

A Social Studies Curriculum: Mississippi Freedom Schools

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INTRODUCTION

A question that appears to be frequently asked with regards to the effects of social studies education is what is social studies supposed to do for students? What effect does social studies curriculum have on students? How do different kinds of instructional strategies affect students? And, if social studies instruction is supposed to cause changes in students, why does research seem to show most students, elementary and secondary, appear to have a very strong dislike for social studies content, particularly historical content? (Shaver, 1987)

This paper is an attempt to explore a social studies curriculum used in a historical Civil Rights educational experience known as the Mississippi Freedom Schools during the summer of 1964. Freedom schools provide a useful context in which to study examples of social studies instruction from the perspectives and experiences of volunteer teachers working under hostile conditions for approximately six to eight weeks instructing African-American students using pedagogical efforts to promote equality, self-discovery, learning, social justice, and community activism (Perlstein, 1990).

The first purpose of this paper is to examine (1) the aims of the freedom schools, (2) the curriculum, (3) the instructional behaviors, (4) the evaluation/assessment uses, and (5) classroom management. A second purpose of this paper is to propose an educational model of social studies instruction built on the principles generated from the aims, curriculum, instruction, evaluation and classroom management espoused by the various freedom school experiences. The organization of the paper provides an historical framework of the development of the freedom school experience, the method design for studying the pedagogical actions of various teachers from five freedom schools, the results of these pedagogical actions as found in the instructional experiences of these teachers, and the organizing principles suggested from these pedagogical experiences in constructing a possible model of social studies instruction.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Zinn (1970) purports history "can recapture those few moments in the past which show the possibility of a better way of life than that which has dominated the earth thus far" (p.47). Earlier, Zinn (1964), himself a Mississippi freedom school teacher, claimed the freedom school idea:

was an experiment that cannot be assessed in the usual terms of 'success' and 'failure,' and it would be wrong to hail it with an enthusiasm which would then lead it to be judged by traditional criteria. But that venture of last summer in Mississippi deserves close attention by all Americans interested in the relationship between education and social change (p.371).

Zinn believed the freedom schools provided a model to scrutinize prevailing educational ideas and practices rooted in an unfair and unjust society. He elaborated in what he hoped the freedom school idea could do to correct antiquated educational beliefs and, in turn, help correct various social ills:

The Freedom Schools challenge of the social structure of Mississippi was obvious from the start. Its challenge to American education as a whole is more subtle. There is, to begin with, the provocative suggestion that an entire school system can be created in any community outside the official order, and critical of its suppositions. But beyond that, other questions were posed by the Mississippi experiment of last summer.

Can we, somehow, bring teachers and students together, not through the artificial sieve of certification and examination but on the basis of their common attraction to an exciting social goal? Can we solve the old educational problem of teaching children crucial values, while avoiding a blanket imposition of the teacher's ideas? Can this be done by honestly accepting as an educational goal that we want better human beings in the rising generation than we had in the last, and that this requires a forthright declaration that the educational process cherishes equality, justice, compassion and

world brotherhood? Is it not possible to create a hunger for those goals through the fiercest argument about whether or not they are worth while? And cannot the schools have a running no-ideas-barred exchange of views about alternative ways to those goals?

Is there, in the floating prosperous, nervous American social order of the sixties, a national equivalent to the excitement of the civil rights movement, one strong enough in its pull to create a motivation for learning that even the enticements of monetary success cannot match? Would it be possible to declare boldly that the aim of the schools is to find solutions for poverty, for injustice, for race and national hatred, and to turn all educational efforts into a national striving for those solutions?

Perhaps people can begin, here and there (not waiting for the government, but leading it) to set up other pilot ventures, imperfect but suggestive, like the one last summer in Mississippi. Education can, and should, be dangerous.

(p. 374-375).

In late 1963, The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), an organization composed of members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the NAACP, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, began to conceive of a major civil rights offensive in Mississippi during the Summer of 1964. (The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee papers [hereafter cited as SNCC], 1982: Reel 38) This offensive, spearheaded largely by SNCC, which became known as Mississippi Freedom Summer, would involve over 1000 African-American and white volunteers, mostly from the north and west, to promote African-American equality and basic democratic rights through (1) a massive voter registration drive among the majority of disenfranchised African-Americans; (2) the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP or FDP) to run a mock election in defiance to the all-white state Democratic party and to represent African-Americans in the upcoming National Democratic Convention; (3) a series of community centers to organize particularly African-American adults by promoting their own agendas through collective action; and (4) the creation of a number of summer school programs situated both in urban and rural

Mississippi aimed originally at high school aged African-American students providing them with a richer school experience than they were able to have in their own schools and, hopefully, committing these students to become a force for social change in Mississippi (State Historical Society of Wisconsin [hereafter cited as SHSW]: Morrey; SHSW: Gould; Rothschild, 1982; Perlstein, 1990; Hinman-Smith, in progress). This educational endeavor became known as the Mississippi Freedom Schools.

Charles Cobb (SHSW: Bowie; SNCC: Reel 68), field secretary for SNCC, proposed the idea of Freedom Schools as a war against academic poverty. He claimed the Mississippi School system to be the worst in United States and the African-American schools to be the worst in Mississippi. In these African-American schools there was "a complete absence of academic freedom." In fact, these schools were meant to "squash intellectual curiosity." Ignorance was safer than inquiry. The classrooms were "intellectual wastelands" (Also see SHSW: Davis; SHSW: Demuth). Cobb wanted young African-American students to have an education related directly to the everyday experiences and problems of these students. Freedom schools would "offer young black Mississippians an education that public schools would not supply, one that both provided intellectual stimulation and linked learning to participation in the movement to transform the South's segregated society" (Perlstein, 1990, p. 297).

To effect the idea of freedom schools, the National Council of Churches sponsored a curriculum conference in New York during March, 1964 (Fusco, 1964; SNCC: Reel 67; 68; 69). The premise for the curriculum conference was a deep-rooted faith that education could promote freedom and democracy. The objective of the conference was to discuss what freedom schools were to be about in the summer of 1964. The major curriculum focus and the core of the freedom school lessons were the formulating of a civic curriculum (SNCC: Reel 35). The civic curriculum was to be composed of (1) fourteen problem-solving case studies dealing with the political, economic, and social forces relating to the direct experiences of the students; (2) a citizenship curriculum facilitating student discussion as a means of achieving a new society; (3) a Guide to Negro History providing a comprehensive survey of African-

American history; and (4) an emphasis on teachers extrapolating directly from students those personal experiences in which they live each day in a hostile, repressive dominated white society (See Sugarman, 1966, p. 219: "You listen to them. You hear what they say, and then you deal with their problems where they are"). Curriculum also revolved around the development of a reading and writing remediation curriculum, a humanities curriculum emphasizing foreign languages, art, and creative writing, and a general science and mathematics curriculum.

Although fourteen case study lessons were to be designed, only seven were created. Yet, these seven proved to be substantial teaching units. To be coupled with the curriculum, the conference recommended a variety of progressive democratic teaching techniques emphasizing informal group discussion. The pedagogical combination of self-discovery and self-expression was to stimulate "high school youth in Mississippi to QUESTION" (SNCC: Reel 27). As Paul Lauter (Lauter & Perlstein, 1991), a freedom school teacher reflected on the purposes of both the curriculum and the instructional behaviors,

"The act of questioning was not just a step in a process of intellectual growth but rather a repudiation of subordination. Questioning would lead to self-expression, to an understanding of Mississippi's oppressive social order, and to participation in the movement for social change" (p.3).

In June, 1964, two one-week orientation meetings were held on the campus of Western College for Women at Oxford, Ohio, for most of the freedom summer volunteers (SHSW: Gould; SHSW: Oolman; SHSW: Vogel). The second week orientation included the 233 freedom school teachers. The volunteer teachers included both professional teachers (there were 40) and non-teachers. Fifty-six percent of the teachers were female, mostly white, median age, 24.1, all either college graduates or attending universities, 74 percent majoring in humanities, and the majority from the East or the Midwest. At least 60 percent had had at least some involvement in the Civil Rights movement either in their home states and/or in the South.

The orientation workshops were crash courses in Mississippi politics,

race relations, practical safety rules, and the movement philosophy of nonviolence as a tactic and life commitment.² Also, there were training courses in the existing educational structure of African-American students, in the physical structures or lack thereof of the freedom schools, in pedagogical techniques, particularly in communication and expression skills, and in the use of civic curriculum of the case studies and African-American history.

Upon completing the orientation, the volunteers traveled to their freedom school locations in Mississippi to begin their six-eight week stay. The original expectation was the creation of twenty schools with a desired student population of 1000 (SHSW: Starobin). However, freedom schools became a far greater success than the project had planned with 41 schools in 20 communities and 2,165 students (SNCC: Reel 38). The schools not only attracted high school age students but also elementary students and some adults:

Where the initial plans had been for only the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades, one found sitting in the informal circles youngsters with the smooth black faces and wondering eyes of the impish ages of nine and ten who were mere fifth-graders...And there just behind teen-age boys-with slender, cotton-picking muscles-were sets of gnarled hands and the care-chiseled faces of grandmothers, some of whom said they thought they were in the seventies (birth records for the old are almost nonexistent).

(Holt, 1966, p.107)

Facing lack of physical facilities ("One beautiful thing about a Freedom School is that, provided it doesn't rain, the only physical plant needed is a shady spot, books, paper and pens" [SNCC: Reel 6]), limited resources, larger student-teacher ratios than anticipated, some African-American community indifference (mostly from Mississippi African-American teachers (SHSW: Davis; SHSW: Benard)), and a hostile white community (SHSW: Demuth), most of the freedom schools offered the intended curriculum plus a variety of other courses that students wanted and the teachers might be able to provide (Zinn, 1964; Gillard, 1965; Howe, 1965). The following was a typical class schedule (SNCC: Reel 68) for many of the freedom schools:

Morning:

8:15 - 8:30-Freedom Songs and Devotions
8:30 - 9:20-History of the Negro in America (on rotating basis of 2 and 3 sessions per week per subject)
-English
9:30 - 10:20 -Citizenship Curriculum (2 general sessions per week and 3 small group discussions)
-Also time for films related to citizenship
10:30 - 12:00-Special Subjects

Afternoon:

1:30 - 3:30-Afternoon Activities:
1.Arts and Crafts
2.Playwriting, producing, acting
3.Writing, editing, sending out Freedom School Newspaper
4.Every Monday afternoon: sessions on how to prepare, mimeograph leaflets for Mass Meetings, Freedom Says, Voter Registration campaigns, etc.
5.Typing one hour per day; times to be arranged.

Special Subjects Available:

Mathematics, German, Biology, Astronomy, Spanish, Geography, Psychology, Creative writing, French, oriental culture, political science (International politics, Supreme Court and the Constitution, with special emphasis on leading Civil Rights cases in American History).

As freedom schools began, students and freedom school teachers crowded into sheds, lodge halls, store fronts, churches, and open fields that served as school facilities (Holt, 1966). Student attendance varied from day to day. Often students had to work as field hands and as domestics. Some Freedom School experiences were more interesting than others ("It was very difficult for us as teachers to sense whether or not we had gotten to the students--whether they were interested or merely polite, whether they comprehended or were too shy or afraid to ask questions" (SNCC: Reel 68). In some cases particular Mississippi public schools were open during the summer months structured around the Fall cotton season. And fear of white community retaliation caused some African-American parents to be reluctant in sending their children to freedom schools (SHSW: Sutherland). Yet many young people wanted to be in the freedom schools and wanted to be part of the Civil Rights Movement despite parental and social pressure even at the risk of their lives (Pam Allen Letter to authors;).³ And the

volunteer teachers for the most part were enthusiastic about their new vocation and adapted ably to their tasks (Rothschild, 1982). Tracy Sugarman (1966), a SNCC fieldworker, described the teacher-student dynamics of a first day freedom school class in Ruleville, Mississippi:

At two in the afternoon the session for the school-age children began. In groups of three and four, teachers led their students to areas of the lawn where they might discuss and question without interrupting the progress of another group. Books, pencils, papers-the paraphernalia of learning-sprinkled the hardpacked yard with a confusion of color. The excited talk of the enthusiastic teachers mingled with the suppressed excitement of the Negro children. One watched the young teachers, bending to the task, starting to probe, to move, to make curious. The youngest children were quickest to be fired. Their surprised laughter and exclamations showed contact was being made. The older boys and girls shyly smiled, seriously frowned, or dropped their eyes. No white teacher had ever taught them, and the northern speech sounded hard and strange in their ears. And no teacher had ever reached out toward them with such ardor and trust. It was new, but not uncomfortable. They watched from lowered lids, did little, and noticed everything.

I laughed as I moved through the clusters of kids. America's most verbal students were teaching her least verbal children, and words that had been useful on campus were suddenly embarrassing and pompous. I shuddered as I heard words like "dichotomy" and "incongruous," but as I watched I realized that most of what they were saying was striking sparks. Even during that first afternoon one could hear the vocabularies becoming simpler as the young teachers found common ground with their younger students. At last the self-doubting that had badgered so many of the teachers since Oxford was being removed in the actual confrontation with their students. Finally, they were beginning to do what they had come so far to do.

(p. 123-125).

The culminating event for the freedom schools was the statewide student convention in Meridian,

Mississippi in August, at which student delegates from each freedom school hammered out and adopted a detail platform on issues ranging from job discrimination to civil liberties (SHSW: Parks; SHSW: Zinn; Grant, 1964; Lynd, 1965). The three day event, planned and administered by the student delegates, was the first time African-American students from all over the state had come together to discuss their common concerns and aims. An observer for the National Council of Churches, Atlee Beechy (SHSW: Friesan) wrote,

The Freedom School conference was impressive. A sense of mission, cultural identity, hope, and inspiration were perhaps more significant outcomes than the academic program of the participants.

As Freedom Summer ended, it was hoped that freedom schools would continue. While some of the schools did continue to operate, few could sustain either learning or activism. The schools were never projected as permanent institutions but rather, according to most of the original planners, as a tactic for immediate change (Lauter & Perlstein, 1991). However, for many students and teachers, the freedom schools in those short six - eight weeks had a substantial impact on their lives. Mary Gillard (1965), a freedom school teacher in Gulfport, summed up the impact of freedom schools:

The Freedom Schools showed that there can be a situation where learning is not forced upon youth. This was a type of education which gave individuals a personal interest in social relationships, a personal interest which made learning something to be sought after . . . The Freedom Schools met the challenge of changing the social order through the educative process. They showed that this is not an additional burden that must be met through education, but a necessity if we are to have truth, justice, and equality in society. (p. 43).

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) explore examples of social studies instruction that took place in the various freedom schools; (2) extract pedagogical principles from the freedom school experience as these principles relate to social studies instruction, and (3) construct

a possible model from these principles for social studies instruction. The data came from case examples of five of the 41 freedom schools. Using cross-case analysis, each of the five freedom schools was studied by examining the pedagogical behaviors of aims, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and classroom management. From each of these behaviors, a set of organizing principles was evolved to construct a possible social studies instruction model.

The five freedom schools used as cases in this study are Holly Springs, Mileston, Jackson, Ruleville, and Gulfport. These five schools were chosen over the other freedom schools because the historical information located and gathered provided detailed accounts of curriculum use, instructional behaviors, and teacher and students' thoughts and responses about their involvement in Mississippi over the six - eight week period.

Information on each of these schools came from a number of sources. In the fall of 1991 and winter 1992, questionnaires were mailed to known freedom school volunteers asking for information describing their freedom school experiences. A number of these have been interviewed for further detailed information. Some participants provided diaries and journals giving accounts of their experiences. Some of the freedom school teachers and the original developers of the citizenship curriculum and the instructional program provided copies of the original curriculum and the intended instructional strategies. A number of news accounts, scholarly books, journals, popular magazine articles, and one master thesis provided a number of personal experiences of various freedom school teachers. A major resource for curriculum development and instructional use by the volunteers was found in a number of archive collections: The SNCC Papers, University Microfilm; Project South Collection, Stanford University; and The Social Action Papers, and State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

The results are divided under the five pedagogical behaviors of aims, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and classroom management. Each behavior begins with a discussion of the general intent of that behavior as prescribed by the organizers of the freedom school movement followed by how each of the five freedom schools effected, modified, or changed the use of the behavior.

RESULTS

AIMS A female freedom school teacher was asked about her progressive teaching in helping her African-American students to think for themselves and to take control of their personal lives, if the freedom schools were not, in fact, indoctrinating the young people. She paused.

Yes, I suppose so. But, I can't think of anything better to indoctrinate them with. Freedom. Justice. The Golden Rule. Isn't there *some* core of belief a school should stand by?

(Zinn, 1964, p. 374)

Indeed, the originators of the freedom school idea had a core belief in the relationship of education and social change. The general goal of the entire Mississippi Freedom Summer Project was to replace the existing oppressive power structure with a new structure that promoted equity and social justice (SHSW: Hard). Freedom schools were to play an important role in accomplishing this goal. "The Freedom Schools mean an exposure to a totally new field of learning," explained Carolyn Reese, a Detroit school teacher and coordinator of the Hattiesburg freedom schools (Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee, 1964; SNCC: REEL 73). "New attitudes about people, new attitudes about self, and about the right to be dissatisfied with the status quo" (p.3). A number of the summer project organizers felt that many of the Mississippi African-American adults were indifferent to any major change in Mississippi society (Howe, 1965). Hope for change, believed the organizers, was to be found in the African-American youth. Therefore, the dominate aim of freedom schools was to promote student conversion from a passive observer of events being acted upon by the dominate white society to an active critical participant involved in solving community problems creating a better society for both African-Americans and whites alike (SHSW: Starobin; Lauter & Perlstein, 1991). Charles Cobb (SNCC: Reel 27), in proposing the need for freedom schools in the Summer project, wrote, "The overall theme of the school would be the student as a force for social change in Mississippi."

To advance students as a force for social change, Cobb and other members of the curriculum conference (Day: Interview) who were to design the curriculum and instruction for the

summer freedom schools suggested additional supportive aims. Freedom schools were to help students develop various intellectual skills in order to articulate their desires for change and personal and community improvement. The schools would provide knowledge of history, sociology, economic and political systems to give students "more sophisticated views of current issues" and "to introduce students to thinking of local difficulties in a context of national problems" (SNCC: Reel 27). Students would need to discover that they were part of a history of people who had been "in a long line of protest and pressure for social and economic justice" (SNCC: Reel 38). These aims were to lead to helping students

"to develop a new way of thinking and be awakened to their powers of analytic reasoning. In short. . . Freedom Schools can accomplish the vital task of causing high school youth in Mississippi to QUESTION." (SNCC: Reel 27).

It was necessary to question society, teachers, or any oppressive authority, if real change was to take place. "More students," Cobb (SNCC: Reel 27) wrote, "need to stand up in the classrooms around the state, and ask their teachers a real question." The "Introduction" to the citizenship curriculum (SHSW: Hextor) states, "It is not our purpose to impose a particular set of conclusions. Our purpose is to encourage the asking of questions, and hope that society can be improved." One of the organizers of the curriculum conference, Jane Stembridge wrote to the freedom school teachers prior to the Oxford orientation:

This is the situation. You will be teaching young people who have lived in Mississippi all their lives. That means that they have been deprived of decent education, from the first grade through high school. It means that they have been denied free expression and free thought. Most of all-- it means *that they have been denied the right to question.*

The purpose of the Freedom Schools is to help them begin to question. This is not an easy job. Neither is it impossible. Deep inside, these young people possess the great creativity . . . the desire for knowledge, . . . and the wild hopes of all young people. You have to reach deep and tap these resources. (SNCC: Reel 39)

With the skills of articulation,

academic learning of various social science content to provide understanding of contemporary and local problems, a historical identity and awareness of self, and the power to question, the freedom school planners hoped the students would return to their communities as an organizing base to further the cause of the Civil Rights movement (Fusco, 1964; SNCC: Reels 27; 67; 68; 69; Day: Interview). It was hoped these students would take back to their communities what they had learned in the freedom schools and teach other students who had not participated in the summer schools. Also, these students might form local and statewide student action groups involved in voter registration, school boycotts, or become community leaders. The aims were ambitious. Hope in the schools was bountiful. Faith in the volunteer teachers to meet these aims appeared, for the most part, to be well-placed (Zinn, 1964; Gillard, 1965; SNCC: Reels 6; 65; 68; SHSW: Lynd; Sutherland, Questionnaire: Pam Allen; Questionnaire: Norma Becker; Aviva Futorian: Interview).

The organizers also realized the volunteers would need to come to terms with their own personal objectives for teaching in the freedom schools with those of the prescribed pedagogical program (SNCC: Reel 67). It was important there be cohesiveness and cooperation among the freedom school personnel of faculty, administrators, and other staff members. To promote this cooperation, it was necessary that each freedom school staff agree on a set of aims (or core beliefs) which would pedagogically drive their respective schools.

Hopefully, before the opening of each school, there will be time for the staff to agree on overall aims and to apportion individual responsibilities. (Sandra Adickes Curriculum Conference Report, SNCC: Reel 67, p.1).

Gulfport Freedom School

The Gulfport freedom schools were where African-American youth could go to discover themselves as human beings by developing racial pride and participating in a meaningful role in critical thought and social action (Gillard, 1965). The schools were to be "a place of social, political, intellectual, and recreational development" providing the students with opportunities both in and out of class to examine the conditions in which they live, develop better ways

of life for them, their families, and the Gulfport community, and exercise their rights to overcome injustice. The Gulfport freedom schools were to "fill the large void in the Negro youth's life while providing him with the means to plan a brighter future for himself and his society" (Gillard, 1965, p. 24).

Jackson Freedom School

The Jackson staff believed that "...academic experiences should relate directly to . . . [the students] . . . real life in Mississippi, and since learning that involves real life experiences is, we think, most meaningful, we hope that the students will be involved in the political life of their communities." (Pease papers).

Florence Howe, a teacher in the Jackson freedom school, looked differently at freedom school aims from the perspective of what freedom school teachers ought or ought not to be to students. First, Howe claimed African-American school teachers in the Jackson public school system were not well-prepared teachers and were either timid and part of the white system or actively hostile, dictatorial, and even vengeful to their students. Either type of teacher would not allow students to question the dominate society or the poor African-American living conditions. The only way these teachers taught was rote learning to an expected passive class:

You learn this. . . and you get along. Get used to the violence, get used to being stuck, get used to taking orders, for that is the way life is on the outside.

(Howe, 1965, p. 145)

Therefore, Howe stated the aims of the Jackson freedom school teachers included not standing before rows of their students being omnipotent, aristocratic dictators, paternalistic domineering parents, or professional manipulators "pouring pre-digested, pre-censored information into their brains." The freedom school teacher was to be a student among students who do not always have the right answer, who was an equally concerned questioner and listener, who wanted to help students control their own lives and promote self-determination in their communities.

Fred Heinze (SHSW: Heinze), also a Jackson freedom school teacher, expressed Howe's positions on poor public school education and the role

of freedom school teachers and those of the summer projects when he wrote to his family:

One of the most basic of COFO's programs is the Freedom School. Every project operates a Freedom School; and Freedom Schools are just that. They are free institutions in a totalitarian state. Essentially, the Freedom Schools seek to do two things. First, we are trying to provide those things in the Freedom Schools that are not available in the public schools, or at least, supplement and improve on the offerings in the public schools. Secondly, in the Freedom School we are trying a new (for Mississippi at any rate, & possibly the rest of the country) approach to that process we call education. The Freedom Schools exist to encourage and aid free expression and thought on the part of the students. We are teachers, but it is important for us to remember that we do not possess knowledge that our students are incapable of acquiring through their own inquiry and efforts. The Freedom Schools exist to set free the intellect.

Holly Springs Freedom School

Two major aims became the focal points of what freedom school teachers wanted to do in Holly Springs. The first aim of the freedom school was to have African American students and the white teachers view each other as people whose only difference was one of cultural experiences (SNCC: Reel 6). The second aim was to provide students with as many opportunities to practice creative thought through a variety of communication techniques (SNCC: Reel 6). Both of these aims were based on what most of the freedom school teachers perceived as the two major obstacles preventing students from changing the power structure in Holly Springs: (1) the lack of confidence students had in themselves caused by years of lack of expression and (2) repressed emotions about their plight and their mistrust in whites, evidenced in years of calling whites Mr. or Mrs. and "years of being automatically second and automatically wrong," (SNCC: Reels 6; 65; 68).

To overcome the first obstacle, teachers provided a number of creative, fun ways to help students to express themselves (SNCC: Reel 6; Questionnaire: Allen; Futorian: Interview). A freedom school newspaper was written and published by

the students containing their articles, poems, news reporting, and critical compositions. Also, the students, with the help of the teachers, developed and acted out an one-act play that was performed a number of times in Mississippi throughout the summer and once in New York City.

The second obstacle was resolved two ways. Teachers were to be called by their first names (SNCC: Reels 6; 65). This proved to be awkward and difficult for the African-American students to do. They addressed adults, particularly white adults as Mr. or Mrs. One teacher to curtail this practice began to call each student Mr. or Mrs. After a week the practice ended. The second way that was used by the teachers to eliminate student mistrust and fear of the white teachers was to physically touch the African-American students (Questionnaire: Allen). A number of black students thought it incredible that whites would touch them, not out of hate, but out of enthusiastic sharing and a deep appreciation for them as equal human beings.

Ruleville Freedom School

In a letter to a friend, Dale Gronemeier (SHSW: Gronemeier), the Ruleville freedom school librarian, wrote that the community freedom school would attempt "to remedy the educational dearth and brain-washing of Negro youths through genuine progressive education." Kristy Powell (SHSW: Lynd), teacher and coordinator at Ruleville, wrote the major purpose of the Ruleville freedom school was to act as a center for real education as opposed to just being an academic institution. Students had to achieve in their own learning, exploring ideas, making choices to solve real problems, giving expression in various and meaningful ways, and becoming actively involved in community change. Academics had its place. It could provide a sound foundation in developing research skills to solve problems and in developing positive self-concepts about oneself. However, if education, thus the freedom school, was to have any meaning and impact on the African-American students, they had to use what they learned in school to effect positive change in the community. Also, students could not make these changes alone. There was needed a strong association between both the teachers and the students working together both academically and socially to solve problems and make improvements in the community.

Mileston Freedom School

Mileston Freedom School

The Mileston freedom school teachers wanted their students to develop a political consciousness and understanding of the oppressive problems in their community (SNCC: Reel 65). If students could understand the white exploitation and injustices that blocked their personal and community development and if they could understand how the white system worked, they would be able to improve their community through articulate dialogue, cooperation, risk taking, and democratic action (See SNCC: Reel 65; SHSW: Lynd).

CURRICULUM

The March, 1964, curriculum conference (SNCC: Reel 64) proposed a progressive curriculum (especially for the African-American students of Mississippi attending less than adequate public schools) to help students to become both better academically and active socially and politically. An academic curriculum of reading, composition, math, science, and humanities emphasizing foreign language, art and creative writing was to be provided because (1) students had limited exposure to most subject matters due to poor schools, (2) some students' need for remedial help in basic reading, writing, and math skills, and (3) need to stimulate students' interest in learning. Although academics was believed to be important in the freedom schools, the civic curriculum proposed by the curriculum conference was to be the major thrust of the freedom schools and formed the core of the freedom school lessons to affect both the students and their immediate communities.

The civic curriculum, which was to be directly related to the experiences and life situations of the students was composed of seven case studies, the Guide to Negro History, and the citizenship curriculum (Fusco, 1964; SHSW: Starobin). The case studies were designed to help students develop leadership abilities to deal with the problems associated with their communities and the state. In teaching the cases, teachers were not to be interested in the quantity of facts students were supposed to learn but rather in students' ability to solve given problems, drawing on their experiences associated with current situations in Mississippi. The case writers were to outline a set of concepts for their topic, provide material relevant to each concept, indicate sources for teachers, provide

a general outline for a week's study - approximately five one-hour lessons, and offer ideas about effective ways to present to students the content in the case (SNCC: Reels 37; 67).

Of the fourteen cases originally proposed, only seven were actually developed and used in the freedom schools. The seven were the role Fannie Lou Hamer's⁵ congressional campaign played in the Mississippi Movement; the impact of the Mississippi judicial system on African-Americans; the ramifications of poverty for both African-Americans and poor whites; the parallel history of Nazi Germany and of the white power structure of the South; the southern education system; and how the Civil Rights Bill of 1963 went through Congress (SNCC: Reel 64).

Perlstein (1990), in his study of freedom schools, maintained these seven case studies were substantial lesson plans, yet, the pedagogical quality varied. For example, the case study on the Power Structure in Mississippi (SHSW: Allen) provided insightful information on the structure of the working class (blacks plowing, planting, chopping, and picking cotton and poor whites working in factories) and on the prevailing dominate social, political, and economic policies through the state (banks, utility companies, the White Citizens' Council, and the white Mississippi Democratic Party). It did not, however, provide instructional guidelines to help teachers present the information or help students to know how to use the information in improving their current situations under such a structure.

In contrast, the case study on the Nazi German power structure vs. the Mississippi power structure (SHSW: Ooiman) provided content, teacher guidelines and suggestions for instructional strategies and showed students how concrete historical experiences could provide solutions to similar current situations. The case study was divided into five sections. The first section provided an overview comparing Nazi Germany with the current Mississippi power elite, comparing concentration camps as a closed society with Mississippi as a closed society, and emphasizing the importance of active community resistance. The next four sections provided historical narrative examples of the above topics within a discussion/role play format suggesting solutions to avoid the mistakes of the Nazis' victims by the African-American community in Mississippi. For

example, to overcome submission to a system of persecution, it was hoped students would learn:

- a. an awareness of the dangers of cooperation with the persecutors.
- b. the need to carve out an area of individual identity, initiative, especially in the face of attempts to reduce Negroes to a "group-status."
- c. the maintenance of inner convictions and of the freedom to chose one"s attitudes, [and]
- d. the importance of group solidarity and rejections of divisions based on privileges or rewards.

(SHSW: Ooiman).

The Guide to Negro History (SHSW: Allen; SHSW: Ooiman; SNCC: Reels 38; 67) was developed to help African-American students learn about their heritage, to construct a positive image of themselves as a people who could be successful in any endeavor, a sense of themselves as a people who could produce heros (Fusco, 1964), and to realize they were taking part in a historical movement of protest for social, economic and political justice (Gillard, 1965). The history lessons also were to show students that history as a subject could have meaning in their lives as a cumulative process. Students could "grow and develop new insights as they (1) master relevant information, and (2) relate this new knowledge to the information they already have, and (3) attempt to apply these insights to current problems" (SHSW: Ooiman).

The Guide began with an introductory lesson on the Amistad incident, a slave revolt in 1839. This was followed with a brief background on African heritage, the slave trade, and an extensive discussion of the origins of prejudice using examples of the Founding Fathers and the Constitutional Convention. There were a series of lessons on the subject of black resistance to opposition, citing the Haitian Revolution, various American slave revolts, and the abolitionist movement, emphasizing the many people, African-American and white, collectively devoting their lives and energy to the abolishment of slavery. A large section of the Guide dealt with the hope and failure of Reconstruction, leading to a segregated South, in general, and Mississippi, in particular. The Guide ends with the beginning of the Civil Rights movement and the role of the courts to enforce Civil Rights laws.

The Citizenship Curriculum (SHSW: Hexter; Day: Interview) was a set of lessons designed to have students critically examine their present situations and determine what they wanted to be and do in obtaining a new existence of social justice and equality. This curriculum was based on students answering two basic set of questions considered to be the foundation to understanding and using the information in the citizenship curriculum:

The BASIC SET OF QUESTIONS is:

1. Why are we (teachers and students) in Freedom Schools?
2. What is the Freedom Movement?
3. What alternatives does the Freedom Movement offer us?

The SECONDARY SET OF QUESTIONS is:

1. What does the majority culture have that we want?
2. What does the majority culture have that we don't want?
3. What do we have that we want to keep?

Lauter and Perlstein (1991), assert these questions were and still are very important to understand the need to reshape both the then Mississippi society and today's society from an individual perspective to a collective, collaborative perspective:

First, these questions do not ask "what does the majority culture have that I want?" but "what does the majority culture have that we want?" The distinction is critical and yet very difficult to comprehend within the framework of American educational institutions. For virtually every-thing in our schools and colleges, except for some team sports, is calculated to reinforce the idea of *individual* advancement, private accumulation of knowledge, grades, degrees. Freedom school students were quite clear about this matter: the discrimination they encountered every day had little or nothing to do with them as individuals named Alice or Burdette or Clarie; it had *everything* to do with them as black people. And thus the question was not only the knowledge, the sense of self Alice as an individual might accumulate in her private way, but also how the social definition of her as an "ignorant nigger," or more politely, a "culturally deprived" black girl, might be changed by joining with

others who shared a similar fate.
(p. 4-5)

The citizenship curriculum consisted of seven units. Each lesson facilitated class discussions with a series of stated questions. The curriculum (Perlstein, 1990; Day: Interview) began with a lesson about students' experiences in their community schools, housing, employment, and medical facilities. What were the differences in the real conditions of these various facilities of African-American compared with those of the whites? The second lesson compared the lives and experiences of Northern African-Americans with Southern African-Americans. The purpose of this lesson was to show that there was comparatively little difference between the geographical realities of African-Americans as second class citizens and that of Southern African-Americans, particularly those in Mississippi, ought to stay and change that reality. The third lesson examined a set of myths perpetuated by the white culture to repress African-Americans with low-expectations and self-image. The next two lessons attempted to create an awareness that some people profit at the expense of others, particularly African-Americans and poor whites, through power, money, fear, and illegal laws. The sixth lesson, "Material Things versus Soul Things," and the first half of the seventh lesson promoted the principles of nonviolence as a philosophy of personal life and of the Civil Rights movement. Various Civil Rights experiences provided vivid examples of nonviolence as the way to merge "the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities" (SHSW: Hexter). The second part of the seventh lesson advocated active participation in changing the existing society and described what steps were needed to effect the change.

It was important to the curriculum committee that the overall curriculum, the academic curriculum, and the civic curriculum, be integrated with existing events in the local communities "to elicit from the students in terms of comprehension and expression of their experiences."

It would seem advisable that, considering the special conditions under which the Freedom Schools will operate, some form of the team approach be adopted, to divide responsibility, yet retain an integrated educational approach to the

student. The teachers should plan the activities together, so that each subject area correlates and reinforces the others. If, for example, the group of students plans to canvass, the language arts phase of the program could concentrate on an appropriate verbal skill, the social studies area could be devoted to the study of the population to be canvassed in terms of economic, social, religious factors and the implications of those factors, the math area could be given over to statistical breakdowns, charts, etc. (This example is a little advanced.) Or, if the students were to publicize a mass meeting, the language arts phase could study the considerations involved in writing persuasive material, the arts and crafts programs could make posters and leaflets, etc. One other advantage of the team approach is that, since students are first of all individuals, a group of teachers working in concert can serve their separate, special needs better. It is not likely that there will be sufficient time or variety of personnel to organize the staff in a detailed manner, but some version of the team concept could probably be implemented (Introduction: Citizenship Curriculum in SHSW: Hexter).

Although the intent of the curriculum makers was to help freedom school volunteers, teachers and nonteachers alike, with a predesigned curriculum geared to attempt to help African-American students to critically change their society despite the volunteers' inexperience in teaching and/or lack of content knowledge of African-American history/Civil Rights content, the makers strongly believed the freedom school teachers should have opportunities to make their own curricular and instructional choices (Hinman-Smith, in progress; SNCC: Reel 67; SHSW: Demuth). It was hoped the teachers would use the designed curriculum but they had the choice to modify or change the curriculum to whatever the teacher thought more suitable depending on the existing situations and/or the experiences and abilities of the students.

Gulfport Freedom School

The Gulfport freedom schools offered the full curriculum advocated by the curriculum conference (SNCC: Reel 68). A discussion of the first lessons in the citizenship curriculum about the existing educational system led to the development of a business

skills curriculum (Gillard, 1965). The teacher began a discussion with a question: "What were the Gulfport schools like?" The students responded by claiming their schools were a waste of time and so poor in instruction that they could not help African-American students qualify for jobs. "What kinds of jobs won't the school qualify you for?" Clerical jobs were the students' responses. Arrangements were made for business skills and typing classes to be taught to those students who were interested.

African-American history was introduced by a teacher having her students gather around a large sheet of paper. She drew a map of the world and explained to the students the relationships of some of the countries to the United States. She stopped at Africa. "What is important about this continent?" One student returned her question with one of his own. "Is this the place where Negro people came from?" The African-American history lessons had begun (Gillard, 1965).

A recreational program also began on the first day (Gillard, 1965). The purposes were to have fun activities and to involve the students in discussing the differences in African-American society compared with the dominant white society. An example of this program involved the playing of baseball. The teachers wanted to have the students critically examine their neighborhoods with something the students were involved with every day. The teachers suggested a game of baseball and the students readily agreed. The teachers asked where did the students usually play and the student took them to a rutted path between some of their homes. It was here on this street they played ball. After the game, a discussion was led as to why white children had playing fields and African-American children did not. Looking for a better baseball field was the result of the baseball game discussion. This activity was designed to start with students where they were in their own personal and community experiences in order to begin to change their own society.

Jackson Freedom School

Reports (Howe, 1965; Zinn, 1964) on the Jackson freedom schools showed the school curriculum was composed of the citizenship curriculum, the seven case studies, and African-American history taught in the mornings and a series of elective courses such as chemistry, biology, English, French, and typing

taught in the afternoon. Other curriculum sources included using local events and movie films as springboards for discussion (Lauter: Interview).

Howe (1965) provided an example of using a lesson from the citizenship curriculum with her 11-14 year olds. She asked her students to describe their own houses compared with those of Jackson whites? After the students described their houses and those white houses where either they or their mothers worked as domestics, Howe asked what changes would they like to make in their own houses. The answers varied from adding additional rooms to more yard space. They did not, however, want the "grandiose" white homes they had earlier described. They described their homes as being very comfortable. This led to a discussion on the conditions of the public schools they attended. The student responses were angry. Although their school was new, it was inferior as compared to the white schools. They resented the hand-me-down textbooks, the inadequacies of the teachers and the repressive atmosphere of allowing no questions or discussions of any topic the students deemed important.

Zinn (1964) provided an example of a freedom school teacher using the case study of how the Civil Rights Bill of 1963 became law. The teacher listed on the blackboard the reasons Barry Goldwater, Senator from Arizona, and Republican candidate for the presidency, gave for voting against the Civil Rights Bill. The bill was unconstitutional, would not end prejudice, could not be enforced, and violated the idea of states' rights. The class role-played these arguments. One boy, portraying Goldwater, defended these points with vigor, while another developed strong positions trying to break these points down.

The elective courses, particularly English classes, films, and the use of local events were geared to help students to analyze the personal experiences in becoming active agents in bringing about social change. The English classes emphasized the reading, discussing, and writing of personal poetry. After reading and discussing poems primarily those of Langston Hughes, e. e. cummings, and Bertolt Brecht (SHSW: COFO), students were able to write their own poems, examining past, present, and hopeful future conditions of the African-American community. A variety of

films, "Oliver Twist," documentaries of Gandhi and the Montgomery bus boycott, "The Magician," and an animated cartoon, "The Hat," provided connections of the Civil Rights movement with non-violence techniques and world peace (Lauter: Interview; Howe, 1965).

An example of using local events that took place in Jackson involved students reading and discussing an editorial in the local newspaper which charged that Civil Rights workers were teaching African-American people to break the law. The teacher asked a question:

"What do you think about that editorial? Is it true? If you could write a letter to the editor about it, what would you say? . . . Here's paper and pencil, go ahead. We'll pick out one or two and really send them to the editor." This was not education for grades, not writing for teacher's approval, but for an immediate use: it was a learning surrounded with urgency. And the students responded with seriousness, picking apart the issues: Are we for the law? Is there a higher law? When is civil disobedience justified? Then the teacher explored with them the differences between statutory law, constitutional law, "natural" law.

(Zinn, 1964, p. 372)

Holly Springs Freedom School

Holly Springs freedom school began at 9 a.m. (Questionnaire: Pam Allen; SHSW: Hard). Singing Civil Rights folksongs went until 9:15. The students were then divided into classes according to age level and interest. The one class all students had to take was citizenship. From 9:30 to 10:30, the core classes of African-American history and citizenship curriculum were offered. 10:30 to 11:30, students had a choice of dance, drama, art, auto mechanics, guitar and folksinging, and sports. The school was closed from noon to 2 p.m. In the afternoon, the school continued with classes in French, religion, crafts, music, playwriting, and journalism. At 4 p.m., the school ended with a seminar on non-violence.

Pam Allen, a Holly Springs freedom school teacher, wrote about a teaching experience she had in implementing the Guide to Negro History:

Let me describe one of my first classes and one of my favorite classes. I gave a talk on Haiti

and the slave revolt which took place there at the end of the 18th century. I told them how the slaves revolted and took over the island. I told them how the French government (during the French Revolution) abolished slavery all over the French Empire. And then I told them that the English decided to invade the island and take it over for a colony of their own. I watched faces fall all around me. They knew what was coming. They knew the story of their people well. They knew that a small island, run by former slaves, could not defeat England. They knew that the Negroes always lost to the Europeans. And then I told them that the people of Haiti succeeded in keeping the English out. I watched a smile spread slowly over a girl's face. And I felt the girls sit up and look at me intently. Then I told them that Napoleon came to power, reinstated slavery, and sent an expedition to reconquer Haiti. They looked at me and their faces began to fall. But they waited this time. They waited for me to tell them that France defeated the former slaves, hoping against hope that I would say that they didn't. But when I told them that the French generals tricked the Haitian leader Toussaint to come aboard their ship, captured him and sent him back to France to die, they knew that there was no hope. They waited for me to spell out the defeat. Former slaves, Negroes, could not defeat France who had the aid of England, Holland, and Spain, especially without a leader. And when I told them that Haiti did succeed in keeping out the European powers and was recognized finally as an independent republic, they just looked at me and smiled. The room stirred with a gladness and a pride that this could have happened. And I felt so happy and so humble that I could have told them this little story and it could have meant so much. (SHSW: Allen)

Ruleville Freedom School

The schedule of classes of the Ruleville freedom school began similarly to those of the schools described above (SHSW: Tecklin). Early into the freedom school program, the teachers realized many of the students were not excited with many of the classes (SHSW: Lynd). Prior to the opening of the freedom school, the

teachers had come together and decided the overall curriculum would be planned co-operatively by the whole staff and each teacher had the right to develop his/her own curriculum. So after the beginning of the school, the staff realized that to motivate the students in attending the school, the teachers needed to revise the curriculum. The civic curriculum was to remain with two revisions (SHSW: Lynd).

The first revision was to add to the citizenship curriculum and the Guide to Negro History a class in world geography (SHSW: Demuth). Two countries and a continent were chosen for study because they emphasized various black cultures: Australia, Egypt, and Africa. The second revision to the civic curriculum was to add a general session prior to the scheduled classes. The general session would include motivational speakers from the freedom school staff, voter registration people, or SNCC visitors on topics such as the White southerner, the Negro in Mississippi, Gandhi and non-violence, and Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

The staff made an additional change involving the freedom school as a student forum in community change (SHSW: Lynd; SHSW: Tecklin; SNCC: Reel 40). A number of the freedom school students were concerned that their African-American teachers in their public school were afraid to register to vote and would not take the lead in demanding better integrated schools (SHSW: Davis). The students wanted to picket the public school to show their concern and hopefully cause the teachers to become active change agents. The freedom school teachers joined the students in a joint effort practicing picket strategies, role-playing student interviews with their public school teachers on registering to vote, producing leaflets to join the picket to be given to all students in the public school, and constructing a pre-picket letter to the public school's principal and faculty presenting student demands. These freedom school experiences lead the students to organize under the threat of school suspension a number of public school students in a successful picket of the local high school.

Milestone Freedom School

An active approach to integrating the citizenship curriculum in developing students' leadership abilities for community activism

characterized the Milestone freedom school (SNCC: Reel 65). The students became so involved in writing and practicing a play, creating and staffing a freedom school newspaper, and preparing and participating in a mock precinct meeting in preparation for the Meridian Freedom School Convention using their learning experiences from the lessons in the Guide for Negro history and the citizenship curriculum, the freedom school teachers canceled the academic classes in the afternoon due to lack of time. Because the students wanted to be involved in creative ways of expression to implement the ideas from the civic curriculum to local events, the teachers believed that the short time they had with the students would be put to better use for student involvement than students spending their time passively studying other subjects. This decision was made with the consent of the students.

INSTRUCTION

Cobb (SNCC: Reels 27; 68) and those preparing the freedom school experience (SNCC: Reels 67; 68; 69; Holt, 1966; Day: Interview; Lauter: Interview) wanted a curriculum that was to be derived "from the students' background" and teaching methods promoting classroom activities drawn from "an outgrowth of [the students'] experiences." This ideology of the founders and the background of the students dictated the classroom methodology. Avoiding traditional teaching methods, they wanted to rely on progressive methods that would promote "student participation in learning a sense of the worth and equality among students, and the need to connect lessons to life..." (Perlstein, 1990, p. 319). The purpose of freedom school teaching was to eschew the repressive mentality that dominated the black formal school system, not to mention the Mississippi society at large (Holt, 1966). Traditional instruction served as a form of oppression. This authoritarian instruction involved rote learning with lecture and testing by the teacher, and kept students in a passive, subservient role instead of functioning as active agents for social change.

This closed minded school system evidenced by traditional teaching, taught the African-American youth not to trust others (particularly whites), to be cynical, and to be ill-prepared to function in their society (SNCC: Reel 67). Therefore, the freedom

school teachers had to use teaching methods that demonstrated to their students that the freedom school teachers were trustworthy, were respectful of their students and their experiences, and could be honest in their relationships with their students. A handout entitled "Notes on Teaching in Mississippi" (SHSW: Allen; SNCC: Reel 39) given to the freedom school volunteers prior to the Mississippi experience, suggested how the teachers should respond to their students:

What will they demand of you? They will demand that you be honest. Honesty is an attitude toward life which is communicated by everything you do. Since you, too, will be in a learning situation - honesty means that you will ask questions as well as answer them. It means that if you don't know something you will say so. It means that you will not "act" a part in the attempt to compensate for all they've endured in Mississippi. You can't compensate for that, and they don't want you to try. It would not be real, and the greatest contribution that you can make to them is to be real.

The suggested basic method of instruction was discussion. The rough draft of the citizenship curriculum (SNCC: Reel 67) showed that of all the methods suggested to teach each particular set of content within each lesson, the discussion method overwhelmingly dominated. The discussion method was strongly suggested above other methods because the method provided for

1. Encouraging expression;
2. Exposing feelings (bringing them into the open where they may be dealt with productively);
3. Permitting the participation of students on various levels;
4. Developing group loyalties and responsibility; [and]
5. Permitting the sharing of strengths and weaknesses of individual group members. (SNCC: Reel 39)

Other progressive methods were suggested: drama, art, singing, resource people, films, role playing, creative writing (especially poetry and the creation of local freedom school newspapers), and social action projects (Sutherland, 1965; SNCC: Reel 67; Lauter: Interview; SHSW: Allen). Discussion, however, was to be used as a follow-up technique to these methods "to make certain that the material has been learned" (SNCC: 39).

The discussion method was intended to promote affective and cognitive results among students (Holt, 1966; Day: Interview). Students needed the opportunities to express feelings and beliefs about their lives without judgement. Many of these students had never had any such open experiences. On the other hand, it was expected discussions would revolve around learning of useful knowledge so that students would have an academic foundation. Unfortunately that was not always the case. Some discussions lacked educational standards, as described by Ronald de Sousa:

The class tends to degenerate into discussion of anything from standards of Negro beauty to the Marxist view of private property. . . . They are eager to argue, in some ways less eager to learn; some days ago I was attempting to give some minimal account of certain facts, when one of the more brilliant and remarkable pupils, but somewhat headstrong, declared that no offense, but, all this was rather boring, and it would be better if other people got a chance to speak, and if we could have discussions. I often think of the difficulties which we will (for these schools will be continued all year) have in making the transition from this school to one where solid academic discipline must be imposed. (Robert de Sousa Journal, July 23, 1964)

The role-play method proved to be very effective instructionally with all age groups bringing to the surface the hidden attitudes of the young people ("It was a form of catharsis for them" [SHSW: Adickes]), practicing critical consciousness ("And it puts them [students] in other people's shoes. We don't want to win easy arguments over straw foes. They have got to be tough thinkers, tough arguers" [Zinn, 1964, p. 373]), and measuring students' comprehension of the civic curriculum ("I think this technique should be used as frequently as possible where it proves successful" [SNCC: Reel 68]). The short, creative dramatizations were also among the most popular freedom school classes for the students ("This proved far and away the most popular and there were sometimes as many as 30 or 40 in a group" [SHSW: Lynd]). These experiences demonstrated the insightful advocacy by the freedom school curriculum designers wanting to implement the role-play method because they believed the method would "permit

the expression of a wide range of feelings by the students, involve their total selves, stimulate creativity, provide the teacher with insights about the students, and at the same time, get across the content material" (SHSW: Allen). A civics class in a Hattiesburg freedom school showed how the method was implemented:

We had a marvelous time at school today with a mock demonstration as a role-playing device designed to illustrate what Negroes have done to fight for their rights. A Volkswagen bus served as a "white only" restaurant complete with sign. The younger children, carrying and wearing signs, picketed in an orderly and very professional way, first in silence and then singing, according to the directions of their leader. They even held firm when at one point "a segregationist" poured water on them as they went by from a jug held over their heads. Along with some of the older girls, who played members of the Citizens Council, the white teachers played segregationists. This was a sort of test for both children and teachers: it took courage for us to assume this role and know the children might become frightened and more unsure than they are already of our real feelings, and it took courage for the children to accept our position as temporary. It appeared that we all passed. The police, played with vengeance by some of the older boys, came and hauled the pickets off to jail when they refused to disperse. The whole thing went off beautifully, with enthusiasm, and spontaneous creativity displayed on all sides. (Sutherland, 1965, p.106-107)

Lecturing had a limited role in the citizenship curriculum (SNCC: Reel 67). Occasionally its use was suggested; however, it was not intended to be used often nor to replace the other methods. Reports indicate that there were teachers who did use the lecture method for a variety of reasons: at New Bethel teachers used lectures because the method "gave out information at a much faster rate" (SNCC: Reel 67), and the teachers at Gluckstadt freedom school lectured primarily because of lack of student materials and resources, of information (If there were such materials and resources, there "would be more discussion and less lecturing" [SNCC: Reel 67]). Clarksdale (SNCC: Reel 67) reported one of their

freedom schools was conducted "on a somewhat formal level, as opposed to roundtable discussions . . . but this does not seem to be particularly detrimental to the school." A school in Madison County (SNCC: Reel 68) devoted the first hour and a half of each day's schedule "to Negro History with the entire student body attending a lecture given by one teacher and then individual groups of students discussing the lecture with their respective teacher," and another school in Pleasant Green (SHSW: Ooiman) "experimented with letting the students take over the lectures and discussion-leading and were excited by the good results."

Gulfport Freedom School

The Gulfport freedom schools incorporated many of the suggestions found in the "Notes for Teaching in Mississippi" (Gillard, 1965). Discussion and creative writing dominated. Students were actively discussing and debating and raising questions as to their way of life. Debating became so successful, contests were set up with neighboring freedom schools. A number of films were shown on the theme of nonviolence as a philosophical approach to freedom followed by many lively discussions. Creative writing was meant to give students their own voice to express deep feelings about their personal experiences. They wrote letters to federal officials about the deplorable conditions in which they lived, published a school newspaper, *The Press of Freedom* (SNCC: Reel 39), containing student work of creative stories, poetry, critical essays, editorials, personal experiences, and news reporting, and created a short play entitled "Memories of Freedom School," (SNCC: Reel 39). The plot of the short play emphasized one of the more memorable activities in the Gulfport freedom school - singing:

Narrator: The day begins with singing.
Beverly Washington will take the part of Florence, the teacher.

Florence: Would you all like to sing some songs?

All: Yes.

Florence: What would you like to sing?

All: Oh Freedom. Begin singing.)

Florence: Are you sure you do not want to be slaves?

All: Yes, of course!

Florence: Then why don't you sing this song like it has some meaning to you. Try it

again.
All: Sing.
Florence: How about "Which Side Are You On?"
All: Sing.
Florence: Which side are you on?
All: The freedom side!

Singing songs about freedom and lessons from the songs was very important in the Gulfport freedom schools. Teachers would ask the students what song they would like to sing (Jones, 1964), then all the students including the teacher would begin fervently singing:

"Which Side Are You On, Boy?" "Oh Freedom." "I Woke Up This Morning With My Mind Stayed on Freedom." "They Say That Freedom Is a Constant Struggle." "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Back." "Ain't Gonna Let No Segregation Turn Me Back." "No Sheriff ... No Governor ... No Uncle Tom ... No Jim Crow ..." The teacher in between verses stopped the singing and started asking questions.

"Now what is this freedom we want?" "Who are these people who turn us back?" "Who are they doing a job for?" "That's right the people who vote for him." "And who votes in this town?" "Well, it's mostly the whites." How do we get people to do the jobs for Negroes as well as whites?" "By getting all the people to register to vote."

At the end of every Freedom School session there was one special song, a very solemn song. It required everyone to gather in a circle and join hands for a time, each thinking in his own mind about the meaning of Freedom and about people like Medgar Evers, Herbert Lee, and the three Civil Rights workers in Neshoba County, and all the others who have died fighting for Freedom in Mississippi. Faces grow sad and earnest. Someone begins. "We Shall Overcome ... We are not afraid ... Truth shall set us free." Everyone knows that overcoming will be difficult because there are many white and Negro people who are afraid of Freedom. The song lets students and teachers know the pattern of their lives; that all the great number of years which comprise a life isn't so many after all when there is Freedom to be fought for.

(Jones, 1964, p.5)

Jackson Freedom School

Howe (1965) and Zinn (1964) offered

rich descriptions of the use of teaching methodology in the Jackson freedom schools. The chief tool of the Jackson freedom school was the discussion method. Howe claimed the biggest problem the teachers encountered was learning not to talk at the students, but to question creatively and then listen. Not only was the method of discussion important, but also how the discussion took place physically. Rows, with a teacher standing in front, would not do. Not only would this hamper free expression, but would also stress inequality between the teacher and students. To solve this authoritarian problem, students and the teacher sat in a circle facing each other. Discussions usually followed the outlined curriculum and as a follow up to showing films, readings like James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Richard Wright, role playing (one of the school's favorite procedures) and listening to resource people such as Pete Seger, a national known folksinger who sang, taught, and discussed songs of other countries. Discussions usually followed a pattern of three steps after the students and teachers became seated in their "discussion circle." The discussion started with the questions. "How do you feel about ...?" or "How would you feel if...?" Next, after responses, these questions were asked: "Why do you feel this way?" or "Why would anyone feel this way?" And finally, as the discussion progressed, the teacher would ask: "How do you feel about her/his idea?" or "What do you think about his/her experience?"

Writing played an important part in the political education of the Jackson students. The writing experience filled a need for self-worth, a feeling of being in control, and having some power to do something. Students wrote speeches as if they were senators urging the passage of the Civil Rights Bill. Zinn (1964) had his students react to various news articles and editorials in a local newspaper by responding with critical editorials of their own. Howe (1965) had her students read poems by Langston Hughes and e. e. cummings, led a class discussion on students reactions and feelings, instructed on poetry form, had students write group and individual poems on personal experiences and aspirations, and had them share their poems with each other, followed by intense discussions. The following poem, entitled "Mine" by Alice Jackson, came from Howe's (1965) project:

I want to walk the streets of a town,
Turn into any restaurant and sit down,
And be served the food of my choice,
And not be met by a hostile voice.
I want to live in the best hotel for a
week,
Or go for a swim at a public beach.
I want to go to the best university
And not be met with violence or
uncertainty.
I want the things my ancestors
Thought we'd never have.
They are mine as a Negro, an American;
I shall have them or be dead.

(p. 157)

Community involvement became an important concern for the Jackson school. "Students had direct evidence that their [freedom] school experience had led them to create something that was lasting and profound" (Howe, 1965, p. 156-157). In the third week of freedom school, it was announced on that Tuesday, African-American first graders would be able to register to attend an all-white elementary school. Apprehension ran high in the African-American community. To encourage the registration, 36 local African-American ministers called for a Tuesday prayer meeting. Monday morning, Howe began a discussion on the "myth" of Negro inferiority. Silence. She then asked if anyone in the class knew any first graders beginning public school. Everyone did. Did anyone know of a first grader going to attend the white elementary school? No one did. Why? Responses were varied: the white school was too far away, my mother wanted my brother to be with his friends. No one talked about the fear of trying to integrate a white school.

Howe, wanting her students to be honest with their feelings, asked "What am I going to say to my friends back north when they ask me why Negro mothers haven't registered their children in white schools? That they like things the way they are?" (Howe, 1965, p. 186). Students began to explore their feelings of fear, loss of jobs, personal safety, and possible failure in the white schools. Then a shift took place. The students were discussing positive reasons why the first graders ought to integrate the white elementary school.

One student suggested to the class they needed to go out into the neighborhood and talk to reluctant parents about sending their children to the white school. Howe suggested the class role play the possible experiences of freedom school students

encountering reluctant parents. Students immediately volunteered for the parts of mother, father, child and two freedom school students. During the role-play all of the previous arguments were rehearsed. Although the father wasn't convinced, the mother thought she would try to send her child to the white school when the students left. After the role play, plans were made to go out into the neighborhoods.

One of the freedom school teachers and a number of student volunteers spent the balance of Monday afternoon, Monday night, and most of Tuesday talking to over 70 families about attending the Tuesday night's prayer meeting. Transportation would be provided. One mother out of 27 assurances showed up. Undaunted, the next day, the freedom school students began the 70 visits again. On Thursday afternoon eleven out of a possible 43 African-American first grade children in Jackson registered to attend the previous all-white public elementary school.

Holly Springs Freedom School

As a freedom school teacher in Holly Springs, Pam Allen taught classes of 20-30 high school aged students in citizenship curriculum, religion, and non-violence and assisted in the drama class. Her experiences (Questionnaire: Allen) in using teaching techniques provide an example of how the freedom school teachers in Holly Springs presented their content. The teaching techniques Allen used included: lectures ("I shared what I was learning. I am an excellent speaker, a storyteller actually. Both I enjoyed the verbal sharing and the girls" enthusiastic responses kept me at it."), storytelling ("My lectures on Negro history were really telling students to share experiences but we didn't tell myths or legends."), discussion ("It was fun, very exciting and alive. We always had discussion after my presentation. I believe it was spontaneous and easy-- no pulling teeth or trying to pull ideas out of the students."), creative writing ("For self-expression and sharing"), resource people ("We utilized the voter registration men. Someone spoke every morning before classes began."), drama, ("The kids developed their own play. Kids chose the topic, Medgar Evers killing, divided up the parts and the characters role-played their parts."), school newspaper ("We mimeographed a newsletter made up of

student writings."), and community action ("It's what the school was about-- educating students for involvement in changing the social conditions. Main work was registering people into the MFDP [Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party].").

The Holly Springs freedom school newspaper, *The Freedom News*, played an important role in providing the African-American students opportunities to administer leadership, to express personal feelings and critical analysis about personal, community, and national experiences, and to involve themselves in the community (Questionnaire: Allen; SHSW: Hard; Futorian: Interview). The students did most of the work and made most of the decisions. *The Freedom News* was the first freedom school newspaper in Mississippi. Four editions were published with articles on national and community news, critical essays on why African-Americans should vote, why whites ought to accept African-Americans, and on the involvement of the Holly Springs mayor attempting to get rid of the freedom summer workers, a creative story on how a white businessman accepts African-American workers as equals, a poem on the J.F.K. assassination, and a tribute to the freedom schools.

Dramas, student-written and performed, played an important role in the freedom schools. Student involvement in the plays caused some of these students to become actively involved in the civil rights movement (Futorian: Interview; de Berry: Interview). After participating in a freedom school play, one student stated,

In fact, I'd say that was the first time I really became personally, deeply, emotionally involved in the movement. Up to then, it was sort of a job, something that had to be done and so we did it. But this was different.

(Lukas, 1968; p. 86)

Of the many student dramas performed throughout the freedom schools, the most memorable was the Holly Springs freedom school's drama, "The Seeds of Freedom," (SNCC: Reels 6; 37; 68; SHSW: Hunn; SHSW: Allen; Lukas, 1968). It played not only in a number of other freedom schools, but played at the Meridian freedom school convention, toured in the semi-professional Free Southern Theater, and was performed in New York City (SHSW: Futorian).

The play began as a suggested activity in the Holly Springs freedom school's creative writing workshop (SNCC: Reel 6). Students decided they wanted to do a play on the life and death of Medger Evers, a Mississippi civil rights leader. None of the students had the slightest experience in playwriting. Deborah Flynn, a New York public school teacher, suggested to the students that they improvise the story. "The dialogue, . . . except for the quotes," explained Flynn, "is indicated or simply outlined as a series of suggested ideas to carry forward the action of the play. Dialogue in this type of play should never be considered as words to be studied by heart and repeated by rote. This play form is particularly well-suited to present ideas of action" (SHSW: Allen).

With Flynn providing the historical content of Evers' life and death, the students for two weeks bit-by-bit acted out the story until the scenes were scripted. The title of the play came during a class discussion about Evers. A female student said, "I don't think of him as really dead. I feel that from his grave is growing a huge tree which is spreading seeds of freedom all over" (Lukas, 1968, p. 84). "Seeds of Freedom" became the title of the play.

The 50 minute play began with the actor-students sitting in the audience coming on stage at a designated time to tell in their own words their part of the story. The narrator begins:

And this is a play about Freedom. . . about us! Yes, us because every step we take along the Freedom Road, every time we act, every time we do something to move forward along the Freedom Road we plant a seed. And seeds are blowing in the wind today. . ." (SHSW: Allen).

The first scene then takes the audience to the home of the Evers family in Jackson, Mississippi. Mrs. Evers explains to her two children while they wait for Medger Evers to return home for dinner about the civil rights work with which he is involved. After a threatening phone call, Evers' car is heard pulling into the family driveway, then a shot rang out. Medger Evers is dead. The second scene finds the family returning home from Evers' funeral, his son very bitter. His mother takes the time to teach him an important principle (this play line was written by Ira Moore, the student who played Mrs. Evers):

Oh Darrell, don't talk this way. I too hated all whites the first day Daddy was murdered. But I don't hate anymore. We must not hate even our worst enemy. We may hate only what they do. It was Daddy himself who taught us this. He wouldn't want you to hate or kill. Daddy is not dead in the inside of us. But if you hate, you will kill him.

(SHSW: Allen)

The next two scenes portray the travesty of the white Mississippi court system allowing Ever's murderer to go free. The last scene, the narrator returns:

Here today we have talked of two men: one alive but forever dead. The other, Medgar Evers, dead. But having died for a cause, a noble cause, he will live forever. Don't you believe me? Then come see, come watch the hundreds, the thousands who are carrying on the work, who are joining the movement (Lukas, 1968, p. 85)

After that narration, each freedom school student, one by one, went to the stage and told the audience of adults why they, the students, joined the civil rights movement.

I believe it is time for the Negro to progress, to assume all the rights and the duties of free men.

Attending Freedom school gives us the chance to learn to make that progress.

As Freedom school students, we are helping in voter registration because we feel that the fight for freedom in Mississippi must be fought not only by the adults, but by the teenager.

We go to Freedom school because we feel this is the era of changing conditions, and we want to participate meaningfully in that change. (Lukas, 1968, p. 85-86)

At the end of these testimonies, the entire cast on the stage with the audience ended the play by singing:

We're voting now

We're voting now

We're voting now for liberty.

Our years of slavery now are ending.

We'll walk and talk till we are free. (Lukas, 1968, p.86)

Ruleville Freedom School

Many of the same teaching methods used in the above three Freedom schools were also used in Ruleville

(SHSW: Lynd). One interesting difference was that the methods were aimed at promoting a community activity helping the students to prepare and effect a protest picket against their high school. Art work was directed to picket sign making, creative writing to designing leaflets to convince other students to join the cause and letters to the school's principal and teachers presenting students' demands, newspapers for keeping the public informed about the students' protest of the high school, role-playing for practicing how to effect the picket, and drama for portraying with a 20-member cast the story of the picket of the school.

Ruleville did have a number of outside resource people bringing to the students a variety of events that appeared to capture their attention about the Civil Rights movement. A touring folk singer group, "Caravan of Music," visited six different times providing entertainment with social songs about the movement. Thirteen women from various national women's organizations gave a one day presentation about the movement in Ruleville followed by a discussion among the students. The third event was the presentation of the play "In White America" by the Mississippi touring company, the Free Southern Theater (SNCC: Reel 38; Hinman-Smith, in progress; O'Neal: Interview). The historical play of African-Americans experiences in the United States was acted out on the back porch of the freedom school building. Kristy Powell described the experience:

The audience almost became a part of the play. Small boys climbed on to the porch to go to the bathroom in the middle of a scene, dogs and hens paraded in front of the stage and there was an intimacy and informality about the performance that underlined for me the impression that the play was woven out of the very stuff of these people's lives. (SHSW: Lynd)

Powell (SHSW: Lynd) provided a description of her own teaching experience trying to integrate a progressive curriculum with traditional teaching methods. Powell taught two classes at Ruleville, African-American history to 13-14 year olds and reading to those students at or above a 5th grade reading level. Her method of teaching African-American history was to introduce a topic by telling a story, then talk about the topic in some detail, show pictures,

then have the students reading something on the topic. This generally took a day. She would find as many resources as she was able and for the next two or three days she would allow students to freely interact with the topic through the resources. Some students "did historical, some creative writing, some drew pictures, or copied poems, or copied historical documents. . ." At the end of each unit, she would display every student's work on the back porch of the school building.

Powell's reading class was an example of a remedial academic class aimed at incorporating aspects of the civic curriculum intended to help students not only to read but also read in order to critically examine Mississippi society. Powell's choice of content included readings on African-American history found in *Ebony Magazine*, (a African-American oriented popular magazine), Frederick Douglas' articles, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, poems such as Margaret Burrough's "What Shall I Tell my Children Who are Black?," and copies of the local freedom school newspaper, *Freedom Fighter*. She followed a standard procedure used at that time in many of the basal reading systems:

1. Introduce the piece to be read, arousing interest, supplying background, explaining new concepts. In the process of doing this introduce any words that you think are new or difficult, or perhaps merely basic to understanding the reading, and write them on the blackboard, as you use them.
2. Have the class read the passage silently section by section, posing a question to direct and motivate their reading before each section, and discussing the answers briefly at the end of each section read. How long each section to be read should be will depend on many things, notably the skill of the group. I found that a reading, 3/4 page of typed quarto long, consisting of 3 or 4 paragraphs, was enough to do in one hour-- long lesson, and we generally read it silently paragraph by paragraph.
3. Read the whole passage through orally--- usually around the class in turn.
4. Discuss meaning of passage as whole. (SHSW: Lynd)

Powell believed that both the reading content and her training procedures allowed students to participate in very pertinent and moving discussions comparing the reading content to the existing conditions in Mississippi.

Mileston Freedom School

The theme that highlighted Mileston freedom school's use of instructional methodology was student collective involvement in critically examining their existing community (SNCC: Reel 65). Students were actually involved in writing for and producing a school and community newspaper, creating and dramatizing a play for the community, canvassing and registering African-American adults to vote, and preparing for the Meridian Student Convention. The *Mileston Minute*, the freedom school newspaper, came out in at least three editions (SNCC: Reel 65). The four to six page paper contained student stories of local people involved in community work, critical essays about labor conditions for both African-Americans and poor whites, articles on African-American history, editorials on beliefs on the concept of freedom, and numerous poems ranging from thoughts on African-American history to African-American self-discovery. This was a designed activity to involve students in both interviewing others and writing about those and other experiences. Teachers hoped these experiences prepared the students for effective community service.

The Mileston play, "The American Negro," was very popular with the students who produced it and the community for whom it was performed (SNCC: Reel 65). The performance of "The American Negro" was the culminating activity in a community meeting advocating political involvement. The play depicted the experiences and conditions of African-Americans in a historical context. The first scene showed a variety of Native Africans blacks free, happy, and proud to be a "dark and beautiful race." Then the scenes changed to slavery, Nat Turner's revolt and a mother and child chopping cotton talking freedom and being whipped for such ideas. Scenes changed to the Civil War and to a segregated South. The scene then changed to a composite end of both world wars to make the world (but not the South) safe for democracy, and the next to the last scene, two African-American men talking of lost sons and lost freedoms

when the Ku Klux Klan rushed in to kill them both. In scene 7, the narrator stepped on the stage and talked directly to the audience:

I am the American Negro.
You have seen my past; you have known my past.
And you have seen the trouble I've seen.
Today we have seen many men die
Because they stood for their rights.
Today we have seen three men disappear
For joining in our fight.
Tomorrow many more will die.
And many more will suffer,
But we've begun and we are not turning back
And someday, somehow we shall overcome!

(SNCC: Reel 65)

Finishing his speech, he invited the community gathering to join in with the cast and sing "We Shall Overcome." Edith Black, a volunteer teacher who witnessed the performance, wrote that the audience was clearly moved (SNCC: Reel 65).

In many of the Mississippi communities involved in the freedom summer project, there were both freedom schools volunteers and voter registration volunteers. Unfortunately, the two groups at times were in conflict due to the value each group placed on their own program (McAdam, 1988). Those conflicts, however, did not exist at Mileston (SNCC: Reel 65). Both groups worked together to help the Mileston community overcome the prevailing repressive conditions. The freedom school students participated after classes in canvassing the African-American neighborhoods, showing adults how to fill out voter registration forms and obtaining commitments to go to the town courthouse and register to vote. Because of this experience, the students came to realize the importance of voter registration in Mileston. In the freedom school classes the students discussed the possibilities of contacting the many African-American laborers on the surrounding plantations around Mileston. To accomplish this objective, the high school students organized the Mileston Action Group (MAG) to carry out voter registration after the summer volunteers left.

Preparation for the Meridian Freedom School Convention provided a number of opportunities for students to learn leadership skills, how to propose and make changes, and how to articulate thoughts (SNCC: Reel 65).

The entire school wanted to draw up a political platform (reports do not describe the content of the platform) for the three chosen delegates to the convention. Mock precinct meetings were staged in the classes in which students and teachers discussed local and political issues. Those issues the student thought to be more important were then discussed in small groups. These small groups researched and prepared motions on their positions. Then the small groups came together and debated their positions until they were able to hammer out a representative platform. The platform was eventually presented and voted on at the Meridian Freedom School Convention.

EVALUATION

Little was said about the role of evaluation in freedom schools (Norma Becker: Questionnaire). Sandra Adickes (SHSW: Adickes), a Hattiesburg freedom school teacher, claimed a major reason why Freedom schools were such an exciting educational adventure was there were no report cards. It would appear the curriculum makers not only wanted to avoid traditional teaching methods but also traditional evaluation/testing techniques. Traditional testing was as oppressive as traditional methods as it forced students to be afraid and submissive and caused loss of self-worth (SHSW: Allen). It was suggested in one curriculum report that testing was an unfortunate fact of life and, therefore, needed to be taught to students within the context of domination and submission so students would be able to counteract test results (SNCC: Adickes Curriculum Report - Reel 67). Another curriculum report (SHSW: Allen) suggested not to formally test students because testing did not accomplish much as a teaching device, therefore, it was a waste of time at best. At worst it was detrimental to students because testing usually served to discourage students.

Reports indicate many teachers used little or no formal testing (SHSW: Ooiman; Futorian: Interview). However, they found it necessary to assess what students did and did not know in order to help students build a better life for themselves (Sutherland, 1965). In other words, evaluation had to build and promote. Deborah Flynn (SNCC: Reel 6) came to realize her responsibility in assessing writing assignments was to "upgrade" students in improving their

language and communication skills. She found students needed to be part of the evaluation process. It promoted self-growth as her students evaluated each other's writing assignment. She also found this collaborative effort built community relations.

Another reason for informal evaluation was to have students critically examine themselves and their ideas in light of new knowledge in order to promote self-growth. Jerry Tecklin (SHSW) provided such an example. One of his students, Deloris, writing on the topic "What are some problems Negroes will face in the future?", believed that for African-Americans to become equal and to gain their freedoms based on the principles that all men are created equal as written by Abraham Lincoln, a war was needed. She continued to discuss some problems African-Americans need to overcome in order to become free. She claimed it was beginning to happen and the whites were trying to stop African-Americans from being equal. "But when it does happen it is going to be a lot of trouble in the State of Mississippi."

Tecklin made the traditional grammar corrections and wrote on the paper next to "Lincoln" the correct information: "All men created equal written by Thomas Jefferson." However, these technical corrections were the least of Tecklin's concern. He wanted to deal with Deloris's hostility. Instead of lecturing her about her feelings, he provided her with a number of questions to critically examine those feelings.

Is war between whites and blacks the only way to get your freedom? Do you know of another way? You have a good idea of what is wrong in Mississippi but might there be better ways of improving conditions. Why don't whites want Negroes to learn? Keep trying to ask yourself these questions.

(SHSW: Tecklin)

This type of evaluation promoted growth and harmony, demonstrating teacher love and concern for the student. Deloris needed to know some of her information was incorrect. She also needed to know her feelings and opinions were of worth. Tecklin provided that knowledge in his questions not in his judgements.

It could be argued the Meridian Freedom School Convention was a type

of final exam (Gillard, 1965; Lynd, 1965; SHSW: Zinn). Seventy-five delegates representing all of the freedom schools came together for three days in August to hammer out a youth political platform to be used in conjunction with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Cornelia Mack (SHSW: Parks) in a letter to family and friends wrote how the student convention was a culminating activity of the freedom schools:

I wish I could convey to you the excitement of the convention. Imagine a thousand or so high-school students, most of whom have been raised in poverty and have gone to poor schools, few of whose relatives have ever voted, who know policeman in general as people to avoid in time of trouble and white men as people who may have fathered their great grandparents and cheated their grandparent and parents. Next, give these young people a month in a freedom school, discussing, arguing, debating, learning about the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and about Negroes who have struggled for better conditions for their people, and discussing, arguing, and debating. Finally, transport seventy-five of the brightest of them from many parts of the state to one room in Meridian and step aside. You, as one of some hundreds of freedom school teachers, gave them an initial nudge and they have taken off.

The student delegates brought with them political resolutions drawn up by students in each freedom school (See the process of the Mileston Freedom School; SHSW: Zinn). In a number of workshops and general assemblies they vigorously discussed and sorted out the various freedom school resolutions until a cohesive platform was developed and accepted by all delegates (Lynd, 1965; SNCC: Reels 39; 67; 68; SHSW: Friesen). One resolution provides an example of what the students did. The resolution calling for academic freedom for teachers developed into a lively debate as reported by JoAnne Grant (1964):

When some students proposed a resolution on academic freedom, for teachers, lively debate developed over whether this meant a teacher might be free to force his ideas on the students. Others argued freedom for teachers to teach Negro history and voter registration. Still others argued for unqualified

academic freedom so teachers could teach "different forms of government." One said: "I hear all this about communism. I want to learn it in school." Focus of the discussion on education was the age and timidity of teachers: "How can we listen to a teacher talk about citizenship and democracy and voter registration when he is afraid to go down and register?" (p. 5)

Gulfport Freedom School

The only report of a freedom school to discuss the role of evaluation was Gulfport (Gillard, 1965). There was no formal evaluation of student work. There were a number of ways to assess student development: (1) teacher observations of changes in student behavior; (2) students' public presentations of their work; (3) student writing skills evident in the freedom school newspaper; (4) student speaking skills shown in the debates and discussions; and (5) student reading skills observed in the books read and discussed. If there was a final exam it was the political platform written by the student delegates for the Meridian Freedom School Convention.

Ruleville Freedom School

Although not described as an evaluation activity, the Ruleville Freedom Festival, on the last day of school, showed characteristics of public presentations as a form of possible assessment (See SHSW: Lynd; SHSW: Tecklin). The program of the Festival included a student puppet play on the valiant knight, Bob Moses (SNCC Field Secretary) vs. the wicked witch, Segregation; student play, "Uncle Tom's High School," telling the story of the Ruleville student protest and picket; choral readings of Eve Merriam's poems; three freedom songs written by students, two readings of students' poems on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, ending with everyone singing "We Shall Overcome."

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

While little was said about evaluation in the Freedom schools, there appears to be even less reported about classroom management. A number of teachers claimed there was little need for classroom management in the form of discipline because the students were very motivated (Questionnaire: Becker; Questionnaire: Howard; Questionnaire: Zinn; Questionnaire: Allen; Futorian:

Interview). That may be true because attendance to the freedom schools was totally voluntary. In some incidents, freedom schools were simultaneously going on with the public schools. The students who attended appeared to want to be there. Classroom problems also appeared to be minimal. At first many students, not knowing what to expect, sat passively as the teachers taught (Sugarman, 1966). As the students began to be drawn out, the curriculum and teaching methodology appeared to keep them both busy and motivated as opposed to becoming bored and mischievous. "Our school," noted Sandra Adickes (SHSW), "was by any definition a fine school - no attendance sheets - absentee post cards - truant officers or report cards - just perfect attendance."

There were reports that indicate there were motivational problems and discipline problems which led to some difficulty in operating the schools (SNCC: Reels 64; 68). Ooiman (SHSW) described such a situation:

Only one daytime encounter worth recording—that with two professional women teachers (late 20"s) who have driven away two fellow teachers and are in deep conflict with a third. They are disciplinarians, very structure-conscious and appallingly unsuited for a Freedom School situation. They've "suspended" three students. Incredible. They insist on a this-hour-we-do-this-and-as-the-next-hour-strike-we-change-to-this-setup: The long suffering fellow working with them now (only a college sophomore) promises not to quit, but neither will he remain silent in his protests, sticking up for the suspended students, arguing for a more flexible, relaxed program that won't smack so much of "school" in its formidable sense—very mixed feelings about those women.

No classroom management problems were reported in the five freedom schools under discussion except for a minor problem in the Jackson freedom school. It appeared in these schools the curriculum and the teaching techniques coupled with positive teacher involvement and positive student attitudes toward learning created a motivated, discipline-free, teaching-learning environment.

Jackson Freedom Schools

The only discipline incident

reported in these five schools occurred in the Jackson freedom school (Howe, 1965). Two boys got into a fist fight. After they were separated, Howe gave counsel on how to resolve problems to both the boys and provided a possible role classroom management might have played in the concept of freedom schools: "Now, look here, we have few rules in this school, but we do have one important one and that is we do not hit each other -- we talk. Understand? We talk here. This is a school for talking. Whenever you feel like hitting someone, remember to talk instead" (p. 147).

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES FOR A SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION MODEL

Freedom schools were organized to provide curriculum and instructional opportunities for African-American students in order for them to promote social change in their respective communities. The pedagogical approaches of the freedom schools were to be the antithesis to prevailing traditional authoritarian content and

methods. Instead of repressive teaching causing submissive, dominated students, the progressive teaching advocated by and, in many instances, implemented in the freedom schools, sought to empower students to critically examine existing conditions, develop an unquestionable belief in themselves as capable persons and improve in academic confidence in learning and using useful information, contribute positively to their community, evoke creative, active participation in building community and espouse an appreciation of diversity and human dignity. These positive student experiences from the freedom schools seem to be pedagogical experiences that ought to be promoted by current social studies instruction.

Below are a set of principles extracted from the freedom school experiences evidenced in the described freedom schools in this paper. These principles involve the pedagogical ideas of aims, curriculum instruction, evaluation, and classroom management. For each of these ideas, a set of

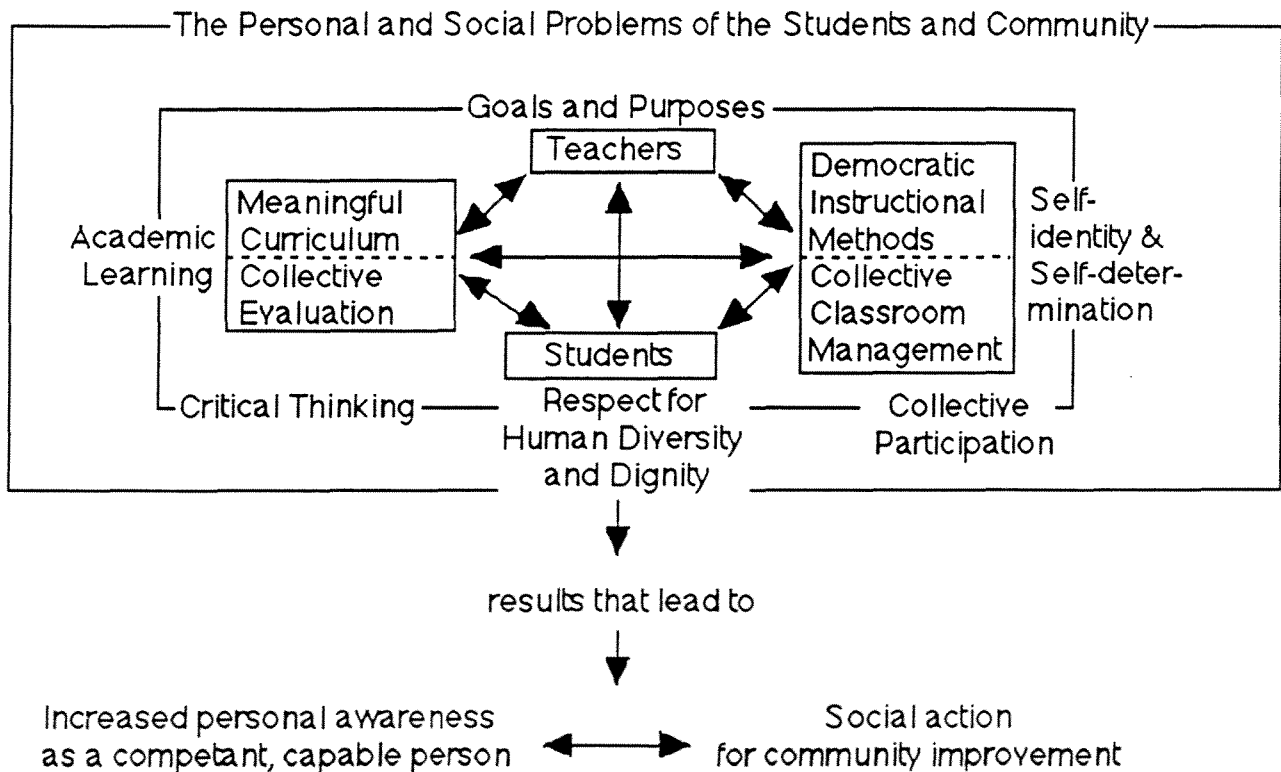


Figure 1: Social Studies Instructional Model

principles derived from the freedom school experience is used to construct a possible model of social studies instruction. The model is depicted graphically in Figure 1 on the previous page.

Aims

At least five general principles would seem to be consistent with the freedom school's conception of social studies aims. These aims are:

1. The need to promote critical thinking skills by examining existing conditions and experiences of individual communities in order to produce positive change.
2. The need to promote academic learning in establishing a sound foundation of useful knowledge in social, economic, and political thought, systems, and skills to effect change.
3. The need to promote appreciation of human diversity and dignity in establishing equality and justice for all humankind.
4. The need to promote awareness of self identity, with determination and expression as a capable human being able to control one's own life.
5. The need to promote active, collective, participation in meaningful tasks to improve the quality of life for humankind.

Curriculum

At least six general principles would seem to be consistent with the freedom school's conception of a progressive social studies curriculum. These curriculum principles are:

1. Directly relate the content to the experiences and situations of the students.
2. The content should be found in a variety of sources outside of standard text books.
3. The quality of content should be the same for all students even though less able students may need the academic levels of the content modified.
4. The development of the curriculum should be done by those teachers teaching in a given community in order to meet the existing needs of the students and the community.
5. The content should provide topics for in-depth study to help students

develop new insights as they (1) master relevant information, (2) relate this new knowledge to the information they already have, and (3) attempt to apply these insights to current problems.

6. The curriculum should promote equality and social justice for all humankind.

Instruction

At least six general principles would seem to be consistent with the freedom school's conception of progressive social studies instruction. These instructional principles are:

1. Instruction should encourage expression, expose feelings, permit student participation, and develop group responsibilities.
2. Instructional techniques should promote skills students can use to improve their existing conditions.
3. Instruction should promote democratic principles of equality, choice, and justice.
4. Instruction should promote community involvement.
5. Instruction should include democratic methods such as discussion, creative writing, art, drama, group projects, role play, music, and social/community action projects.
6. Teachers and students should become collectively involved in all aspects of instructional and curriculum as active agents for social change.

Evaluation

At least six general principles would seem to be consistent with the freedom school's conception of social studies evaluation. These principles are:

1. Evaluation should build up and promote students' self-worth and academic and community learning.
2. Students should be actively engaged in the evaluation of theirs and fellow students' work to promote critical examination and self-growth.
3. If formal evaluations are to be given, students should be involved in the development of those evaluations.
4. Evaluation techniques should include teacher observations of students' behaviors and presentations of students' works in a variety of ways including in the community.

5. Final exams might be suggested in the format of student presentations of their work (See Freedom Festival in the Ruleville Freedom School).
6. Evaluation should include assessment of community involvement.

Classroom Management

At least three general principles would seem to be consistent with the freedom school's conception of classroom management in social studies. These principles are:

1. Classroom problems would be minimized through meaningful curriculum and progressive democratic instructional methods.
2. Classroom problems would be minimized if teachers showed genuine respect for and trust in students and collectively, teacher and students would learn, examine, and solve problems.
3. If a discipline problem occurs, classroom talk and dialogue should be the first approach to solve the problem.

COMMENTARY

For six to eight weeks in the summer of 1964, freedom schools, a vast educational experiment attacked the "intellectual waste lands" of Mississippi with a "pedagogical project" promoting student self-discovery and articulating a vision of social justice. As an alternative to the traditional educational system, these schools trusted the minds and abilities of students, encouraged students to express, to do and to think, and engaged students in opportunities to make a difference in society.

The students were taken seriously in the freedom schools. They were encouraged to talk, and their talking was listened to. They were assigned to write, and their writing was read with attention to idea and style as well as to grammar. They were encouraged to sing, to dance, to draw, to play, to laugh. They were encouraged to think. (Fusco, 1964)

This is not to say in every freedom school the ideal vision of Charles Cobb and others was always implemented. Evidence indicates otherwise. But the idea of the pedagogical experiences in the Mississippi Freedom Schools do pose a possible approach to social studies

education and suggest student experiences that ought to be promoted by social studies instruction.

In fact, the freedom school experience did bring new meaning to social studies instruction for one of the freedom school volunteers. Dan Hudson (SHSW: Demuth), a high school history teacher from Hartford, Connecticut and a freedom school teacher in Belzoni, Mississippi, was impressed with the content, use, student results of, and his personal instructional experiences with the civic curriculum and its suggested instruction strategies that he decided to change his own public school pedagogy approach in order to engage his history students with the similar aims promoted by the freedom schools. Hudson explained:

The SNCC or FDP approach will have some influence on my teaching. I'll be getting away from an authoritarian lecture posture to some kind of attempt to create an atmosphere conducive to freer discussion. It would be sort of the group working out problems and having discussions instead of my spoon-feeding them.

I'll certainly make a much greater attempt to incorporate Negro history into American history. But I don't want to spend a week on it. Instead I want to work it in so it becomes clear and natural that Negroes played a part in building this country.

Social studies education appears to be in a malaise. It has become listless. There seems to be no or little direction. A conservative historical movement is beginning to dominate many social studies classrooms promoting academic knowledge with limited critical examination. Dialogue appears to be limited between this group and many social studies educators. In fact, social studies educators may have little or no impact on what is happening in social studies education. To counteract this movement, real discussion needs to take place on the direction social studies education is heading. This is an attempt to add to that discussion.

NOTES

¹ Statistical information comes from Hinman-Smith, in progress.

² For more detail on the Oxford orientation see Rothschild, 1982.

³ See SNCC: Reel 38, *Freedom's Journal* (McComb, Mississippi), August 24, 1964: "Some Thoughts About Freedom School - I want Freedom School to keep on. I like everything about Freedom School. I like art. I like Freedom School. I don't like to get up in the morning to come to Freedom School. I like for Helen to read stories in Freedom School. I like my teacher in Freedom School. I like to sing the Freedom Songs." - Denise Ledbetter, 10 years old).

⁴ There is information on many of the other schools. However, much of the information is about isolated events, yet, when pieced together provide a rich description of the overall freedom school effect. For such detail and a look at other freedom schools, see Perlstein, 1991; Himan-Smith, in progress.

⁵ Fannie Lou Hamer was a resident of Ruleville, Mississippi and an active member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party (Sugarman, 1966).

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Sandra Adickes, Pam Allen, Jacqueline Bernard, Henry (Harry) Bowie, COFO, Ruby Davis, Jerry DeMuth, Jake Friesan, Aviva Futorian, Rev. Richard Gould, Dale Gronemeir, Sandra Hard, Fred Heinze, Christopher Hextor, Eugene Hunn, Staughton Lynd, R. Hunter Morrey, JoAnn Ooiman, Robert Parks, Robert Starobin, Elizabeth Sutherland, Jerry Tecklin, Lise Vogel, Howard Zinn.

Private Collections

Ronald De Sousa Journal
Otis Pease Papers

Interviews with Noel Day, Roy de Berry, Aviva Futorian, Paul Lauter, John O'Neal,

Questionnaires from the following:

Pam Allen, Norma Becker, Francis Harris, Howard Zinn

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