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OAKLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL OPENS FIFTH YEAR



Students of the Oakland Community School deeply involved in a science class. The School began its fifth year on September 8, providing Black and poor youth with an innovative and creative educational program which is unparalleled in the stagnant, racist public school system.

(Oakland, Calif.) - America's public schools began the 1975-76 school year in chaos and violence. In Boston, Massachusetts, and Louisville, Kentucky, clashes erupted between police and White racists opposed to forced school busing (see article, page 7). Meanwhile, in cities from Berkeley, California, to New York City, teachers' strikes have left one out of 22 public school children out of school. Amidst the turbulence in the public school system is a distinct, refreshing contrast, indeed, an example of what education should be all about - the highly respected Oakland Community School, which peacefully began its fifth year of innovative education for Black and poor youth on September 8.

The tuition-free, fully accredited School, (formerly the Intercommunal Youth Institute), located at 6118 E. 14th Street in East Oakland, has a current enrollment of 120 children between the ages of two and one-half and 11. The children are placed in eight ungraded groups according to their skills and abilities. The eighth group is new this year and has been added to better serve the diverse educational needs of the children.

The staff of the Oakland Community School, headed by its dedicated director, Ms. Ericka Huggins, has worked diligently to develop an exciting, model educational curriculum geared toward the creation of a learning atmosphere absent of the sterile and abstract techniques

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OAKLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL OPENS

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found in the classrooms of so many public schools. The majority of the youth enrolled at the School are former students from the racist public school system which has failed to provide Black and minority youth with a meaningful education.

The spacious facilities of the School include eight classrooms, an art room, a curriculum center, a large, fully-equipped kitchen, a huge cafeteria area, and an auditorium with a seating capacity of 350 which is used for drama presentations and other School programs.

The atmosphere in the classrooms — classes are held from 9:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Monday through Friday — is structured but open in keeping with the School's philosophy that the instructors' function is to facilitate the children's learning as opposed to lecturing to them. The children are encouraged to communicate with each other as part of their learning experience. Three representatives from Groups 2 through 8 comprise the Youth Committee which has direct input into the academic and activity-related decision-making at the School.

The 1975-76 curriculum includes Language Arts, Spanish, Mathematics, Speech, Science, Social Science, Environmental Studies, Physical Education, Art, Music Appreciation and Voice.

The Language Arts classes are designed to develop the students' skills in vocabulary; reading; grammar; writing; and use of books and the library.

To aid the children in expressing themselves clearly, effectively and confidently in speaking, Speech classes have been created. Projected activities in Speech for the coming year include taping the children's voices to locate errors and deficiencies in pronunciation, enunciation and grammar; correct usage of present and simple past tenses of verbs; and development of the ability to speak in complete sentences.

This year's Spanish classes will focus on the study of the Spanish language, aspects of Latin American and Spanish-speaking countries and field trips. The study of the Spanish language — which will vary according to the level, span of attention and particular interests of each group — will concentrate on basic, day-to-day Spanish expressions and conversations. The ultimate goal is for the children to be able to read and write in Spanish.

The Mathematics curriculum includes: arithmetic (counting, recognition and writing of numbers); sets; vocabulary and symbols; measurement of money and time; geometry; and algebra. The Mathematics curriculum is designed to promote the students' ability to perform objectives in these areas as well as objectives in logic, probability and statistics.

The Oakland Community School's Social Science curriculum — the scientific study of society's past, present and future possibilities — includes investigation, study and analysis based upon facts. The children's thinking and drawing of conclusions, as opposed to the instructors' opinions about social issues, are emphasized. American history, for example, when the facts are examined, is quite different from the public school textbook interpretation that is usually presented. Other areas of study in Social Science include current events, geography, Black history and world studies.

WORLD IS CLASSROOM

"The World Is Our Classroom" — the motto of the Oakland Community School — is the guiding principle which motivates the Environmental Studies program. The objective, partially accomplished through field trips, is to put the students into as much contact with the "extracurricular" world as possible.

In Music Appreciation, the children will study gospel music, blues, jazz, rock and roll, funk/discotheque, classical, Latin American and Caribbean music as well as learn to recognize musical instruments. The vocal skills of the children will be developed in the Voice classes. The children will also construct,

compose, and write original songs of their own and will participate in a choir.

The Art program will introduce the children to a variety of crafts and drawing media as well as art history which will expose the children to the integral role that art plays in people's lives and how history and politics have shaped the thinking of artists and how art has shaped the thinking of people.

The study of the human body, nutrition, health, hygiene, the physical properties of matter and use of laboratory equipment are among the subjects included in the Science program for the coming year. The Oakland Community School Science Club will sponsor an after-school program consisting of a science film series, weekly science activity sessions and individual and small group science projects. Membership in the club is open to enrolled students as well as youth in the surrounding community.

In addition to student participation in basketball, track and field, soccer, wrestling, swimming and rowing, handball, gymnastics, martial arts and other

sports, the Physical Education curriculum has been expanded to include yoga, isometrics and a study of the history of sports.

Beyond its academic program, the Oakland Community School offers services designed to promote and realize the physical, psychological and social growth and development of its students. The School's health service provides eye, hearing and speech screening for the children and takes care of their first aid or emergency care health needs. Parents are encouraged to register with Children's Hospital which the School uses for consultant and emergency services. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served each day in the school's cafeteria.

HARD WORK

The School survives through the hard work of its staff and the parents and community volunteers who helped develop the school and have made it the model school it is today. Parents who are able contribute \$25.00 monthly to assist in the general expenses of the School as well as provide the supplies needed for classroom use.

The Oakland Community School was originally conceived by Huey P. Newton, leader and chief theoretician of the Black Panther Party, who says concerning the purpose of the school:

"The School is the realization of a dream... to repair disabled minds and the disenfranchised lives of this country's poor communities, to lay the foundations as to create an arena for the world without such suffering. Our aim is to provide the young of these communities with as much knowledge possible and to provide them with the ability to interpret that knowledge with understanding. For we believe without knowledge there can be no real understanding and that understanding is the key to liberation of all." □

Black and Chicano children learning in structured but open classroom atmosphere.



"The school is a realization of a dream... to repair disabled minds and the disenfranchised lives of this country's poor communities."