NEGRO EDUCATION IN OMAHA, NEBRASKA

BY

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A THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most of us have read numerous accounts of the bitter struggles and seemingly unsurmountable difficulties which man has faced throughout his entire history. Despite our knowledge of this fact, many of us have experienced, on various occasions, the feeling that our own particular problems were unique. It is in our human nature to do so. It is true, especially, of us in the teaching profession. Tending to magnify our problems we fancy that they are much more difficult than those which confront other members of society. Without question, educators do have an enormous task; yet, when we look about us we can plainly see that others are being confronted constantly with equally serious problems. In all worthwhile fields of human endeavor, there are innumerable obstacles to hurdle. Perhaps, such obstacles tend to make them worthwhile. Because the problems found in teaching are different from those found elsewhere, it does not follow that they are more troublesome.

Prior to her assignment as first grade teacher in a Negro school, the writer had received university training in the field of primary teaching and had
gained some actual experience in teaching first grade children. However, at Howard Kennedy School,\(^1\) she was confronted with many problems for which she needed further experience. Her tenure in this school provided such experience. As a result, she has formulated the opinion that a teacher should have special training before beginning to teach in this type of school. Throughout this thesis, an attempt will be made to marshal facts to substantiate this opinion. For the author realizes that, if she had received special training, she would have made fewer mistakes.

After becoming more experienced in teaching Negro children, the writer found the work extremely interesting, though hard, and remained for nearly nine years at this same school. However, it would seem unwise for a teacher to remain too long in any school which has so many continuing socio-economic problems lest her viewpoint become warped and her health impaired.

Although not teaching Negro children at the present time, the author’s interest in their welfare continues. Because of this interest, *Negro Education in Omaha, Nebraska* was chosen as the subject of this thesis. Such a study should prove helpful to those who have not worked with large numbers of Negro

\(^1\)Howard Kennedy Public Grade School is located at Thirtieth and Maple Streets, Omaha, Nebraska.
children since it appears upon research that the information contained in this dissertation is not widely known.

To the writer's knowledge, no particularized study of Negro children in the Omaha elementary schools has been undertaken. There are two unpublished Master's theses, which were written at Omaha University, on related subjects: the first, in the field of Sociology, was written by James H. Kerns in 1932.2 It has to do with the industrial and business life of the Negro population in Omaha; the second, in the field of Sociology, was written by Francis Y. Knapple, a Central High School teacher.3 This treats of Negro high school students.

It is the writer's intention to acquaint the reader with the present status of Negro elementary education and to offer suggestions which, in her opinion, would result in improvement in the education of the Negro children in the elementary schools in Omaha. It is also to be hoped that the findings in this thesis will prove helpful to other teachers facing the same problems.

The author's work with Negro children was


confined to Howard Kennedy School, but, from discussions with teachers in other Negro schools, she discovered conditions were similar to those at Howard Kennedy. While Negro children are enrolled in several elementary schools throughout the city, the groups are usually small in relation to the white enrollment. However, at Long School, the entire student body is Negro, and, at Howard Kennedy School for 1945-1946, the enrollment numbered 347 Negro children and fifteen white. It will be explained later how it happens that these two schools have a predominantly Negro student body.

In this presentation of the status of Negro education in Omaha at the present time, the writer will limit herself to relating educational conditions, as she saw them, at Howard Kennedy. However, in general, these conditions are applicable to Negro education throughout the entire city.

In the process of relating her own personal experiences in the First Grade at Howard Kennedy School, the researcher will give a description in Chapter II of Negro life in Omaha. This Chapter describes the Negro family, their housing, their standard of living, the type of employment open to them, the wages they receive, the community and welfare agencies active among them, their religious interests, their recreational

4Long Public Grade School is located at Twenty-sixth and Franklin Streets, Omaha, Nebraska.
facilities, and the motility of the people.

In Chapter III, the reader will find a description of the Howard Kennedy School building and its grounds, its equipment, the personnel, the methods of instruction, the curriculum, the school problems, and the students.

Chapter IV tells a personal story of the primary methods and techniques used in the First Grade at Howard Kennedy School for the years 1935-1943 with special emphasis upon the little children's problems and their solution as worked out by the teacher.

The Fifth Chapter will be quite brief. In this Chapter will be contrasted the teaching of the two races of children. The differences in their backgrounds which call for a different method of teaching will also be discussed.

A brief sketch of the early settlement of Negroes in Nebraska and in Omaha will be found in Chapter Six. Included, also, will be a record of their present numbers, mention of the fact of residential segregation, and a discussion of their educational opportunities at the present time.

In the concluding Chapter, suggestions will be offered to improve the education of Negro children in Omaha. Among these suggestions will be: new textbooks, a complete testing program, better grade-placement, more special classes, additional courses of study, fewer
pupils per classroom, additional personnel, a Child-
Care Center, free bus service, free lunches, and addi-
tional teaching and building equipment.
CHAPTER II

DESCRIPTION OF NEGRO LIFE IN OMAHA

The students who attend Howard Kennedy School may be described under these three classifications: a small number of very capable children; a small number of average pupils; a vast number of children needing special instruction. There is direct correlation between these groups and the types of conditions existing in the home. When the children come from homes where the parents have an adequate income, the children usually enjoy better health and have had wider experience than those who come from homes where there is no assured income or where the parents are unemployed. Since the majority of the Howard Kennedy School children are in this latter category, they are the ones who cause the school the most concern.

The pupils in the school reflect the socio-economic conditions in the neighborhood. The school can do very little to improve the economic status of the Negro people in the community except to keep the public informed about the undesirable conditions there.

Very few of the parents of Howard Kennedy School children are in the professional or business classes. Most of the fathers are laborers and the mothers are
domestic workers. In the section which might be called the "slum" area, the parents are unemployed or existing on semi-charity. Children who live in the "slum" area, where poverty, disease, ignorance, vice and crime are prevalent, are underprivileged. They present problems to the school in health, in character training, and in attendance. From such homes, the school receives children who become truant and delinquent. However, truancy and delinquency cannot be traced, in every instance, to undesirable home conditions because many children from these homes are very satisfactory pupils in the school. Some authorities contend that the schools are responsible, in some instances, for some of the truancy and delinquency. Wallin illustrates this very plainly when he writes:

It is undoubtedly true that the schools themselves are responsible for much truancy and delinquency by attempting to force children to do work which they cannot do. This fosters a spirit of rebellion against the school and causes the children to become truant and delinquent, for truancy often leads to delinquency. In this direction the schools can do real preventive work, for they can prevent much truancy and delinquency by properly adapting the instruction to meet the needs of the children. The juvenile courts and reformatories get the children only after they have embarked on their career of delinquency. It is easier to prevent children from embarking on such careers than to reform them after they have already become delinquent.

While at Howard Kennedy School, the author saw

many children referred to the Attendance Department of the city school system. Some children had to appear before the Juvenile Court. Some were sent to Riverview Home; some to Father Flanagan's Boys' Home; some to the Reformatory at Kearney, Nebraska. In a few instances, these children were neither truant nor delinquent but homeless.

We can imagine the kinds of houses in which Negroes live if we compare the average monthly rental paid by them, approximately fifteen dollars, with the average of thirty-five dollars, paid for rent in Nebraska. This is the way Stegner describes Negro housing:

Housing for colored people, though better in the South than in the most crowded Northern cities, is often sub-standard. Negroes live in such shacks as they can afford or in houses given up by white residents.

It is estimated that forty per cent of the Negroes, in Omaha, are home-owners, forty-five per cent are renters, and the remaining fifteen per cent are living with relatives.

In Howard Kennedy School district, there are three types of Negro residences. The author having visited in each type gained the impression that the

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better homes in the district were those owned by the Ne­groes and were the ones that had been kept in good re­pair by the former white owners. The second kind were the rented dwellings usually owned by white people. Some of these were in fairly good condition, but others were in great need of repair. The third type of resi­dence in this school district may be described best as hovels or shacks where poor sanitation and filth are the outstanding features.

In 1937, the United States Government began a program of "slum" clearance. As a result of this pro­gram, a Federal Housing Project was built in the Negro district in the northern part of town. This project houses Negroes as well as whites. It helped somewhat in relieving congestion in this area, but, since the war, because of the extreme housing shortage all over the city, Negroes again had to resort to doubling up of families.

Some white families live in the Negro school districts. The school census, for 1945, listed 321 white children of school age in Howard Kennedy district, and sixty-six in Long district, but none of these white children attended Long School. Some may have been too

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5This Federal Housing Project is called the Logan Fontenelle Homes with offices at 1401 North Twenty-second Street, Omaha, Nebraska.

young when the census was taken; some may have been attending high, private, or parochial schools; some may have been employed; and others may have been attending, by special permission, public schools outside of their residential district.

From a description of Negro housing conditions, we may now proceed to a discussion of their standard of living. Because of their inferior economic status, unemployment, even in normal times, is widespread among them. They suffer the disadvantages of low wages, seasonal employment, and lack of advancement opportunities. It is estimated that the average yearly income of a Negro family in Nebraska (Omaha having the largest Negro population in the State) is approximately $750, even with several members of the family employed. Less than twenty per cent of the skilled and white-collar workers earn over $1,000 annually. Among all Negro wage-earners, less than five per cent earn in excess of $1,500 per year.

When we consider that about sixty per cent are unskilled workers (some unemployed), we realize that most Negroes receive small wages. Of the remaining, about twenty-seven per cent are semi-skilled, eight per cent skilled, and five per cent hold white-collar jobs. Most of the men work in the packing and railroad

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7Nebraska Writers' Project, op. cit., p. 21.
8Ibid., p. 19.
industries, and in hotels, restaurants, clubs, and apartment buildings. The women usually do domestic work. 9

Because of their generally low incomes resulting from the type of jobs available to them, Negroes do not spend as much money as most white people do on housing, food, clothing, or dental and medical care. As a result of this low standard of living, they become easy victims of disease. The mortality rate among Negroes is very high with poor sanitation, delayed medical care, and crowded home conditions, all factors contributing to this high death rate. For example, among Nebraska Negroes, there were 207 deaths and 173 births reported for 1938. 10 In Omaha, in 1943, among non-white races, there were 258 live-births and 217 deaths, the highest mortality rate occurring under one year of age. 11

This is not only a local picture of the high mortality rate among Negroes since the same story is true nationally as shown by Stegner:

The Negro death rate is still thirty-two per cent higher than the white death rate; that the infant mortality rate is twice as high; that the frequency of social diseases, especially syphilis and tuberculosis, is much greater. In the past fifty years the Negro death rate has dropped from thirty-three to fourteen per thousand. Yet even

9Ibid., p. 22.
10Ibid., p. 20.
today the average Negro's life span is ten years less than that of a white man.\(^{12}\)

No city can point with pride toward areas where disease is allowed to flourish. Parker gives a very vivid description of living conditions in a "slum" district:

Disease breeds disease. Vice and filth grow where vice and filth abound. Ignorance flourishes in such surroundings, and maintains the blight. Poverty settles where the city is darkest. Lazy, shiftless, broken hulks of humanity bring into the world infants among whom mortality is high, in an environment where those who die are often more fortunate than those who live to fill the jail houses, occupy free beds in the hospitals, or exist hopelessly on charity or semi-charity. Even the decent, here through force of circumstance or because of mental or physical incapacity, can hardly survive and develop into self-respecting citizens.\(^{13}\)

This description fits perfectly some sections of the Omaha Negro district.

In Omaha, although at the present time there are no special Negro hospitals, Negroes are admitted in all hospitals. However, because of their economic plight, they do not avail themselves of any except the free institutions as a rule. They do make use of the two clinics: one, conducted by the Creighton University Medical College;\(^{14}\) and the other operated by the Nebraska State Medical Dispensary.

\(^{12}\)Stegner, op. cit., p. 225.


\(^{14}\)Creighton Medical Dispensary is located at Fourteenth and Davenport Streets, Omaha, Nebraska.
Medical College.\textsuperscript{15}

There has been some interest among the Negroes in the proposed building of a hospital, to be called Provident Hospital, on land purchased recently at the corner of Thirtyeth and Wirt Streets. However, upon checking with the Community Welfare Council, the writer was told that the activity is dormant at the present time.\textsuperscript{16}

No paper such as this would be complete without mention of the outstanding work of the Omaha Visiting Nurse Association.\textsuperscript{17} These nurses:

\begin{itemize}
\item Give nursing care, under the orders of a physician: such as bedside care, dressings, and medications.
\item Demonstrate isolation technique in cases of contagion.
\item Assist the doctor in the supervision of the pregnant mother, and help her in preparing for the baby.
\item Give care to the Mother and Baby after delivery.
\item Instruct mothers in the care of their infants, demonstrating feeding as ordered by the doctor.
\item Give bedside care to Tuberculosis patients and teach members of their families and all other contacts the value of medical examinations and how to prevent the spread of the disease.
\item Instruct cases of Venereal Disease and their contacts in their problem, as well as the value
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{15}University of Nebraska Medical College is located at Forty-second and Dewey Avenue, Omaha, Nebraska.

\textsuperscript{16}Information secured (August, 1946) by telephoning Miss Albrecht of the Community Welfare Council, 736 World-Herald Building, Omaha.

\textsuperscript{17}The Visiting Nurse Association is located at 606 City Hall, Omaha.
of carrying out the treatment suggested by the doctor.\textsuperscript{18}

The Association also holds Well Child Conferences for infants and pre-school children in various parts of the city for children of low income families.\textsuperscript{19}

While a commensurate charge for a visit is made, nevertheless this payment is waived if the family cannot afford to pay. Seventy-eight per cent of the visits made from January through June, 1944, were free.\textsuperscript{20} Approximately twenty-five per cent of the admitted cases for 1945 were Negro.\textsuperscript{21}

In the vicinity of Howard Kennedy and Long Schools, there are some grocery stores, drug stores, restaurants, lunch rooms, transfer companies, garages, pool halls, taverns, barber and beauty shops, dance halls, several mortuaries, and a cab company, all of them owned and operated by Negro business men and women.

In Omaha, an effort has been made, from time to time, to raise the standard of living among the Negro population. For example, in October, 1933, men of both races met in an Interracial Conference to study the

\textsuperscript{18}"Visiting Nurses Serve All" (pamphlet), The Visiting Nurse Association of Omaha.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{21}The author secured this information during an interview at the V.N.A. headquarters, August 10, 1946.
economic life of the Negro population in Omaha. These were some of their findings:

The traditional concept of jobs for Negroes limit their opportunities for employment. Negroes are limited to low-wage jobs requiring unskilled labor. There is less demand for Negroes in domestic service. The highest per cent of unemployed is among Negroes. Whenever possible Negroes are replaced by white workers. Negroes are denied membership in trade unions. The standard of living among Negroes is generally low.22

The Conference suggested that the development of friendly interracial attitudes through education was one way of improving the economic status of Negroes in the city.23 While some of the findings of that Conference are not true today, there is still need for improvement in Negro employment in Omaha.

Negroes have received help from the United States Government by such programs as the Works' Progress Administration, Relief, Federal Housing, and free school lunches. Executive Order 8802, or the Fair Employment Practice in Defense Industries, was issued by Franklin D. Roosevelt in June, 1941, for the expressed purpose of aiding Negroes in obtaining employment in war industries. Yet, if this order expires this year (1946), there is some danger that unemployment among Negroes will increase, and they will again need

22 Nebraska Writers' Project, op. cit., p. 17.
23 Ibid., p. 18.
government assistance.

No accurate picture of life in the Negro District in North Omaha would be complete without including mention of the Negro press. Negroes issue two weekly newspapers: the *Omaha Guide*, established in 1927, and the *Omaha Star*, founded in 1938. These newspapers contain information about Negroes, both locally and nationally.

Many organizations of a social, economic, or political nature are conducted by or for Negroes in Omaha. A most influential organization is the Local Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People begun in Omaha in 1914. While most of its members are Negroes, some are white.

Its chief objective is to help secure for Negroes equal rights with all races, as provided by the national Constitution, when such rights have been infringed upon. In the interest of full citizenship rights for Negroes the Association has waged a campaign against illegal convictions, lynchings, civil and political discrimination, and venal politicians. In recent years it has extended its efforts toward bettering the economic status of Negroes, in cooperation with other agencies working toward the same end.

Another very important organization is the Local Branch of the National Urban League, founded in 1928 as an outgrowth of the Colored Commercial Club. Although

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26The Urban League Community Center is located at 2213 Lake Street, Omaha. Organized in 1920 as a Community Center, it was consolidated with the Urban League in 1934.
the executive board includes both Negroes and whites. The active management is in the hands of an executive secretary, chosen from members of the Negro race for his executive and leadership qualities.

The constitution of the Omaha Urban League states that the primary function of the League is to foster the improvement of the industrial, housing, economic, health, social, and spiritual conditions of Negroes by: (1) Encouraging better understanding and fellowship between the races. (2) Making any necessary studies and surveys of conditions. (3) Coordination and cooperation among existing agencies and organizations by developing such other agencies and organizations as may be found necessary. (4) Promoting, encouraging, assisting, and engaging in any and all kinds of work toward the accomplishment of the purposes of the League.

The Omaha Urban League further defines its activities by classifying them into four groups, as follows: (1) To coordinate the effort of persons and organizations working for the welfare of the colored people of Omaha. (2) To secure larger opportunities for colored people through public and private social agencies. (3) To investigate the social and industrial conditions of Negroes in Omaha as a basis for practical work. (4) To improve the social and industrial conditions of Negroes, with emphasis on health, housing, education, recreation, employment, and delinquency.

Five chapters of the State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs are active in Omaha and are endeavoring to improve conditions among Negro women by making available instructions in home making, motherhood, healthful living, disease prevention, and child welfare.

The programs of activities of the following organizations include some welfare work. Some of them

27Ibid., p. 30.
28Ibid., pp. 30-31.
provide recreational facilities and offer courses in vocational education. The Inter-Racial Committee of the Community Welfare Council is working to better intercultural understanding through education and to secure recognition for Negro teachers in the Omaha public school system. Woodson Center at 3009 R Street in South Omaha, founded in 1926, was formerly a Branch of the Social Settlement, but it has been an independent organization since 1940. It is supported by the Omaha Community Chest. Woodson Center charges a small membership fee to those who can afford to pay. Children, from five to twelve years of age, are enrolled at the Center the year round. The enrollment is chiefly Negro. The Omaha Board of Education sponsors evening classes for adults conducted at Woodson Center. The Neighborhood Council, initiated by the Woodson Center and composed of ministers, case workers, members of the Visiting Nurse Association, school principals and other community leaders, is proving effective among the Negroes of South Omaha.

The following organizations cooperated in the formation of a community program for the benefit of


30 Telephone conversation (August 9, 1946) with Director, Woodson Center.

Negroes living in the northern section of Omaha: the Northside Y.W.C.A., the Urban League, the City Recreation Department, the Near North Side Y.M.C.A., and Youth Centers, Inc. In April, 1946, this entire community program was centered in the Near North Side Y.M.C.A. Headquarters building at 2221 North Twenty-fourth Street. The Three Corners' Canteen is operated in this building under the supervision of the Secretary.32

A Colored Old Folks' Home, located in Omaha at 933 North Twenty-fifth Street, cares for the indigent aged. Organized in 1913, it became an agency of the Omaha Community Chest in 1923. It is managed by a Board of Directors.33 The Theodore Roosevelt Post of the American Legion, organized by Negro ex-service men in 1919 carries on a relatively extensive program of relief and social welfare.34 The Centralized Commonwealth Civic Club, commonly called the Four C Club, activated in 1937, sponsors group activities and community events among Omaha Negroes.35

Extensive programs for Negro girls are carried on by the Northside Branch of the Young Women's Christian

33Nebraska Writers' Project, op. cit., p. 31.
34Ibid.
35Ibid.
In Omaha, three Troops of Boy Scouts are composed of Negro boys exclusively. One of these Negro Troops, Troop 79, numbers more Eagle Scouts than any other Boy Scout Troop in America. An annual outing for all colored Boy Scouts is held at Camp Gifford.\(^{37}\)

The existence of some forty-odd Negro churches in Omaha is indicative of their religious life. Memberships range from small congregations of a dozen people to some three hundred active members. Less than half of the Negroes belong to any church, and less than forty per cent of those belonging are active members attending regularly. Rented basements, store-front buildings, halls, frame structures, and a few rather imposing cathedrals serve as places of worship. Among the denominations are Methodist Episcopal, Church of God in Christ, Episcopalian, Memorial, Baptist, Catholic, Unity, Presbyterian, Seven Day Adventists, Sanctified, Holiness, Christian, Spiritualist, Pentacostal, People's Interdenominational, and one Branch of Father Divine's Heaven. There are numerous subdivisions of these denominations. Most of these churches are burdened by debt. The leadership of these Negro churches is represented by some untrained men and by some highly-trained graduates of

\(^{36}\)Ibid., p. 32.

\(^{37}\)Ibid., pp. 31-32.
divinity schools.38

The school of St. Benedict, the Moor,39 a Catholic institution, enrolls Negro students exclusively. It was founded by the Jesuit Order in Omaha and is under the supervision of a Jesuit priest. In 1933, it was estimated that only about half of the student body was Catholic.40 At the present time (1946), sixty-three percent are Catholic. The total enrollment of 150 students is taught by four Sisters of the Servants of Mary and by one lay teacher.41

One of the most publicized functions among the Negroes of Omaha is the annual selection of a Negro King and Queen. Many prominent Negroes take an active part in the Coronation Pageant and in the Coronation Ball. The entire colorful ceremony, which is held in Dreamland Hall, is sponsored by the Church of St. Philip, the Deacon.42

Several Negro Churches sponsor an annual picnic for Negroes. They are admitted to all public parks and

38 Ibid., p. 37.
39 The Church of St. Benedict, the Moor, and the school are located at 2423 Grant Street, Omaha.
42 Nebraska Writers' Project, op. cit., p. 29.
playgrounds. Recreational facilities are available to them at Woodson Center, the Urban League Community Center, and the Near Northside Y.M.C.A. building. These organizations carry on programs of supervised recreation and planned amusement.43

All of these Negro organizations are striving to improve the economic, social, educational, recreational, and spiritual life of the Negro population in Omaha. Most of them are working under the handicaps of limited funds, insufficient facilities, or inadequate space.

The aim of all Negro organizations is to raise the economic status of their people. If this aim is realized, one outcome will be a lower rate of mobility among many Negro families. Because of low wages, irregular employment, and dependence upon relatives or relief and welfare agencies, they are unable to make regular payments of rent and must seek frequent changes of residence. Many times, they move in with relatives or other families. Such overcrowding is unsatisfactory from a health standpoint. It is to be hoped that Negro organizations will eliminate living conditions of such an undesirable kind.

43 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
Howard Kennedy School is located on the west side of Thirtieth Street a short distance north of Maple Street in the northwest section of Omaha, Nebraska. This two-story red brick building faces east and is constructed on a high terrace enclosed in a cement block retaining wall. Thirtieth Street, a busy national highway, passes by the front of the building. There are no streets on either side of the building, and Thirty-first Street on the west side to which the playground extends is unpaved and on a much higher level of ground. It is an attractive building, modern in all respects, and in good repair. However, school architects of the future, from their past experience, will change and correct some features of Howard Kennedy School: install a more modern heating plant, locate the drinking fountains more conveniently throughout the building and adjust their height to the different sizes of children, provide a larger playground fitted with play equipment, and build the school away from a national highway in the best possible location for the general safety of the children. These corrections will be made in any proposed new school building program for these disadvantages certainly
are not unique at Howard Kennedy School.

Inside the building, there are sixteen classrooms, eight on each floor. Half of the classrooms are on the east side of the building, the other half on the west side with a long, bright corridor running the full length of the building between the classrooms. Two west side rooms, on each floor, are larger than the rest. The principal's office and toilet rooms are located between the two large rooms on the first floor, and the teachers' lunch and toilet rooms are located between the two large rooms on the second floor. One of the extra large rooms on the first floor is used as a combination gymnasium-auditorium, and the other is not in regular use. On the second floor, one of the extra large rooms is used as an ungraded classroom, and the other is the regular Fifth-grade classroom. All rooms are bright and airy, but some of them are not easily heated. There are several large rooms in the basement. They are not used as classrooms, but they have provided ample space for the day nursery which was conducted at the school during the war and for the lunch room when free lunches were provided for the needy by the government, under the W.P.A. program.

In so far as supplies are concerned, Howard Kennedy School is furnished with the same equipment as are all other elementary schools in the city. However, some Omaha schools have received assistance from their
Parent-Teacher Organizations in purchasing much needed equipment, but this has not been true in Howard Kennedy School because its P.-T.A. organization has not been financially able to expend money for the supplies which teachers believe are beneficial to the children's needs. While lack of teaching equipment is a handicap in any school system, it does not constitute the major school problems in the case of Howard Kennedy School.

Although the Omaha Board of Education is cognizant of the fact that all the schools are in need of many improvements, they have not been able to supply the schools adequately because of a shortage of funds available for educational purposes in the city. To remedy this situation, several Nebraska school officials are endeavoring at the present time to enlist State aid in providing more equalized educational opportunities for all school children in Nebraska. Frank C. Heinisch, executive secretary of the Omaha Education Association, has pointed out that the Constitution of the State of Nebraska states that the Legislature shall provide free instruction in the common schools for all children between the ages of five and twenty-one.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Frank C. Heinisch, "Where Do We Go from Here?" The Quarterly (March, 1945), p. 8.
support its own institutions of learning. There appears to be a wide variation in the appropriations for schools in different sections of the State. Mr. Heinisch has remarked that in Omaha ninety-five per cent of the funds used for educational purposes are obtained from taxes on real estate. He feels that this is an undue burden on property owners and that the support of the schools would be more evenly distributed if the Legislature would devise some additional forms of taxation in Nebraska. The proposed Bill for State Aid will appear on the ballots in November, 1946.

When the writer taught at Howard Kennedy School, she found most of the teachers were very cooperative. A congenial group, they were doing everything possible to improve conditions in the school. Of course, some of them were succeeding better than others. All seventeen,² however, were working to the best of their abilities.

From the Fifth Grade through the Eighth, the school was departmentalized. Each home room teacher specialized in one of the following: Mathematics, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies. The Physical Education and the traveling Speech-Correction teachers taught the whole student body. The part-time Music teacher taught from Grades Three through Eight; while

²There were thirteen full time teachers, three part-time Special instructors, and one principal at Howard Kennedy School.
the part-time Art instructor taught from the Fifth Grade through the Eighth.

In addition to her regular curriculum, the Eighth Grade teacher was in charge of the Safety Patrol and the Student Council. The Seventh Grade teacher supervised the Fire Patrol. Each year a Red Cross Instructor conducted a course in First Aid for the Seventh and Eighth Grade students.

Since the teacher turn-over is quite rapid at this school, there was provided an opportunity for the author to observe a great many teachers over a period of years. Some were too conscientious, a fact resulting in the impairment of their health; some attempting to maintain discipline by a show of force brought about resentment from the students; and others remained for only a short time in the school because they seemed unable to adjust to the surroundings.

Two Negro teachers taught for a short time in the Omaha schools previous to 1903. Since that time, there were no Negro teachers until 1939 when four were employed by the Board of Education. One of them was assigned as full-time Physical-Education director at Howard Kennedy School, one was appointed as part-time Music teacher at this school, the third was employed as a Substitute teacher, and the fourth was given the position of Dean of Negro girls at Technical High School.\(^3\)

\(^3\)The main entrance to Technical High School is at Thirty-second and Cuming Street, Omaha.
In 1946, ten Negro teachers were employed in the Omaha schools.

As to the reaction of the white teachers to the Negro teachers or vice versa, there was none. They met each other on an equal footing and worked together cooperatively for the good of the school. There was a total absence of friction, and each had a pleasant, friendly attitude toward the other.4

What was the reaction of the Negro children to the Negro teachers? Their reaction varied according to their individual ability to adjust to new situations. Children are naturally curious when something new occurs in their experience. Once the newness has worn off, they are usually in complete agreement or in open rebellion to a change in their environment. Some of the Negro children appeared very happy to have members of their own race as teachers; others seemed to resent the Negro teachers. The reaction of each individual pupil was, to a certain extent, the result of the pupil-teacher relationship fostered in the atmosphere of different classrooms. Sometimes the pupil reaction could be traced to the opinions held in the home. For example, if the parents were desirous of having Negro teachers in the school, the children reacted favorably.

4Mrs. Robbie Davis, Dean of Negro girls at Technical High School, has often commented on the fine cooperation she received from the Howard Kennedy personnel.
On the other hand, if the parents did not regard Negro teachers as an asset to the school, the children reacted with undesirable behavior. It is the writer's opinion that the Negro teachers whom she has known were very capable. As long as they meet the same requirements as white teachers before being employed to teach in the Omaha schools, the Board of Education should continue to give them employment—at least, in representative proportion to the number of Negro children enrolled in the Omaha schools.

The teachers who were most successful at Howard Kennedy School possessed some or all of these qualifications: a determination to become adjusted; a willingness to adapt the instruction to the needs of the individual pupils; a well-developed sense of humor; a missionary spirit; extreme patience; good health; a sympathetic understanding of the children; excellent training not only in presenting subject matter but also in handling disciplinary problems in a fair and just manner; and a generous nature being willing to give freely of time, energy, and, on some occasions, even money.

The methods of instruction varied with different teachers, but it seemed to be the consensus of opinion, among them, that the formalized type of instruction was best suited to Negro children.

Some teachers, who attempted the so-called "progressive" methods of instruction, were not very successful
because the children did not react so favorably to these methods. This may have been due, in part, to the individual teacher, but it seemed that the children got out of control when they were allowed much freedom. Most Negro children seemed to prefer to follow the leadership of the teachers rather than to be required to do their own planning, one feature of the "progressive" method. Many Negro children lack the initiative to select their own work because of very limited experience. They depend upon their teachers for guidance and for providing them with wider experiences.

All of the teachers at Howard Kennedy School believed that the Negro children should study Negro history in order to become acquainted with their heritage and in order to take pride in the accomplishments of members of their race. Each year, one week was set aside for the study of books written by and about Negroes. At the end of the week, an all-school assembly program was held with each classroom contributing a portion of the program. This annual observance occurred during the second week in February which is called National Negro History Week. Another annual observance, termed National Negro Health Week, came during the first week of April, and the school, again, concluded the week with the presentation of an all-school assembly program. Parents were invited to both of these programs.

In the upper grades, since Negro histories were
not the basic texts, the teachers provided supplementary materials containing information concerning Negro people. In addition to reading about the history of their race, the upper grade students read the works of such famous Negro poets as Langston Hughes and the late James Weldon Johnson. They read about prominent Negroes who are contributing to American civilization at the present time.

It is advisable here to mention some of these contributors and their contributions. The late George Washington Carver is worthy of particular mention because he was the outstanding Negro scientist of recent times. Born a slave in 1864, he was twenty years old before he had learned to read or write. Yet, by the time he was thirty-two years of age, he had received his Master of Science Degree in Agriculture at Iowa State College at Ames. After his graduation in 1896, he became a teacher at Tuskegee Institute at the request of Booker T. Washington, early-day champion of Negro education and founder of Tuskegee. Carver began his work there in an ill-equipped laboratory which he had devised from little odds and ends of wire, glass, and pieces of rubber gathered around the neighborhood. Outside of the school, he began a program of crop rotation. As a result of his work, the peanut has become second only to cotton as an important crop in southern agriculture. He contributed to this country hundreds of new products made from peanuts, pecans, sweet potatoes, wood shavings, cornstalks, and cottonstalks.
Stegner tells us that Carver manufactured 145 products from the peanut alone. Thomas A. Edison once offered Carver one hundred thousand dollars a year to join his laboratory and to do research work in the manufacture of synthetic rubber. Carver refused the offer, but, in 1942 at the age of seventy-eight, he joined the experimental laboratories of the Ford Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan. Before his death, he had become recognized as one of the greatest authorities in the field of plastics and synthetics.

A second famous Negro scientist is Dr. Percy L. Julian. He left his home in Montgomery, Alabama, to attend De Pauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. He majored in Chemistry and graduated in 1920 at the head of his class as the Phi Beta Kappa orator and valedictorian. Being financially unable to acquire further training, he taught Chemistry for a time at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Later, he applied for and received a research fellowship from Harvard where he earned his Master's degree in one year. He remained for four years in minor fellowships at Harvard and then taught at West Virginia State College for Negroes. His fine record there resulted in an appointment as head of the Department of Chemistry at Howard University, in Washington, D.C. There he planned and built a million...

5Stegner, op. cit., p. 258.
dollar laboratory. With financial backing from a Harvard classmate and with a General Education Board fellowship, he went to Vienna where he took his Doctor's degree in Organic Chemistry in 1921 under Ernest Späth. Returning to Howard University, he succeeded in synthesizing for the first time the drug, physostigmine. Recognizing his ability, the Glidden Company of Chicago, producers of paints, varnishes and food products, obtained his services. He is now Director of Research in their laboratories guiding a staff of more than fifty highly-trained chemists, white and Negro. From soybeans, he has developed a soya protein which has proved valuable commercially. It proved very helpful during the war in extinguishing fires aboard ships. Among the soybean by-products, he has developed the soya sterols, found to be important in human vigor, and he has produced them in such huge quantities that they are now available to all at a price within their means. Today at forty-seven years of age, Dr. Julian is honored in the scientific world as one of America's greatest chemists.\(^6\)

A third Negro worthy of special attention is Dr. Charles R. Drew. During World War II, he left his position on the medical staff at Howard University to work for the Government and succeeded in solving the

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problem of preserving blood plasma. For this remarkable contribution, he has received the Spingarn Medal.

Chandler Owen, a prominent Negro author, published in 1942 a book which was an official publication of the Office of War Information. Reading the book, the writer of this thesis gathered the impression that Owen was endeavoring to combat an idea, which he felt was prevalent among some Negroes, namely, that the outcome of the war was of no particular interest to them because they would be treated no worse under Axis rule than under the American form of government. Throughout his book, he attempts to show how far Negroes have progressed in America and how much they would lose if Hitler were to come into power. He states that Hitler described Negroes as "half-apes" and that the German newspapers referred to them as the "black auxiliaries." Owen quotes from Mein Kampf to illustrate Hitler's views about Negro education:

... that it is a criminal absurdity to train a born half-ape until one believes a lawyer has been made of him ... for it is training exactly as that of a poodle, and not a scientific "education." The same trouble and care, applied to intelligent races, would fit each individual a thousand times better for the same achievements.

Owen's book was distributed widely among Negroes for apparently it was intended as a form of war.

8 Ibid., unpaged.
propaganda. Owen, who is considered a very able author, must have felt such a book would be effective among his people.

There is need to mention only a few other Negroes who are certainly a credit to their race and who are contributing to the culture of America at the present time. Perhaps, most of them are better known to the American public than Carver, Julian, Drew, and Owen. In the field of Literature, there are Richard Wright and Jessie Fauset, prominent novelists, and Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, famous poets. In the field of Music, there are: Roland Hayes, classical pianist; Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson, vocal artists; Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway, exponents of swing; the Fisk Jubilee Singers, outstanding interpreters of Negro Spirituals; and Maxine Sullivan, singer of popular songs. In the field of Sports, we find such famous names as Joe Louis, heavyweight boxing champion, and Jesse Owens, champion track star. Noted Negro dancers are Bill Robinson and Katherine Dunham. Many other Negroes, too numerous to mention, have won equal recognition in their respective professions.

When Negro children read about these prominent members of their race, they developed a sense of pride that was justifiable. That type of reading served as an incentive for them to imitate such famous personages. Providing reading materials of and by Negroes was the
only way in which the course of study at Howard Kennedy School differed from the courses followed in other elementary schools in Omaha.

Although the teachers at Howard Kennedy School felt that Manual Training was valuable to Negro children, there was no special Manual Training class. Projects of that nature were undertaken by teachers at their own expense. There were special classes in Art, Music, Physical-Education, and Speech-Correction. The latter class was conducted only one day every other week. In the one ungraded room in the building, the incorrigible children were grouped with the slow-learners which was unfortunate. Visiting teachers were furnished by the Board of Education for those children who were unable to attend school for various reasons, but not if they were institutional cases. In cooperation with the Adult Education Department of the Omaha Public Schools, the Parent-Teacher Organization sponsored classes in home making, budgeting, health, home nursing, cooking, sewing, and other handicrafts—in fact, any courses in which parents showed an interest.

While at Howard Kennedy School, it was the writer's good fortune to see the beginning of a much-needed program in guidance initiated by Mrs. Robbie Turner Davis, a Negro teacher. In 1939, in answer to a request by the Negro Chamber of Commerce that the
Board of Education employ some Negro teachers in Omaha. Dr. Homer W. Anderson, Superintendent of Schools at that time, asked Mrs. Davis to become Dean of Negro girls at Technical High School. She was well trained for the position having graduated from Howard University, in Washington, D.C. where she had specialized in the fields of Social Service and Guidance. A native of Omaha, she had attended elementary and high school here. She was aided in her work because of a wide acquaintance with the Negroes in this community. In her capacity as Dean, she began a program of guidance and counseling among the Negro high school students, but she soon discovered that she did not have enough information about each individual student. Therefore, she decided that she could do a better job of counseling and guidance if she obtained information about each student before he entered high school. Since most of the graduates of Howard Kennedy and Long Schools attend Technical High School because of its proximity to the Negro district and because of the type of courses offered there, Mrs. Davis undertook a complete testing program among all the Seventh and Eighth Grade pupils in these two elementary schools. A case history about every child was written on a cumulative record sheet. With these records in her office in the high school, she has been able to assist each student in selecting the high school program most suitable for him. She has encouraged some of the more capable
students to remain longer in high school and has advised some of them of the opportunities of obtaining scholarships which would enable them to receive additional education in an institution of higher learning. Other students, less able, she has discouraged from seeking education beyond the high school level.

If the teachers at Howard Kennedy School attempted to follow religiously the courses of study prescribed for the city schools, they were apt to meet with failure. It was necessary for them to adapt their programs to meet the needs of each individual child. This procedure was not easily accomplished because of the large numbers of children in each classroom and because of the great number who needed special instruction. For all sorts of children were found in every classroom. There were some with visual handicaps, such as extreme near-sightedness, mirror-vision, crossed-eyes, and various other visual defects. There were delicate children and children with auditory defects; there were some with poor muscular control. A large number of the children had speech defects. Over a third of every First Grade class needed the assistance of the Speech-Correction teacher. With her help, some of the children improved in a short time, but many of them were handicapped by serious speech defects all through the grades. In addition to the physically handicapped children, there were some children who were very intelligent, ambitious,
and well-trained at home, and others who were slow-learners, shiftless, uncooperative, immature, emotionally unstable, and neglected. When such a wide variety of children were grouped into a single classroom, it was next to impossible for one teacher to provide the instruction that would meet the needs of all of them. Different grouping, more special classes, and additional personnel would have helped to eliminate this major problem.

Primary teachers, especially, would have found valuable the installation of a remedial-reading class. Such a class would have taken care of those children who were compelled, because of illness, to miss school for a long period of time. In addition, it would have taken care of those students who had reading difficulties in grades throughout the school and of those children who came to the school from the South, where the compulsory attendance law was not enforced, and who had never attended school. Although their ages ranged all the way from ten to sixteen years, they had never received any reading instruction. They could not be placed in the same classroom with little First and Second Grade children nor in the ungraded room with the slow-learners and incorrigible children. If a remedial-reading class had been provided, there would have been fewer instances of children repeating grades in Howard Kennedy School.
CHAPTER IV

PRIMARY METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

This chapter will deal with the teaching of First Grade children at Howard Kennedy School starting in March, 1935, and concluding in June, 1943. The only information available to the First Grade teacher about each child was the estimate of his ability and behavior in the Kindergarten prepared by the Kindergarten teacher. Although most of the children had received training in the Kindergarten in reading readiness, the majority of them needed additional training in the First Grade before beginning the regular reading program. This fact necessitated a slower approach to the actual instruction in reading and in the reading skills.

The basic reading text, being used during the first few years of the writer's tenure at Howard Kennedy School, contained stories of the fable variety which presented a moral lesson. Later, the Alice and Jerry Series, published by Row-Peterson Company, was adopted throughout the school. This series is much more satisfactory because it contains stories that are very child-like and that are suited to a small child's experiences. During the first few weeks of the semester, the First Grade children took the group Reading Readiness Test which
accompanies the *Alice and Jerry* readers. While this test proved helpful in grouping the children for reading instruction, the results gave no clues as to their mental, emotional, or personality development.

During the ensuing years, the size of the First Grade classes ranged from thirty-five pupils to as many as forty-eight. Numbered among them were those who were very ambitious, cooperative, eager to learn, and properly trained in social behavior at home. They were the possessors of all the desirable traits conducive to good citizenship not only at school but also at home and outside of the home. Such children occasion no problems and are a joy to know and to teach. It is when the majority of the children in a classroom are from homes where there is extreme poverty or from homes where there is vice and crime that the teacher's difficulties are multiplied.

Thus it is this group of children who need special attention and for whom improvements of all types must be sought.

The following are descriptions of some children who come from undesirable homes. These examples are illustrative of children not only from impoverished homes but from every kind of undesirable environment. Picture the child who continually witnesses drunken brawls, displays of guns and knives, and all sorts of crime and vice in his home. Imagine the one who lives in a home where filth and disease abound, or the one who is
violently beaten for every slight misdemeanor. Think of the child who has been teased because of physical appearance or because of a serious speech impediment, and think of the child who has been taught to fight for his rights when he goes to school. Observe the child who is mentally incompetent to do the school work and the one who is malnourished, ill-clad, and poorly housed, being forced to live in an over-crowded house where he must share the same smelly, wet mattress with five other members of the household. Some of these poverty-stricken children have no water in the home because of failure to pay the bill or because of frozen water pipes. Some of them must wear the same underwear morning and night throughout the entire winter because they lack the money to buy sufficient changes of clothing.

In the author's own classroom, there were many instances of the most pitiful conditions of poverty. Sometimes, a child becoming ill at school could not be sent home because both parents were employed in order to meet the expenses in the home. It was necessary to isolate him in the nurse's room until the end of the school session. On other occasions, children were kept home from school because they had no food, unsuitable clothing, and no coal in the house. They remained in bed to keep from freezing. Some children became ill in school from lack of food. There were instances when
children, who had been sick with a contagious disease, were forced to stay home longer than was necessary because the parents lacked the carfare to go into the city to obtain a permit from the Health Department. However, this was eliminated when a Negro doctor in the district was given permission to issue permits. On numerous occasions, it became necessary to isolate children because they became objectionable to others on account of a lack of bodily or clothing cleanliness.

What can be expected in school from children from these undesirable home surroundings? Such unfortunate and underprivileged children cannot be in a very receptive mood toward learning. They are usually very nervous, emotionally and socially maladjusted, not very strong physically, irritable and even pugnacious. They do not work well in a group, and their span of attention is short along with unretentive memories. With these children, teachers must proceed rather slowly providing a great amount of drill and repetition as well as remedial work and individual instruction.

In the primary department, especially, the children do not attend school regularly. These frequent absences are a serious handicap to the teachers. When the children are not in school all the time, the teachers cannot develop the basic skills necessary for success in the entire school life of the children. When they are absent for long periods of time, it is not an easy
task to find a place for them when they return to school. At such times, they are in need of instruction in a special class.

Teachers acknowledge that one very good way to prevent disciplinary problems from arising is to keep children busily occupied. Therefore, primary teachers must prepare an abundance of seat-work materials designed to be not only interesting to children but also educational. Because the children in the primary grades at Howard Kennedy School were, in most instances, very inattentive and their span of attention was so brief, it was especially difficult not only to prepare sufficient amounts of this type of material but also to provide enough of a wide variety of activities to maintain their interest and attention. It was necessary to make changes from one task to the next quite frequently, and this resulted in the need of preparing more than the customary amount of materials for the use of the children throughout the day. However, even an abundance of material will not suffice when children do not desire to do school work. There is need to build in such children the proper habits and attitudes toward school and toward the work of the school. A great amount of time is spent at Howard Kennedy School in character training and in the development of good citizens. Lessons in health and safety education are stressed.

Because of the high frequency of speech
difficulties among the children in the writer's classes, she found it necessary to enlarge their speaking vocabulary before undertaking the teaching of a sight vocabulary. While many of the children had no physical speech handicap, they would not speak because their experiences were so limited that they had nothing about which they could converse easily or because they were afraid to speak.

In an attempt to broaden their experiences, the teacher kept on file a wide variety of pictures which served, vicariously at least, to acquaint the pupils with various features in their surroundings. Early each year, the First Grade took a little trip through the entire school building. During this trip, the children always became fascinated with the large heating plant in the basement. Later, the visits were extended into the surrounding neighborhood. At the time when a school bus was available for use on excursions, the little children visited farms, pet shops, the dog pound, and other places of interest in the city for primary reading books usually contain stories about homes, families, farms and farm animals, and pets. These stories became more interesting and more meaningful to the children because the excursions had broadened their experiences.

When they returned to the classroom from one of their visits, the children would talk about the different things they had noticed. As this discussion proceeded,
the teacher would write simple sentences and phrases on the blackboard in order that the children could see some connection between the printed symbols and their speech. The trips served as a means of instructing the children in proper deportment, group cooperation, keen observation, and, in addition, they encouraged some children who had not contributed to conversations before to express themselves.

As a supplement to their Physical Educational training, which was conducted by a special teacher, the writer afforded the students an opportunity every day to perform calisthenics, to play games, or to move about rhythmically to music. Little children need to develop the large muscles of the body before they can have the muscular control required in doing satisfactory hand work. At this age, physical growth is quite rapid and this fact must not be ignored in the pursuit of acquiring academic skills.

The Science program consisted chiefly of nature study: the changes in the four seasons, weather, birds, flowers, animals, and the clothing most suited to each season. When the children brought to school such items as leaves, stones, flowers, seeds, seashells, bird's nests, bird's eggs, cocoons, or pets, the teacher and the children wrote simple stories noting the additions to their collection. Some of the stories were preserved in chart or book form for future reading.
The Social Studies program contained short units of work about the home, the family, the farm, pets, and activities celebrating special occasions, such as holidays or birthdays of famous men. Many class parties were provided for the enjoyment of the children and for the purpose of instructing them in proper etiquette and behavior.

Most of the lessons in writing, spelling, arithmetic, and language were integrated as parts of the Science, Social Studies, and Reading activities.

The songs, taught by rote, were correlated as much as possible to the other subjects. Some were action songs, and some were vocal. The rhythm program had to be curtailed somewhat because the classroom was not equipped with a piano or victrola. There was one portable phonograph for the use of the entire school.

The games were the usual ones in which little children engage: some musical, some circle, some guessing, some language development, and some physical development.

For Manual Training, the children were supplied with scissors, paste, paper, pencils, crayons, chalk, plasticine, and clay. With these materials, they performed such activities as: drawing, coloring, cutting, folding, pasting, modelling, copying, writing, and illustrating stories. Other types of handwork were: matching words and phrases, and working jigsaw puzzles,
educational games, or ready-prepared instructional cards obtained from publishers. Since workbooks to accompany the readers were not used, a variety of types of seat-work for reading purposes were mimeographed or duplicated by the teacher. While some handwork was done by using patterns, more often it was original or creative work with many children exhibiting outstanding artistic ability.

It was the author's aim to maintain a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom by decorating it as attractively as possible. Noisy activities were kept at a minimum because noise served to increase the tension for nervous children and because a quiet atmosphere was more conducive to the development of good reading habits. Sometimes, in spite of all precautions, there would arise a tenseness when a child became pugnacious. Fighting is a common attribute of nervous and emotionally unstable children. Usually, this desire to fight could be traced to some out-of-school feud. Pugnaciousness on the part of some children is extremely difficult to combat in the school. The usual procedure in handling a child desirous of fighting was to isolate him from the other children and to deprive him of some privilege which he particularly enjoyed.

Because the children were very easily upset by a change in routine, it was necessary to spend some time in preparing them for any such projected change. The
teacher avoided anything that would tend to over-stimulate them. However, because complete avoidance was impossible, they became very excited when they attended all-school assembly programs or went to the gymnasium for their Physical-Education class. Upon their return to the classroom following such occasions, the teacher would read a story to them or provide a period of rest and relaxation for them. If the phonograph were available, they could listen to music. This seemed to help in overcoming their excitement. They needed numerous rest periods throughout every day.

There was, at Howard Kennedy School, a high percentage of pupils who transferred in and out of the school district. This was because of the economic life of the children who lived in that vicinity. Some of them lived for a very short time in a house and then were forced to move elsewhere. Other children lived for a short time in the homes of relatives in one part of town and then moved to the homes of other relatives in another locality. Very few children who entered the Kindergarten at the same time remained together until they graduated from the Eighth Grade. There were three main causes for this: transferring from the school, grade acceleration, or grade retardation. The main reasons for grade retardation were mental incapacity, immaturity, long absences, or frequent transfers from one school to another.

The author made an examination of the names of
all the children who are enrolled in Howard Kennedy School for September, 1946. Among these names, there were only seventy-seven who had started in First Grade while the writer taught there. Of course, some of her former pupils had graduated by this time, and other children had enrolled there since she left the school in June, 1943. The author constructed Table 1 to show how far her former students have progressed since leaving First Grade.1 An examination of this Table will reveal how widespread is their present classification, how some have been accelerated, how some have been retained, and how some are now in the ungraded classroom. Some were found to have missed school for several semesters because of illness, and others were found to have attended as many as thirteen schools, not all different, but they had enrolled that many times. Some were discovered to have moved in and out of the school district three and four times in a single semester.

Perhaps, some of the facts revealed in Table 1 could have been avoided if the school had been able to give special instruction to the children when they needed it. Perhaps, too, some improvements could have been made in grade placement and in class grouping. It was always a matter for regret that it was necessary to combine the handicapped children in the same classrooms with the very capable and superior students. Primary

1Table 1 may be found on the following page.
TABLE 1

PRESENT CLASSIFICATION OF NEGRO STUDENTS WHO ENTERED FIRST GRADE AT HOWARD KENNEDY SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER, 1938 THROUGH SEPTEMBER, 1942

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Entry, First Grade</th>
<th>Number Enrolled September, 1946</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September, 1938</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January, 1939</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 1939</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January, 1940</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 1940</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4-A</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>January, 1941</td>
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<td>6-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5-A</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4-A</td>
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<tr>
<td>September, 1941</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4-A</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>January, 1942</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6-A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4-B</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4-A</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Special</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\)Howard Kennedy School Enrollment Files, Attendance Department, Omaha Public Schools, 1946.
teachers were never permitted to accelerate any pupil in spite of evidences of superiority.

In concluding this chapter, the author wants to make clear that although there were many things to be desired, some of these difficulties resulted from physical conditions outside the school which can only be corrected by sociological education and are not in the narrow sense school problems. Some of the difficulties being physical or mental belong properly to the field of medicine or public health. In general the teaching in the Primary Department was sound and thorough according to the latest findings in the Educational field. The teachers had not only educational training but an understanding of psychology, sociology, and educational hygiene, and they did a thorough and, above all, a sincere job.
CHAPTER V

CONTRAST IN TEACHING TWO RACIAL GROUPS

For the past three years, the writer has been engaged in teaching white children in the First Grade at Franklin School. Some comparisons of these children with her former Negro pupils at Howard Kennedy School were inevitable. Aside from the obvious difference in color, she has found that other differences are the result of a different home environment.

Gunnar Myrdal, a prominent Swedish sociologist, was asked by the Carnegie Corporation to come to America to make a survey of all phases of Negro life in this country. His findings were published at the conclusion of the survey. In one of his books, there is a very detailed comparison of the differences in physical characteristics between the Negro and white races:

Compared to the average white man, the average Negro of the present day seems to exhibit the following traits: head slightly longer and narrower; cranial capacity slightly less; interpupillary distance greater; nose broader; lips thicker; external ear shorter; torso shorter; arms and legs longer; pelvis narrower and smaller; stature shorter; skin with greater amount of black pigment; hair wiry, curly, frizzly or

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1 Frankin School is located at Thirty-fifth and Franklin Streets, Omaha. In 1946, out of an enrollment of 637 students, there were only nine Negro children.

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woolly; distribution of hair less thick; more sweat glands. Progenothism is greater, not because the brain stops growing in early childhood, but because the upper jawbone continues to grow after the age at which that of the white man stops. A larger proportion of Negroes have brown eyes, black hair, and saccral pigment spots than do Old Americans.  

In addition to this very excellent distinction by Myrdal, the author would include these personal observations: Negro children seem to develop more rapidly physically than do the average white children; and Negroes very often exhibit malformation in their bony structures. The latter is not a matter of heredity but is caused by rickets which is prevalent among Negro children. They are victims of this disease because of malnourishment and a low standard of living.

Concerning differences in intelligence between the two races, the writer agrees with those who hold that such differences are the result of environment, not of heredity. Numerous controversies on this subject have arisen from time to time in America. For example, Morris S. Viteles reaches this conclusion in comparing the intelligence of Negroes and whites:

1. On practically all tests of mental ability, groups of Negroes are consistently inferior to groups of whites.
2. Although in every instance there is considerable overlapping between the two races, there is consistently higher proportion of inferior scores and smaller proportion of superior

test scores among Negroes than among whites.

3. There is evidence to the effect that the amount of difference between the groups increases with age.

4. A selection of Negroes and whites from similar social levels reduces the difference between the two races.

5. Weighing the educational differences serves likewise to reduce the inferiority on test scores on the part of the Negro.

6. According to certain of these studies, the findings of which are not undisputed, increases in the proportion of white blood in the mixed Negro serve to reduce the amount of Negro inferiority.

7. Although the evidence is limited, there are suggestions of qualitative differences in mental ability between the two races following from investigations employing tests of specified mental abilities.

8. Experimental evidence on differences in temperament between the two races is extremely meagre.3

Charles H. Thompson, a Negro, reached this conclusion concerning Negro intelligence:

1. That the doctrine of an inherent mental inferiority of the Negro is a myth unfounded by the most logical interpretation of the scientific facts on the subject produced to date.

2. That the mental and scholastic achievements of Negro children as with white children, are, in the main, a direct function of their environmental and school opportunities rather than a function of some inherent difference in mental ability.

3. That a philosophy of education based upon the current unwarranted interpretations of achievement differences between white and Negro children, as due to inherent racial mental inferiority of the Negro, is not only unjust, but a little short of disastrous, especially in view of the many other disabilities the Negro has to undergo in this country.4


E. George Payne held this viewpoint on the controversial subject:

The more recent investigations into the intelligence tests and the explanations of differences of "native intelligence" warrant the conclusion that much of the differences of so-called native intelligence between the northern Negro and white children, may be explained on the ground of differences in environment and education, and that segregation is an important, if not the main, factor of difference.5

From her experience in teaching both races of children, the writer has observed the following points of difference between Negro children and white children: the average white child is better nourished, less susceptible to disease, less nervous and irritable, less excitable and pugnacious, better clothed, and better housed than is the average Negro child. White children attend school more regularly, transfer from school less frequently, progress more rapidly in school, do not tire as quickly, have a longer span of attention, and are able to concentrate better. They have more educational and play equipment in their homes, have enjoyed wider experiences, and have received more home-training in proper behavior and in the use of school materials. Fewer white mothers are employed outside of the home, a fact which enables them to spend more time in the training of their children. In comparison to Negro children,

white children ordinarily receive better medical care and treatment for illnesses and for the correction of physical handicaps.

At Franklin School, there are considerably fewer instances of children repeating grades than there were at Howard Kennedy School. This fact does not indicate that the Franklin School children are more capable, but that they do attend school more regularly. In addition, their parents can afford to provide them with private instruction if the children have difficulties with their school work. Negro parents, as a rule, have not the means for that purpose.

In the First Grade at Franklin School, the writer follows a Course of Study similar to the one she used at Howard Kennedy School. Methods of instruction differ in some respects. At Franklin, a faster rate of progress is possible because less time is needed in reading readiness training, in enlarging experiences, and in building up an oral vocabulary. As a result, the regular reading program is begun much sooner. Most of the children have had a rather wide variety of preschool experiences and have developed quite an extensive speaking vocabulary by the time they enter First Grade. Many of them exhibit initiative qualities and seem able to plan and carry out activities independently. They are permitted considerable freedom because they seem able to handle it.
It would be a wise procedure for a teacher newly assigned to a school similar to Howard Kennedy to make a study of the life of the people in the neighborhood. Such a study would be an excellent means of acquiring a sympathetic understanding of Negro children. She would find that the standard of living of most Negro families in the district was lower than that of the average white family. Taking this fact into consideration, she would realize that many of her students would be poorly clad, living in cramped and unsanitary quarters, and malnourished. She would find some of them were restless, over-stimulated, inattentive, nervous, easily fatigued, irritable, uncooperative, and susceptible to disease. She would find it necessary to be constantly on the alert for symptoms of illness and to report them to the Health Department. In adapting a program to meet the needs of her pupils, she would find it important to stress instruction in health, hygiene, and citizenship. She would discover that she needed to spend much time in developing proper habits and attitudes, in broadening their experiences, in enlarging their vocabulary, in instructing individually, in correcting speech defects, and in handling disciplinary problems. The teacher would see that short units of work and rapid changes from one activity to the next were most effective in maintaining the interest and attention of the children. For that purpose, she should prepare an abundance of seat work.
materials. She should proceed rather slowly and provide for frequent periods of repetition, drill, and review. In order to brighten the lives of the children, an attractive room should be maintained. The teacher would notice that the children responded best to a well modulated voice and a cheerful disposition on her part. She should be patient, understanding, sympathetic, poised, energetic, healthy, and calm at all times. She should not attempt to shoulder the responsibility of improving conditions in the environment of the children, but she should do everything possible to better conditions in the school.
CHAPTER VI

NEGRO POPULATION IN OMAHA

The origin of the name, Negro, is given by Brawley:

The word Negro is the Spanish and Portuguese form of the Latin adjective, niger, meaning black. As commonly used, it is made to apply to any and all the black and dark brown races of Africa. Such usage is not strictly correct, the term having both a narrower and a wider significance than this would imply. In Africa the real Negroes occupy a comparatively small part of the continent, while beyond, on the islands of the Pacific Ocean, there is a branch of the Negritian race of people only less important than the group of Negroes on the mainland.¹

In accounting for the presence of Negroes in this city, let us start with a brief account of their early arrival in America, of their migration into Nebraska, and finally of their settlement in Omaha.

There are theories to the effect that African Negroes lived in America before the arrival of the white man and that they exerted some influence upon Indian civilization. There is some historical evidence that Negroes accompanied Columbus and some of the other early explorers on their voyages to this continent. It is

known to be true that twenty African Negroes landed from a Dutch ship at Jamestown, Virginia in August, 1619. This was the beginning of the slave trade in America.

The earliest record of Negroes living in Nebraska is found in the census of 1860 which listed eighty-one, ten of them slaves. Following the Civil War and the emancipation of the Negro, many of them migrated northward settling chiefly in the larger cities because of better opportunities of obtaining work there.

Most of these Negroes were extremely poor upon their arrival in the North; so it was necessary to seek houses which were the cheapest to rent. Many of these poor, displaced people could not find work and were faced with starvation. To show what zeal plus money can do to help, may the writer tell here the story of one woman who came to the rescue of the Negro people. She is a Catholic Religious who has spent a large fortune and her entire life in aiding the Indians and Negroes in this country. Her name is Mother Mary Katherine Drexel, and she is called the richest nun in the world. However, even in her native Philadelphia, very few people know the story of her life’s work because she has spent over half a century in cloistered seclusion.


3Gullenger, op. cit., p. 47.
Her father was Francis Anthony Drexel of a wealthy Philadelphia banking family. When Mary Katherine was just a few weeks old, her mother died. The second Mrs. Drexel reared her stepdaughters, Mary Katherine and Elizabeth, and her own daughter, Louise, in the tradition of the nuns. The entire family attended daily mass and lived very plainly. The rooms in their fine mansion resembled cloistered cells. They opened their home to the poor and supported many poverty-stricken families. In the basement, they stored food and clothing for the needy.

When Reverend James O'Connor (later a Bishop of Omaha) was pastor of St. Dominic's Church in Holmestburg, Pennsylvania, he became acquainted with the Drexel family and knew of their numerous acts of charity. Later, in 1876, he was appointed as vicar-apostolic of Nebraska which, at that time, included the territory of Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas. On his tours of this territory, he discovered some very unsatisfactory conditions among the Indian tribes. Immediately, he made an appeal to the Drexel family for help. The Drexel sisters toured the territory with Father O'Connor and sent back reports to their father. Within five years, Drexel-built missions were located from the Great Lakes to the Columbia River and southward to the Mexican border.

Upon the death of her father in 1885, Mary Katherine Drexel inherited half of his fifteen-million-
dollar estate, the income from it totalling around a thousand dollars a day.

When they encountered some difficulty in finding enough nuns and priests to staff their missions, the Drexel sisters went to Rome to appeal to Pope Leo XIII for help. At his suggestion, Mary Katherine decided to become a nun. She entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh in May, 1899. After two years, she took the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Thus she has spent none of her vast fortune on herself because she has renounced wealth and society to become a Religious.

In addition to the regular vows, she promised to succor Indians and Negroes. In order to carry out this promise, she founded the Order of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. The old Drexel mansion in Cornwell Heights, a suburb of Philadelphia, was converted into the Headquarters of her Order.

Her annual income of more than 365 thousand dollars has been used in helping the Indians and Negroes in America. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent in establishing and maintaining Xavier University in New Orleans, a Catholic institution operated exclusively for Negroes.4

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4Jack Smith, "Richest Nun in the World: An Omaha Bishop Inspired Her Fifty Years of Charity," Omaha World Herald (June 21, 1942), p. 2-C.
Reverend John La Farge, S.J., who spent many years working among Negro people, has the greatest respect for persons like Mother Drexel. The following quotation shows his high regard for those who strive to improve unsatisfactory conditions in Negro life:

... I have also been privileged to know over these many years a great number of the Catholic priests and Religious who are devoting their lives to the welfare of the colored people. This long acquaintanceship has deepened each year my conviction that these men and women are among the salt of the earth in this country, that none are second to them in unselfish devotion and willingness to make every sacrifice of their own personal convenience for the sake of their flocks.5

Papal encyclicals on Inter-Racial Justice have illustrated the interest of the Catholic Church in the welfare of the American Negro. In his Sentium Laetitiae, addressed to the Hierarchy of the American Church, November 1, 1939, Pope Pius XII stated:

We confess that we feel a special paternal affection, which is certainly inspired of Heaven, for the Negro people dwelling among you; for in the field of religion and education, we know that they need special care and comfort and are very deserving of it. We therefore invoke an abundance of heavenly blessing and we pray fruitful success for those whose generous zeal is devoted to their welfare.6

Negroes have come a long way since their arrival in this country. Through the efforts of members of their own race, through the help of white people, and through

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6 Ibid., p. xi.
government legislation in their behalf, they have risen from a benighted state of slavery, owned body and soul by another, to a state of independence and awareness of a standard, desirable way of life. However, they shall continue to need, for a long time, the help of everyone in order to reach the standard of living which is the right of everyone under a democratic form of government.

The primary reason for the presence of Negroes in Omaha is an economic one. Although some desired to join friends and relatives already here, most of them were in search of employment. These Negroes found work on the construction gangs of the Union Pacific, Burlington, and Midland Pacific Railroad Companies. Later, during several labor disputes, Negroes were imported into Omaha from the South for use as strike breakers. For example, during strikes, Negroes were employed by the Union Pacific Railroad in 1877, by the Smelting Industry in 1880, by the Packing Industries in 1894, and by the Burlington Railroad in 1923. At the conclusion of these strikes, many Negroes remained in the employ of these industries. Acute shortages of manpower during both World Wars have brought additional Negroes to the North to work in war industries.

The general population of Nebraska on April 1, 1940 was 1,315,834 representing a decrease of 62,129, or

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7Nebraska Writers' Project, op. cit., p. 10.
4.5 per cent, in the population since April 1, 1930.\textsuperscript{8} In 1940, the entire population of Omaha, the largest city in Nebraska, was 223,844 representing an increase of 4.6 per cent over the 214,006 listed in 1930.\textsuperscript{9} This would indicate that the State suffered the loss outside of Omaha with some out-state residents, perhaps, moving into this city.

In 1930, the Negro population of Omaha was 11,123, divided almost equally as to sex, listing 5,607 male and 5,516 female. By 1940, a slight increase in the Negro population was shown, the number totalling 12,015, of whom 5,902 were male and 6,095 were female.\textsuperscript{10} There are more Negroes in Omaha than in any other city in Nebraska. This is because most of the large industries are located in Omaha, thereby affording Negroes a better opportunity of obtaining employment.

Being extremely poor upon their arrival in Omaha from the South, the Negroes settled in the poorer residential districts of the city. Thus, because of economic pressure, they tended to become segregated from the white population. This fact of segregation in Omaha is typical.


\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., p. 649.

of segregation throughout the North. This is the way Burgess describes segregation:

Separation by residence of the Negro from the white exists in some form in all American cities. In none of them is there complete segregation. No large American city is entirely white or entirely Negro, as is the case with certain smaller communities.11

This is true of Omaha where some Negroes live in the northern section of town, some in the southern part of the city near the Packing-House District, and some few families do not live in Negro districts at all. Because of the over-crowded conditions in Negro districts, they have found houses in non-restricted white neighborhoods. However, they usually occupy the least desirable dwellings there.

Residences of Negroes are found in several sections of the city:

... The majority of Negroes live in the second, third, and seventh wards. Other small groups are in the vicinity of Pacific Street, and from Emmet on the south to Manderson; and from 30th on the east to 36th Street. About three hundred families are scattered in other sections of the city.12

There are fifty-five public elementary and five public high schools in Omaha. In making a survey of the school districts, the writer found that Negro children of school age lived in seventeen of the public elementary


12Sullenger, op. cit., p. 48.
school districts. Table 2, on the following page, was constructed to show their distribution among the seventeen schools. An examination of the Table will show that the majority of Negro children live in the Long, Kellom, Howard Kennedy, and Lake School Districts. All of these schools are located in the northern part of the city. Kellom is one of the oldest school buildings in Omaha. It will be the first school to be replaced by a new structure. That was the decision of the Omaha Board of Education, in the spring of 1946, in making plans for carrying on a postwar program of new school building construction. In South Omaha, the greatest number of Negro children are listed in the Highland School District. Of course, not all of the Negro children are enrolled in the schools in their residential districts. Separated into elementary school districts, the annual school census lists all children between the ages of five and twenty-one whether they attend school or not. When the 1945 school census was taken, some children had not enrolled in school because they were just five years of age, some were incapacitated, some were high school students, some were private or parochial school students, some were employed, and some were temporarily unemployed.¹³

Although, on casual observation, it might appear

¹³Omaha School Census: 1945, unpaged.
TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS, OF NEGROES
OF SCHOOL AGE, IN OMAHA, IN 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Number of Negroes of School Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown Park</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castelar</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Grade</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Park</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comenius</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druid Hill</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Rosewater</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry W. Yates</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Kennedy</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kellom</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saunders</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherman</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Lincoln</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that Long and Howard Kennedy Schools were segregated,
that was certainly not the intention when they were built. The high percentage of the Negro enrollment in these schools is occasioned by the concentration of Negro families in this particular section of the city.
In other words, what seems to be school segregation is actually the result of residential segregation. For, as Payne remarks, "It may be noted here that legally segregation of the Negro population or Negro children in schools is not recognized in the northern states." This statement is true of schools in Omaha because no public school has ever been constructed for the use of Negro children exclusively.

At this time, let us consider the educational opportunities of Negro children in Nebraska and in Omaha. The following quotation describes the education of Negroes in Nebraska:

In only one phase of their life do the Negroes of Nebraska approach equality with all other races, and that is with regard to their educational status. There is only one system of schools in Nebraska for all people, and all students, regardless of race, color, or creed, are admitted impartially. Negroes attend Nebraska schools, from kindergarten through the graduate schools of the universities, upon an equal basis with whites.

There is in general a high level of literacy among the Negroes of Nebraska. In some cities in the State there are no Negroes who are illiterate. Throughout the State less than one per cent of the Negro population is illiterate, a figure which compares favorably

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14 Payne, op. cit., p. 226.
with any other racial group in Nebraska. Most of those who are unable to read or write are recent arrivals from Southern rural districts.\textsuperscript{15}

This speaks well for Nebraska schools and for the teachers of Nebraska. In 1943, Nebraska ranked in forty-second place among the forty-eight States in the average annual salary paid its teachers.\textsuperscript{16} However, the salaries of Omaha teachers rank somewhat more favorably with cities of the same size.

Despite the fact that the educational opportunities of Negroes in Nebraska are equal to those of all other races, Negroes do not attend school much beyond the grade school level. Of course, there are a few exceptions. In an examination of United States statistics concerning the number of Omaha Negro students in 1930 and in 1940, the author noticed that there was a sharp decline in Negro school attendance after the age of fifteen. Table \textsuperscript{3}\textsuperscript{17} will reveal that the percentage of attendance in school among Negro students increased in the ten-year span, but the number of older students attending school decreased. From the statistics, the author also found that out of a total number of 3,272 Negroes between the ages of five and twenty-four years

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{15}Nebraska Writers' Project, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 33. \\
\textsuperscript{16}Dr. Leslie L. Chisholm, "How Does Nebraska Rank in the Salary Paid Teachers?" \textit{Nebraska Educational Journal} (February, 1946), p. 54. \\
\textsuperscript{17}Table 3 is on the following page.
\end{flushright}
### TABLE 3
CLASSIFICATION BY AGE, SEX, AND PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AMONG NEGROES OF OMAHA IN 1930, AND IN 1940

#### 1930

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td></td>
<td>97.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-13</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>90.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td></td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1,563 ... 5-24 ... Male ... 61.7
1,709 ... 5-24 ... Female ... 57.2

#### 1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>96.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td></td>
<td>97.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-13</td>
<td></td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1,761 ... 5-24 ... Male ... 69.4
1,930 ... 5-24 ... Female ... 65.6
who lived in Omaha in 1930, only 1,941, or 59.3 per cent, attended school. In 1940, out of a total of 3,691 Negroes, between five and twenty-four years of age, in Omaha, only 2,490, or 67.5 per cent, attended school. 18

The compulsory school attendance law in Nebraska requires all students to attend school until they are sixteen years of age. Not many Negro students remain in school beyond that age. Therefore, only a few of them finish their high school education. Some find it necessary to leave school because of economic hardships. Others leave school because they do not consider a high school education is required for the kinds of occupations available for Negroes. The following quotation illustrates the status of higher education among Negroes:

... There is considerable disparity between the number of Negro high school students, about twenty-five per cent of those qualified to enter high school, and the number of high school graduates, less than ten per cent of those who completed the grades. This disparity is still further emphasized to extend the comparison on the same statistical basis, when the number of those who attend college, about one per cent, and of these the number who finally earn degrees, less than one-half of one per cent, is considered. 19

It is estimated that the number of Negroes in Nebraska now holding college degrees is well over one


19Nebraska Writers' Project, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
hundred as compared to only three in 1907. Exclusive of clergymen, there are not over twenty-five Negro professional men, including physicians, dentists, and attorneys in Nebraska, most of whom live in Omaha. Some Negroes do not enter the professions because they lack the financial means for this type of education. Others do not enter the professions because they feel that practice among their own people would not assure them of a regular income.

In the United States, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of Negro students enrolled in institutions of higher learning. Owen reports that there are approximately one hundred universities and colleges devoted exclusively to Negro education in this country. He states that there were 1,643 students in Negro colleges in 1916, and 40,000 in 1941, an increase of some 2,400 per cent in this twenty-five year period.

It is to be hoped that the G.I. Bill of Rights will enable many more young Negroes who, having faithfully served their country, seek further education to secure it.

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20 Ibid., p. 34.
21 Ibid., p. 35.
22 Owen, op. cit., unpaged.
CHAPTER VII

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The suggestions for improvements offered in this chapter pertain particularly to Howard Kennedy School about which the author is best informed. Yet, it may not be the only Omaha elementary school that would benefit from these suggested improvements.

The depression, World War II with its shortages of manpower and materials, and the subsequent time spent in reconversion with the nation’s mind and energy devoted to immediately pressing problems, plus the acute teacher shortage all over the country, all these immediately unsolvable problems have tended to delay these improvements.

For a long time, Omaha schools have suffered from a lack of sufficient textbooks. When it is possible for school officials to purchase new textbooks, the writer would like to see Howard Kennedy School furnished with some Negro histories. The only information concerning Negroes contained in regular history texts is in connection with the Civil War and slavery.

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1 At the present time, book supplies from publishers are very small even if funds were available.

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Geographies, too, usually picture Negroes as former slaves and cotton-pickers. No student can arrive at a very broad understanding of the Negro race from such a distorted and limited picture of Negroes. Since one of the main objectives in the teaching of the Social Studies is to acquaint children with different kinds of people who inhabit the earth, let us see to it soon that the story of the Negro be properly and adequately told to all.

An adequate Social Studies program is one means of fulfilling the need in American education which is suggested by Brown:

One thing more is necessary in educating American children. John Dewey has defined true democracy as that society wherein all individuals of all groups contribute freely and receive freely the peculiar value, essence, quality, and contribution of every other individual and culture in the community. The child must see that even from a selfish point of view his own individuality is variegated, enriched, and diversified in proportion to the many and various contacts with the many types, classes, and traditions to which he can expose himself.  

Authors of textbooks should present more accurate information about all races and nations of the world, and, in addition, they should offer the same information in several books using different levels of vocabulary. For example, they should write Seventh Grade materials on a Fourth Grade level, and vice versa. Thus the students would profit by the device of repetition, and, at

Francis J. Brown, One America, op. cit., p. 436.
the same time, those with limited reading ability could obtain the necessary information. Teachers everywhere have felt the need for a variety of textbooks because of the wide range of reading ability among their students.

The author was a member of a Social Studies Committee for five years. Our committee was assigned the task of writing a Course of Study in the field of Social Science to be used in all Omaha elementary schools. We were, also, to make recommendations of textbooks to accompany this Course of Study. In our examination of various textbooks, we found that a great number of them were written on a college level, yet they were intended to be used in the upper elementary grades. Therefore, with so difficult a vocabulary, very few students, in the Seventh and Eighth Grades, would be able to assimilate the information in these books.

Some of the writer's suggestions for improving the education of the Negro students at Howard Kennedy School approximate some of those proposed in Heck's list of essential needs of all schools. He believes that if we are to achieve our goal in education all schools should have these features:

... (1) Demand that each teacher on the staff have not only a mastery of teaching methods but a mastery of the art of understanding children. (2) Install an adequate "Pupil's Cumulative Record" which is readily accessible to all teachers. (3) Make constant use of standardized tests—mental, mechanical, prognostic, social, and subject
matter—in order to have at hand objective data concerning pupil abilities. (4) Adopt methods of so adjusting schoolwork to the abilities and interests of the pupils that maladjustment will be eliminated. (5) Provide with the schools field service of such excellence and amount that all extreme problem children may be given early and continuous supervision. (6) Maintain a program of guidance that will reach all pupils and will be accepted as a regular part of the duties of the entire staff. (7) Develop a health and physical-education program of such scope that the school facilities for play will be utilized the entire year, including vacation periods, Saturdays, and after school hours.

The author believes that the first point mentioned above is, in general, true of Omaha teachers. The adoption of all of his proposals would result in an ideal school situation.

Omaha schools are attempting to meet some of these requirements. Only recently, cumulative records were provided in all the schools. Yet, without the installation of a complete testing program, there is very little, other than opinion, that can be recorded about each child on the report. Teachers can give only an estimate of a child's achievement and of the behavior which he has displayed in the classroom.

Teachers may refer a child to the Child Study Clinic at Omaha University. He is given a series of standardized tests there. Then the Clinic reports to the school its findings and offers recommendations.

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about the child. However, teachers do not refer all students to the Clinic usually sending only those who seem unable to make the proper adjustment in the classroom. We, therefore, do not have too much information about the remaining members of our classes.

This summer (1946), for the first time, Omaha school playgrounds and buildings have been available for the use of school children under supervised instruction. It is to be hoped that this program, initiated to curb juvenile delinquency, will be established permanently to provide wholesome activity for children during vacation periods.\footnote{This program was financed and supervised by the City Recreation Department, 602 City Hall, Omaha.}

It would be advisable for every child, before enrolling in the Kindergarten at Howard Kennedy School, to have a complete physical, mental, emotional, and aptitude examination. The test results should be a determining factor in his grade placement. Thus the child would become better adjusted. Such a testing program would be helpful to the teachers in understanding each child and in adapting a program to meet his needs and interests.

A Child Care Center, similar to the one conducted at the school during the war, should be continued in this district to supervise not only pre-school children but those students in the primary grades whose
mothers are employed. At Howard Kennedy School, there should be fewer pupils per classroom and more special classes, especially in remedial reading and in speech correction. Since few Negro students complete their high school training, the elementary school should provide them with courses in Vocational Education, Manual Training, and Home Economics. Additional equipment would be required, and additional personnel, especially trained in carrying on such programs, would be needed.

In this school, there is need for the services of a full-time nurse. In addition to making a great number of physical examinations of the pupils in the school and numerous home calls, she could conduct an adequate course in Sex-Education, which is vitally needed when we consider the high frequency of syphilis among Negroes.

The principal in this school is definitely overworked. He should be helped, at least, with the clerical work. Here are some of the duties of the principal at Howard Kennedy School:

1. Assists teachers with disciplinary problems.
2. Holds conferences with pupils, parents, and teachers.
3. Cooperates with all other public agencies.
4. Supervises the teaching personnel as well as the engineering and custodial staff.
5. Attends professional meetings, lectures, and institutes.
6. Works with the Parent-Teacher Organization.
7. Conducts weekly teachers' meetings.
8. Writes up endless records and reports.
10. Requisitions school and custodial supplies.
11. Obtains for the needy, through interested agencies, such items as glasses, shoes, clothing, food, coal, and dental and medical care.
12. Reports all cases of contagious disease to the Board of Health.
13. Visits the classrooms.
14. Contacts the Attendance Department.
15. Supervises members of the Student Council, Safety Patrol, and Fire Patrol.
16. Holds a monthly fire drill.
17. Provides meeting places for the Parent-Teacher Organization, adult education classes, and Boy and Girl Scout Troops.
18. Provides for child care while mothers attend classes or meetings.
19. Cooperates with neighborhood organizations, such as the Urban League, the Y.M.C.A., and the churches.
20. Works for the betterment of conditions in the school by keeping the administrative officials informed about various needs.

These are only part of the duties of the principal, but they emphasize the fact that he must be very well trained, especially in the fields of social service and guidance. Previous experience in teaching Negro children would be valuable to him. Before accepting an assignment to this type of school, a principal should have a knowledge of the nature of the school problems and should possess the desire to work in that atmosphere. Furthermore, he should have some of the following
personal qualifications: tactfulness; a willingness to cooperate; calmness; and a sympathetic understanding and love of the children.

Suggestions for improvements in the physical plant at Howard Kennedy School, which modern invention and development coupled with additional funds will bring, are: (1) Install a better heating system. (2) Alter some of the plumbing, such as placing drinking fountains on each floor, and installing small-sized toilets and lavatories off the Kindergarten room. (3) Provide shower rooms in the basement for the use of those who have no bathing facilities at home and of those who engage in athletic sports. (4) Increase the size of the Kindergarten room. (5) Establish and equip a central library room. (6) Provide individual lockers. (7) Enlarge the area of the playground and provide modern play equipment. (8) Equip a combination gymnasium-auditorium. The room used for that purpose is entirely too small. When it is used as an auditorium, the children must sit on the floor in a cramped position. This does not aid the development of proper posture. The room is not a healthful place for the students are too crowded in such a small room. However, it is the only room available for viewing educational films. Sometimes, all-school assembly programs are held in the lower hall. The children are not so crowded then, but again they must sit on the steps or on the floor. This is not satisfactory, especially in the
winter time, because the halls become quite draughty.

A moving picture projector and a radio in every classroom would be desirable equipment at Howard Kennedy School. Hot lunches for all at a nominal fee and without charge to the needy should be provided. Bus service for use on excursions should be reestablished providing free transportation for those who are unable to pay.

The adoption of all of these suggested improvements in the education of Negro children in Omaha will be very expensive and will take time to achieve, but the results would be so valuable as to make the undertaking worthwhile.

The writer will always be glad that she had the opportunity of teaching Negro children because through this experience she gained a better understanding of the Negro race. She found Negro children very interesting and their problems challenging. She has derived a great amount of satisfaction from having shared in the education of many Negro children in Omaha. While the work was difficult, it enlarged her experience, broadened her viewpoint, and acquainted her with the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.
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