

INFORMATIONAL REPORT ONLY

HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE - Diversity Programs in the Marin County Public School System

SUMMARY

“Hurt people hurt people,” said one of the people interviewed when describing young people who are not sensitive to differences of race, language, religion, socio-economic and personal lifestyles. He told students they need to make choices about what to filter in and out of their worlds. When a student has been hurt, that student strikes out against another. This creates a cycle that needs to be broken. These challenges particularly affect the school districts which are experiencing the greatest impact of diversity. These schools also have been the most active in developing innovative programs.

Many school districts have instituted the Tribes program, an adaptation of information appearing in “Tribes, A New Way of Learning and Being Together” - Jeanne Gibbs.¹ Starting with kindergarten, it develops in children the patterns needed for non-confrontational resolution of daily interactions, developing respect for one another, responsibility for one’s actions and kindness toward one another. These are skills to be used for a lifetime.

The Grand Jury interviewed the Sheriff and police departments and found they are doing a good job as liaisons to the schools. Officers have been appointed to work directly with school administrators as well as the school populations, meeting the challenge of social issues as they arise. Their work with the Drug & Alcohol Resistance Education (DARE) programs in the schools has proven to be a valuable component of the curriculum. The Partnership Program currently put in place by the Marin County Office of Education is the setting to bring police, sheriffs and educators together to work toward understanding diversity programs. It would be advantageous if law enforcement were as knowledgeable of other diversity programs in Marin County schools.

Parent groups are active participants in the adoption procedures of these school programs. The sensitivity of the issues, in certain instances, has resulted in controversy between some parent groups and the schools. Because of the high level of parent involvement, it is expected that all parties can work together to reach a compromise. One compromise already in place is the ability to use opt-in and opt-out prerogatives.

Community activities by agencies outside of the public school system are also important. The YMCA is a good example of a community agency making an impact in the diversity issue. One of its programs, No More Scapegoats, has been successful at community seminars.

¹ CenterSource Systems 2000, 6th Ed.

The Grand Jury has observed that the San Rafael High School and Davidson Middle School have become, over the years, living laboratories of diversity. Therefore, they have not needed to adopt formal programs to the extent that other districts have. The schools and the parents have created an environment in the school that exemplifies a text-book description of how diversity programs should work. They have established programs within the schools that result in diverse classes, such as the Leadership Class and the Steel Pan Program. This should not imply that the aforementioned schools do not have problems, but rather that the administration, faculty, parents and support staff are aware of the challenges and strive to resolve them.

The Grand Jury concludes that students who are educated in a diverse setting will be better prepared for the world in which they will live and work. Schools, therefore, must find ways to incorporate tolerance, acceptance and social growth by the use of superior communication tools, but at the same time not detract from the regular academic program.

BACKGROUND

The Grand Jury reviewed past reports, and found no previous study on student diversity programs in the Marin County school system. Currently, many of the students have different racial, linguistic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. The traditional family model has also changed. More students are entering schools with non-traditional family units: same-sex partners, single and combined families (this latter category often giving students multiple mothers and/or fathers, and perhaps several sets of grandparents). As a result, schools are faced with these ever-changing demographics and the challenges that are inherent in them.

In the last 30 years, the population of Marin County has risen from 208,652 in 1970 to 249,900 by January, 2002. While the population has grown by 20%, the racial/ethnic diversity of public school students has changed somewhat, particularly the Latino population, as evidenced by the following graphs representing a ten-year difference in student racial/ethnic makeup.

2001-2002 Marin County Public School Enrollment (K-12)*

	1993-1994	2001-2002	% Change
Total # Students	26,534	28,709	+ 8%
White	78.6%	71.5%	-7.2%
Latino	10.7%	15.9%	+5.2%
Asian	5.1%	5.8%	+0.7%
African American	4.3%	3.6%	-0.7%
Pacific Islander	0.6%	0.5%	-0.1%
Filipino	0.4%	0.3%	-0.1%
American Indian	0.3%	0.3%	No change
Multiple	0.0%	2.1%	+2.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	

*Figures taken from California Dept. of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, '93-'94 and '01-'02

The California Education Code has officially addressed the need to offer programs “that are free from discriminatory attitudes and practices and acts of hate violence.” The Education Code Section 200-201, states, “It is the policy of the State of California to afford all persons in public schools, regardless of their sex, ethnic group identification, race, national origin, religion, mental or physical disability, or regardless of any basis that is contained in the prohibition of hate crimes set forth in subdivision (a) of Section 422.6 of the Penal Code, equal rights and opportunities in the educational institutions of the state. The purpose of this chapter is to prohibit acts which are contrary to that policy and to provide remedies therefor.” (For the full text, see Appendix A)

Further, the Education Code, Section 233-233.8, spells out the need to establish curricula, in-service training, awareness and sensitivity training for school personnel, and the provision of grants from funds appropriated for that purpose. (For the full text, also see Appendix A)

A community leader and former school board member pointed out that Marin County demographics are very different from the rest of California:

**Racial/Ethnic Composition Comparison
Public Schools K-12****

	Marin	California
White	72.0%	34.8%
Black	2.4%	7.1%
Black & White	0.9%	0.6%
Latino	6.0%	22.5%
Latino & White	7.2%	16.7%
American Indian	0.2%	0.5%
American Indian & White	0.4%	0.4%
Asian	4.2%	9.2%
Asian & White	2.6%	1.3%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.3%
Other	0.5%	0.3%
Black & American Indian	0.1%	0.1%
Other Two or More Races	3.4%	6.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

**2000 U.S. Census, P.L. 94-171 data showing “Racial/Ethnic composition of under 18 population”

With these issues in mind, the Marin County Grand Jury of 2002-2003 developed the following topics for use in interviews:

- Define and discuss the types of programs that have been implemented to facilitate the issues of diversity.
- Discuss the tools your district has put in place to measure the success and/or failure of the implemented diversity programs.

- Discuss your specific plans to meet future challenges given the ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic changes in the county. Are there any particular schools within your district that you feel are outstanding in meeting these challenges?

The Grand Jury decided that the best way to present the report would be to emphasize the positive results of the various school district programs, consider which schools have been having success with their programs, and hold their accomplishments as standards for others to emulate. The Grand Jury was mindful of its self-directed charge to make a distinction between educating rather than advocating.

For the purpose of guiding the investigation, the Grand Jury defined diversity programs as:

- Those which provide students with a unique combination of academic and real life experiences that enable and encourage them to develop empathy for people different from themselves²
- Giving students a vocabulary to explore issues of diversity³
- Developing the concepts of ‘differentness’ early in the process⁴
- Creating a culture of kindness and acceptance within the school community⁵

METHODOLOGY

Interviews Conducted

- Officials and Administrators of Marin County Office of Education (MCOE)
- Administrators and support staff of various Marin County school districts, kindergarten through high school (K-12)
- Various school board members, past and present
- Marin County Sheriff's Department and police agencies concerning their various school programs
- Community professionals in student behavior related to diversity issues
- Student peer groups
- E-mail interview with recent Marin County high school graduate
- Parents

Sites visited

- Various schools to interview personnel and students
- Numerous schools to attend diversity offerings for students and open to all interested members of the community
- Marin County Office of Education to interview personnel

² “The Essence of Acceptance,” 2002 program flyer from MCOE

³ “Holocaust,” 2002 program flyer from MCOE

⁴ “Different and the Same,” 2000 program flyer from MCOE

⁵ “Peer Summit VI,” 2001 workshop announcement from MCOE

- County police departments to interview personnel knowledgeable about results of diversity programs
- Sheriff's Department – juvenile liaison
- Charter School – Phoenix Academy

Meetings Attended

- Tolerance presentations at Novato School District
- San Rafael Police Department – Teen Liaison
- First Partnership Program at MCOE
- Teen Summit at MCOE
- Charter School – Phoenix Academy
- Second Partnership Program at MCOE
- Leadership Class – San Rafael High school
- Mothers Advisory Group to San Rafael School District

Documents Reviewed

California Education Code, 200-201

California Penal Code, Section 422.6

A Sampling of Diversity Trainings, . . . conducted by the MCOE

Equity Action Plan Sept., 1999 from Novato Unified School District

San Rafael City Schools, various Diversity Focus programs, 2002

Davidson Middle School Steel Pan Program

DISCUSSION

The Grand Jury began interviewing kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) administrators, who described the many diversity programs currently used in the districts. Some of these programs start in kindergarten, but most begin in the third grade. The programs stress respect for one another, responsibility for one's actions and kindness toward one another. Some schools use a program called "Tribes." One of the most important parts of this particular program is the use of "I" messages. Children are taught to express their feelings in a non-confrontational manner, for instance, "I feel that you were being mean to me when we were playing." The other child, who cannot interrupt, can then respond by saying, "I feel that you were not playing fair." From those two points, a teacher facilitates a dialogue between the students to resolve the issue. As the children progress through the grades, student peer counselors facilitate this process on the playground. It works because the children already know the rules.

Throughout the districts, bullying is one of the most serious issues confronting schools and there is a zero tolerance policy for it. Bullying can be a prelude to prejudices and hate crimes. It can become a "them and us" issue. The schools confront these

incidents by telephoning and writing the parents and making the students write letters of apology to the victims. If the infraction is repeated, a student can be suspended.

In one school district, a group was formed to: 1) assist with implementation of an action plan; 2) review materials for tolerance education and human relations studies; and, 3) provide staff development on diversity issues. Their work resulted in the Equity Action Plan. Teachers, parents, students, administrators, youth-serving agency representatives and community members participate in this Equity Action Plan. One of their recommendations was to use the following materials:

- “A World of Difference,” curriculum manual from the Anti-Defamation League (grades 6-12)
- “Different and the Same,” Family Communications, Inc. (grades 1-3)
- “That’s A Family,” Women’s Education Media (grades 5-12)
- “Bully-Proofing Your School,” Specialty Place (grades 3-8)

Law Enforcement

To ascertain if these programs have made a practical difference in the community by reducing youth crimes, the Grand Jury interviewed several members of law enforcement. The responses were generally neutral, that is, the police had no way of forming an opinion since joint studies had never been initiated. However, the police who were interviewed stated they had the problems “contained,” whether it was gangs or individual incidents. There seemed to be a consensus that there were no *serious* gang issues within the county, although there were some gangs. One of the policemen said that gang activity was a factor in the counties that surround Marin – that Marin is a conduit for gang members to get to other counties. The Grand Jury received anecdotal testimony from some police professionals indicating they think there is a decline in county youth crimes.

Impact of Diversity Programs

In order to “shine a light” on the types of programs that have been implemented, the Grand Jury asked the following questions and received the following answers:

- Do these programs have a positive impact on school populations? **Yes.** Most of the programs that have been put into place are designed to develop awareness of the issues which may be more important, in the long run, than securing resolutions. Since it is difficult to legislate social consciousness, if the students gain a wider perception of the issues, these programs will have been a success.
- Will these programs, given the county’s ethnic, cultural and socio-economic changes, meet future needs? **Yes.** Districts that are not “living laboratories” in diversity will profit from the many types of programs in use throughout the county. Because the need is to establish awareness in the minds of the students, the

wide variety of issue-based programs presented by the schools will meet future needs.

- Do these programs offer a simplistic answer to far more complex and underlying issues? **Yes.** Realistically, no one expects to solve complex issues by a series of curricula, no matter their excellence. However, the Grand Jury believes this simplistic answer is a positive step to the introduction of concepts designed for broadening social awareness.

Teacher Impact

Perhaps the most overlooked result of these programs has been the impact on the teachers themselves. Diversity programs have added to their existing curricula in an area that is always difficult to teach and sometimes controversial. Many of the teachers also face negativity from parts of the community and from some parents directly. The Grand Jury recognizes the added work this has brought to the teachers and other school personnel, but at the same time realizes there is no immediate solution to the added curricular burden.

School Programs that Foster Diversity Awareness

The Grand Jury investigation showed that schools with diverse populations indicate little need for formal diversity programs because they are “living laboratories” of diversity. At San Rafael High School, one of most racially and ethnically integrated high school, students in their recent Leadership Program outlined plans for the semester which included celebrations of Black History Month, Cesar Chavez Day, as well as support and participation with Special Olympics in Marin. At this same high school, there is gang activity. Interestingly enough, there is pride in being part of the school that overrides the racial makeup of gangs. When threatened from the “outside,” the students hang together to present a united front. When interviewed, some students at other schools said that the perception of many was that San Rafael High was a school where students were afraid. In fact, San Rafael High students said they felt safe on their campus and only felt intolerance when they visited other school sites for sport activities, where they were subjected to racial slurs and other negative comments.

Much has been said and reported about racial slurs and other negative remarks made at high school sports events, particularly at basketball games. Some of the police who were interviewed said they would like to see the athletic faculty and members of administration take a more active role in disciplining the troublemakers. Admittedly, when situations of this sort include remarks from the audience/fans, it is difficult to control. Certainly, all interscholastic competitive events, not only sporting events, need to be made safe and secure for the students.

At Davidson Middle School the entire staff, from custodial to administrative, is part of the diversity program. The message given to the students is consistent: If a custodial person observes racial or ethnic issues, he/she delivers the same message to the

offending students as would the principal. At this same middle school site, there is an award-winning Steel Pan Program that has been implemented as part of the musical program. From its inception, it was intended to be an alternative to the traditional music program. Their program description is "...comprised of a cross-section of the student body: "at risk students, regular education students, GATE(Gifted & Talented Education) students, ESL(English as a Second Language) students, learning-disabled students, physically challenged students, as well as students of all ages and all ethnic groups." There are currently three Steel Pan classes, each with 34 students. The band is now in its eighteenth year and has been invited to play at Disneyland, The Santa Cruz Jazz Festival, and many other venues. The group is important, not only because of the joy of performing, but also because of peer group and community acceptance. This program continues as part of the music department at one district high school and is one of the many positive ways the school has met the challenge of integrating a diverse student body (see Appendix B for Steel Pan Program).

Community Programs that Foster Diversity Awareness

There are also community programs that are making an impact. A youth and family counselor who has worked in Marin County for many years has developed a diversity program titled "No More Scapegoats." This videotape is shown at a community awareness seminar on confronting prejudice. The Grand Jury was able to review the tape and felt it was an excellent teaching tool. The theme of this very successful program is that there are *bullies, victims and bystanders*. Students roleplay, thereby learning that scapegoating is not acceptable behavior.

Government and Foundation Programs that Foster Diversity Awareness

The state has indicated its support and understanding of the importance of adding diversity programs to the curricula at all schools in order to give students the knowledge and understanding they will need when they "go out into the world." The demographics at the colleges, universities and the workplace are increasingly diverse, therefore, our students need to be prepared in order to function successfully in this milieu. Given the almost homogenous demographics of Marin, this mandate becomes even more essential.

Among the many programs in place to reduce violence and hate crimes is "Tools for Tolerance." Monies for this project are from a \$440,000 grant from the Marin Foundation. This three-year grant, which ends in June of 2003, is designed for law enforcement personnel and educators and is administered by the MCOE. Participants visit the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. The Museum provides two-day training, a tour of the museum, guest speakers, a workshop with expert presenters and discussions with trained facilitators. The Grand Jury, when interviewing teachers, found enthusiastic responses to this educational experience, as did administrators, school board members and police/sheriff personnel.

Generally, the Grand Jury has found that these programs, only a few of which we have delineated, are considered by school personnel helpful tools for teaching.

Resistance to Diversity Program Education

As mentioned earlier, there are some parents who object to having the schools teach subject matter they feel is better taught in the home. The schools recognize their concerns and some have developed an “opt out” and/or “opt in” procedure and form. Unfortunately, in at least one district there were glitches in the procedure: Some parents became angry over not having been notified in a timely manner so they could remove their children from what they felt were inappropriate courses. Individual school districts have their own manner of administering this part of their programs and not all of them have encountered problems. The Grand Jury did not investigate the cause of these glitches and has no recommendation to make.

The Grand Jury held an e-mail interview with a former Marin County student, currently attending UC Berkeley. One of his recollections was that neither the Latino nor Caucasian student groups made a concerted effort to mix socially; however, each group co-existed in a positive manner. The school held a few voluntary multi-cultural assemblies during the year, which seemed to have little effect on the integration of the student body. He said that since some of the assemblies were voluntary, some students did not attend.

The Grand Jury is aware that some county residents continue to resist diversity programs. The Grand Jury believes that efforts should continue to be made to establish creative ways that introduce to students acceptance and understanding. The Grand Jury believes the establishment of diversity programs will, in the long run, better facilitate understanding among all students. The current budgetary crisis will probably jeopardize new programs. The Grand Jury urges all districts to at least maintain what is in place during the coming tight times.

As noted in the beginning of this report, diversity programs break the cycle of insensitivity and provide students with tools to develop empathy for people different from themselves; give students a vocabulary to explore diversity issues; develop concepts of ‘differentness;’ and, create a culture of kindness and acceptance. This extraordinary benefit should not be at the mercy of budgetary shortfalls.

FINDINGS

1. The California Education Code states unequivocally that diversity programs curriculum is an integral part of education in all public schools.
2. Students do not hear a consistent message about the efficacy of diversity programs.

3. The Sheriff and police departments are not always aware of the various diversity programs offered by school districts.
4. There are no statistics kept regarding the impact of diversity programs on youth crimes.
5. Documented incidents of racial slurs and other negative comments toward minorities have occurred in the past without the imposition of penalties.
6. Community leaders have substantially contributed to the ‘bank’ of available programs for students use.
7. Certain members of the parent community make use of the opt-in or opt-out forms if they think the programs are inappropriate for their children to attend.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Diversity programs throughout the Marin County School Districts should start in kindergarten.
2. Faculty and administration, at the direction of the MCOE, need to establish a task force of all groups to deliver a consistent message to the students.
3. Efforts should be made by the MCOE (at the quarterly meetings of Partnership Program, for instance) to make police/sheriff's personnel more familiar with diversity programs offered in the schools.
4. The MCOE should establish conjoint studies with the police/sheriff's personnel to track statistics showing whether or not diversity programs are reducing youth crimes.
5. School administrators, teachers, parents, police and students should foster a non-threatening, competitive environment at all inter-scholastic events. They should impose immediate penalties when problems, conflicts or violence occur.
6. District superintendents should plan diversity education assemblies as a part of the curriculum.
7. The MCOE should develop county-wide standardized procedures and forms for opt-in/opt-out prerogatives in diversity programs and make them available to parents at all schools.

RESPONSES

This is an informational report only. Responses are neither required nor requested.

Appendix A

California Education Code, Section 200-201 and 233-233.8
California Penal Code, Section 422.6

Appendix B

Various program handouts:

- Peer Summit VI
- Different and the Same
- Holocaust, History and Humanity
- The Essence of Acceptance

Steel Pan Program Description