

The University of Manitoba

A DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEMS AND PROCEDURES
INVOLVED IN THE INITIATION OF A HIGHER
HORIZONS PROGRAMME IN SEVEN SCHOOLS OF
THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 1

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This study provides an account of the problems and procedures involved in the initiation of the Higher Horizons programme in an area within the Winnipeg School Division. The programme is designed to stimulate pupils in culturally deprived and economically depressed areas, and to retain them in school until they have qualified for admission to college or to a technical or vocational school. Since there are schools in which large numbers of children have special educational needs, brought about by underprivileged homes, cultural deprivation, lack of intellectual stimulation, and difficult social conditions, many educators believe that educational opportunities should be provided to meet the needs of these children, as well as to raise the aspirations of children, parents and teachers, in order to improve the standards of education.

The operation of the Higher Horizons programme in New York and, to a lesser extent, in Detroit, is reviewed and

discussed, with major attention focussed on the activities and reasoning behind such activities. Some broad generalizations and conclusions are drawn, to enable other centres to overcome similar problems.

The schools designated as a suitable area for instituting a Higher Horizons programme in Winnipeg were the Hugh John Macdonald Junior High School and its six elementary feeder schools; namely, Victoria-Albert, Pinkham, Somerset, Isbister, Dufferin, and Montcalm.

The Winnipeg Higher Horizons programme is examined, regarding the problems encountered in educating the children of these schools, in order to justify the implementation of the project. An investigation examined: 1) the pupil drop-outs, 2) the grade expectancies of Grade V and VI pupils, and 3) the mobility of pupils in the area selected for the programme. Comparisons of mental ability, reading, and monthly attendance records were made between the pupils in the area and pupils in higher socio-economic areas of Winnipeg. A further comparison was made in relation to other areas in the city, with regard to social conditions as indicated by statistics supplied by the Child Guidance Clinic, juvenile delinquency, and social welfare agencies.

The procedures established in the operation of the

programme are discussed next. First, a historical background and the preliminary planning are outlined. Second, the resources required are noted. Third, the cultural activities and special academic projects are reviewed.

An important factor in conducting the varied programme of activities and projects was found to be the stimulation and encouragement given by the Coordinator and the administrative personnel to the principals, teachers, pupils and parents. Cultural activities such as Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra concerts, Royal Winnipeg Ballet performances, art displays, and tours are provided. The major academic emphasis is placed upon remedial reading and, to a lesser extent, upon arithmetic, in order to realize the Higher Horizon objectives.

Much of the success of the programme as a whole cannot be measured in statistical terms but, after more than two years of operation, the programme reveals certain strengths and weaknesses. Of the tangible results, procedures for better attendance, for improved home contacts, for good rapport between teachers and parents, and for increased awareness of special needs in the area, are moderately successful. Reports by the teaching staffs and principals to the Coordinator, while necessarily subjective in nature,

are invariably positive, and show a trend towards improvement in all areas.

The concentrated efforts of the teaching staff call for hard work and longer hours at their tasks, but the absence of negative attitudes and the growing enthusiasm of the staff in most cases, is justification, at this stage of the programme, for its continuance.

The children, in most cases, show increased enthusiasm for learning, better work habits and attitudes, and present fewer attendance problems.

The programme continues to labour under definite limitations, and a major factor contributing to lack of complete success is that of finance. Difficulties in selecting suitable staff arise, in most instances, directly from insufficient funds for the supply of suitable personnel. On the other hand, in some cases when funds are allocated for specialized personnel, qualified teachers have not been available. Lack of funds also limits the cultural phases of the programme. The problem of mobility of the school population is one which cannot be solved by the programme itself, and is, in turn, a limiting factor in the attainment of positive results.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Equality of educational opportunity is a doctrine freely accepted and seldom questioned seriously. Based upon the principle that educational opportunity ought to be consistent with the needs of children, however, the operation of educational programmes can become complex and diverse. Small classes and special services are widely organized and available for handicapped and mentally retarded children, these having special needs which cannot be met by ordinary education. There are, however, whole schools in which the majority of children have special educational needs, brought about by underprivileged homes, cultural deprivation, lack of intellectual stimulation, and difficult social conditions.

The purpose of this study is to provide an account of the origin, development and operation of the Higher Horizons programme in the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, a programme designed to stimulate pupils in culturally deprived and economically depressed areas, and to retain pupils in school until they have qualified for admission to college or to technical school.

The study is limited by the very nature of its being a continuous process in which no particular time limits can be set for compilation of findings and observation of results. Also, any noticeable results may be due, in part, to certain other factors which might be operational in the enrichment of the area in question, such as changed social conditions, variations in mobility of pupils, and other factors which are not within the control of the schools themselves. However, the study is useful in that it provides a view of an attempt to change the direction of the learning processes and to alleviate some of the educational deprivations in one designated area of an urban community.

Comparisons can be made between the Winnipeg programme and similar projects in other cities and, at a time when educational programmes are in a ferment of change, some direction may be given to the thinking of educational planners in general. This report of the beginnings of the Higher Horizons programme, its gradual development and operation up to the present time (September, 1964,) may enable Winnipeg School Division No. 1 to assess the total picture with the view to expansion of the programme.

II. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

Chapter One sets forth the basic purposes of the study, together with its setting, definition of terms used, and the sources of data.

Chapter Two furnishes accounts of the Higher Horizons programme in New York City and of the Great Cities Grey Areas School Improvement Programme in Detroit, two of the fourteen largest cities of the United States which are presently carrying out similar projects.

The basis for instituting the Higher Horizons programme in a culturally deprived area of the City of Winnipeg is investigated in Chapter Three, providing an account of some early projects and a summation of events leading to the introduction of the programme. There follows, in Chapter Four, an account of the Winnipeg programme in actual operation, dealing with pilot projects, allocation of resources, and designation of personnel. Cultural activities and special academic programmes involving pupils, school staffs and parents are considered.

Chapter Five contains an assessment of some of the values of the programme, in the light of certain defined limitations, and some short-term forecasts for the future of the Higher Horizons programme.

III. SETTING OF THE STUDY

Those schools designated as a suitable area for instituting a Higher Horizons programme were the Hugh John Macdonald Junior High School and its six elementary feeder schools, namely: Victoria-Albert, Pinkham, Somerset, Isbister,¹ Dufferin, and Montcalm schools. A map of the area involved is shown in Figure 1.

IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS

A number of new or specially designated terms will be used in the report. They are defined as follows:

Committee: A group consisting of the principals of Hugh John Macdonald, Victoria-Albert, Pinkham, Somerset, Isbister, Dufferin and Montcalm schools, and certain designated personnel of the Superintendent's Department of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

Coordinator: a person who plans and coordinates the functions of the Higher Horizons programme, under the direction of the Superintendent's Department of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

Culturally deprived: children deprived of a way of life that encourages them to become contributing members

¹Isbister School was closed on June 30, 1964, and its pupils were transferred to John M. King, Victoria-Albert and Somerset schools.

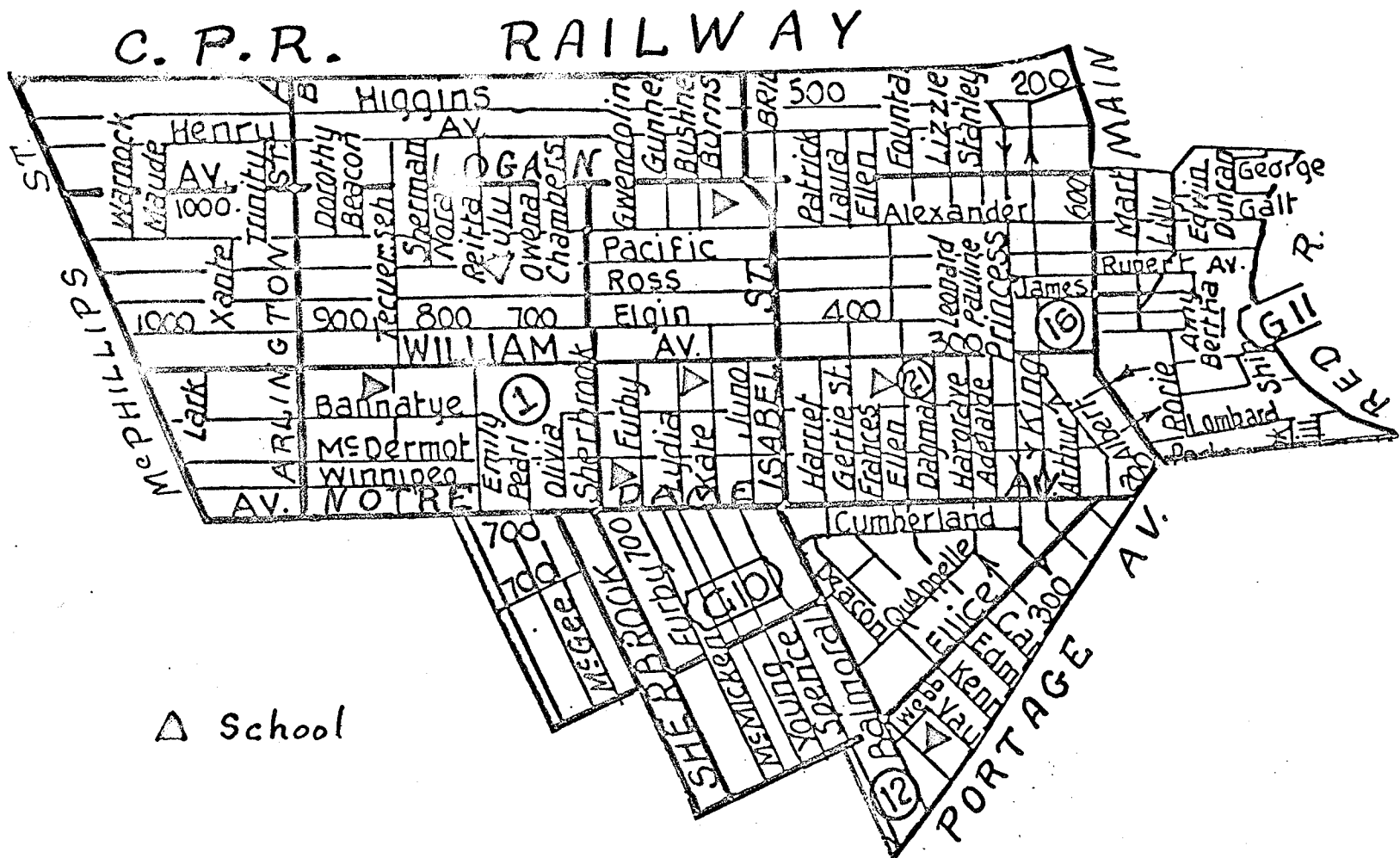


Figure 1. Map of area designated for Higher Horizons project.

of our society, to achieve self-reliance as persons, and to have their own reasons for being. Other terms synonymous with it are: educationally deprived, economically depressed, underprivileged, disadvantaged, lower class, lower socio-economic, impoverished, economically deprived, culturally different, culturally depressed.

Division: all public schools situated within the boundaries of the city of Winnipeg, and known as The Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

Drop-outs: pupils who, for a number of reasons, fail to complete their high school education.

Elementary school: a school which offers instruction in Kindergarten and in grades one to six.

Great Cities Grey Areas School Improvement Programme, or Great Cities School Improvement Programme: includes the fourteen largest public school systems in the United States. Its purpose is to discover ways of providing better schooling for culturally deprived children.

Higher Horizons area: that portion of the City of Winnipeg School Division No. 1, providing education facilities through one designated junior high and six elementary schools, experimenting with the Higher Horizons programme. See Figure 1.

Higher Horizons programme: a programme designed to

encourage pupils, particularly in culturally deprived and economically depressed areas, to stay in school until they have qualified for admission to college or have acquired a trade or marketable skill.

Junior high school: a school where grades seven, eight and nine are taught.

Open House: an evening, designated several times during the year, for parents to visit the school and to discuss their children's progress with the teachers.

Programme: the Higher Horizons project or the Great Cities Grey Areas School Improvement programme, both of which aim for an optimal development of each pupil.

V. SOURCES OF DATA

The following are the sources of data for this report:

1. The pamphlets, reports and bulletins on Higher Horizons, Board of Education of the City of New York, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn 1, New York.
2. Reports of the Detroit Great Cities School Improvement Project, 453 Stimson Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.
3. Phi Delta Kappan, a Journal for the Promotion of Research, Service, and Leadership in Education, Eighth Street and Union Avenue, Bloomington, Indiana.

4. Education and the Disadvantaged American, the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association of the United States and the American Association of School Administrators, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

5. A report of the Committee on Services for Juvenile and Adult Offenders, Community Welfare Planning Council, 177 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg 2, Manitoba.

6. School Board minutes and annual reports published by the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, 1577 Wall Street East, Winnipeg 3, Manitoba.

7. A report of a visit to a number of Higher Horizons schools in Metropolitan New York City, made by Mr. G. M. Newfield, Coordinator of Higher Horizons, the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, 1577 Wall Street East, Winnipeg 3, Manitoba.

8. Minutes of the Higher Horizons meetings, the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, 1577 Wall Street East, Winnipeg 3, Manitoba.

9. Personal consultation with the principals of the seven Winnipeg schools experimenting with the Higher Horizons programme.

10. Personal consultation with the City of Winnipeg Social Welfare Agency, the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court, and the Child Guidance Clinic of Greater Winnipeg.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SIMILAR PROGRAMMES

I. THE HIGHER HORIZONS PROGRAMME IN NEW YORK CITY

Background and Organization

The New York City school system has traditionally played a leading role in developing human potential and in broadening democratic principles. The Higher Horizons programme is the most recent evidence of its leadership in the education of disadvantaged children. The programme aims to develop the potential achievement level of all children and to prevent the waste of human talent.

In the spring of 1956, the New York Board of Education's Commission on Integration, working through a sub-commission on Guidance, Educational Stimulation, and Placement, stated in its report:

It is well known that tests of mental ability usually do not measure the full intellectual potential of children who come from low status socio-economic homes, or homes in which there is cultural deprivation. Neither do such children demonstrate the academic achievement that other, more privileged children of comparable ability do, with the result that relatively few of the under-privileged children pursue post high school education, if indeed they complete even modified high school courses. In the concern for this type of child, it is proposed to institute a demonstration guidance programme for the early identification and stimulation of able students

who are not now identified, and to combine this guidance programme with one of teacher education in the identification and stimulation of able students of the type mentioned.¹

The Demonstration Guidance Project evolved from this proposal and began at Junior High School 43, Manhattan, in December of 1956. The project was planned for a six-year period so that seventh grade pupils could be followed through graduation. In the beginning it included 717 of the 1,400 junior high school students in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. After further screening and the dispersion of many students to a variety of high schools, 379 students were placed in project classes at George Washington High School. Of this number, 240 students were ultimately graduated.

In the course of the project, many efforts were made to compensate for limitations caused by community factors. Expanded guidance and counselling staffs, special instructional and remedial services, broader cultural experiences, more contacts with parents, and clinical and financial assistance were provided.

The success of the project led to its extension into other junior high schools having the same problems. This

¹Higher Horizons, Progress Report, Board of Education of the City of New York, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn 1, New York, January, 1963, p. 2.