The Gains: Smaller Cities Integrate And Find That It Works

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The New York Times

A time of sharp national debate over how much school desegregation is enough, a number of smaller cities have tried complete integration and found that it works.

Complete school integration—where pupil ratios closely parallel the racial composition of the community—and too new that and the places where it has been tried so far are too few to yield concrete conclusions. But school officials of eight smaller cities, in the North and South, report the following initial gains in educational achievement and in social attitudes:

Black children have been seen by whites. The guise of black segregation or black in white form, was not clearly when it came in white form, is legally and constitutionally correct in its main effect, as I see it, is now it is a replacement of the concept.

A key and controversial element of the racial balance formula is the elimination of schools that, even after substantial desegregation, remain all-black or predominately black.

The issues of racial balance and all-black schools lie at the heart of the public debate over desegregation, a debate reinforced...in the Supreme Court in cases involving Charlotte, N.C.; Mobile, Ala., and, Gia.

Eight cities surveyed were New Providence, Pa.; Rochester, N.Y.; Chapel Hill, N.C.; Berkeley and Riverside, Calif.; Evanston, Ill., and, Greenville, S.C.

The experience of these cities would seem to hold little value for major urban centers, with large populations, great distances to be overcome by extensive school busing, large numbers—sometimes a majority—of nonwhite children.

But in smaller cities—they average about 150,000 population, are more compact in size and have a minority enrolment of roughly 30 per cent—there is a wealth of experience in school desegregation.

Their experience supports the findings of the Coleman Report, a massive federal...for $156.4 million as did the school board.

When we look at the schools in the city at the end of the sixth grade, said Superintendent...where we would have done. It has aided all education for all children. It has caused us to break the shackles that have...away from the rigidity of our old educational system.

It is a long way from Riverside (population about 8,000) but officials in the city apply a parallel attitude.

"Before Court Acted

New Albany, in northeast Mississippi, completely desegregated its four schools in 1969, despite bitter opposition, well in advance of court requirements. Each school, like the population, is now about 30 per cent black.

The emphasis was on education, not integration, with "an individual instruction program, supplemented by a good teaching," recalls Bryant Smith, who was then superintendent of schools.

White parents have been slow, not rejecting the moral and ethical implications, of racial fights , but none of the gang disorders . While nearly half of the city's 8,000 grade school pupils are black, there has been no disorder, no violence, some, but, typically, less than before integration.

In Harburs, there have been scattered racial fights, but none of the gang disorders that one was to avoid being called a "Negro." They were doing it so much more insidiously than anyone.

"The United States has a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the opposite, to their communities. We could give these children an education that is free...and the public schools now are providing in the long run."

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