5) frequent monitoring of student progress.

Instead of dividing students and placing them in separate systems, "special education fiefdoms,' based on arbitrary judgements of abilities, more attention should be placed on developing a merged system. We need to change our thinking to focus more on differences among people, in the ways we choose to organize schools for their education, and in how we view the purpose of that education. This new view would reject a division of handicapped and non-handicapped students. Individuals demonstrate different learning patterns.

In merged system, effective practices in classrooms and schools would characterize education for all students. No longer would there be an education system-that focuses on limitations of "handicapped" students, a teacher's incapacity to teach students because of a lack of special credentials, or instruction that is determined by labels attached to students. Nor would blame be placed on students or on family characteristics.

A new system means curriculum adaptations and individualized educational strategies that would allow both general and special education students to take more rigorous courses. What distinguishes general and special education is

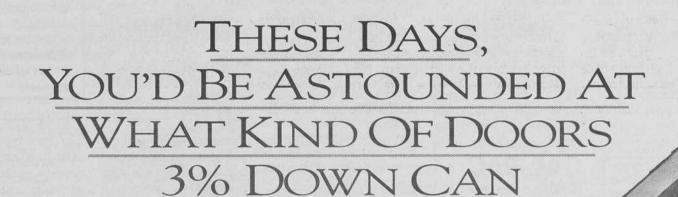
course choices, schools are

to help young people make wise to take courses that match their

grade level and abilities. Schools intellectually challenging,

used in those courses are course of study, the more students achieve, within the

that in general education in order increasingly requiring students are seeing to it that the materials Moreover: "the more rigorous the limits of their capacity. Student achievement also depends on (See Dialogue, Page 21)



PEN

Right now, for very little down you can open front doors, back doors, garage doors, all the doors that come with a home of your own. If this sounds like a dream

come true, it's time you looked into buying a HUD Home.

With the help of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), you can open up a world of

IF YOU CAN SWING AS LITTLE AS 3% DOWN, YOU'RE ABOUT TO BECOME A HOMEOWNER.

possibilities when it comes to affordable, first time home ownership. And, you can buy that first home for as little as



3% down and not much more than you're paying in monthly rent. To make it even easier, HUD will cover most, if not all of your closing costs.

For more information, contact a local real estate broker. Or, for a free brochure on how to buy a HUD

Home, call 1-800-767-4HUD. Because now you can afford to open the one door you've always dreamed of opening.



WE'LL HELP YOU OWN A PIECE OF AMERICA



To qualified buyers, only on homes with FHA-insured financing. Actual down payment and monthly mortgage payments will vary based on price of home and terms. Closing costs and fees additional.