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O-WAI-YA-WA

Professor Watts, who is at present in the United States, visited this Indian school in Chicago and found the atmosphere very exciting. She feels sure that teachers in schools with a minority enrolment of Aboriginal students will also find it of high interest.

The first educational program in Chicago (the only one) designed specifically for American Indian youth at the elementary level, opened in September 1973 at Winthrop, Uptown Chicago. *O-wai-ya-wa* or "Place of Learning", is a branch of the Goudy School, Winthrop, which has an enrolment of 900 pupils. Of these, about one-fifth are black, one-third Spanish speaking, one-eighth American Indian, one-third white (mainly Appalachian), plus Chinese and other Asians.

O-wai-ya-wa caters for 45 kindergarten and primary school children in the morning and another 45 intermediate and junior high students in the afternoon. The curriculum includes an intensive reading program, earth sciences, social sciences, art and cultural studies, all taught with a strong emphasis on Native American heritage. The program is designed to develop each student's self-confidence, as well as provide the knowledge necessary for transcultural competence.

The rationale for the school rests firmly on several basic principles to which the American Indian community subscribes. These are :

1. Indian people must have increasing influence and responsibility for the education of their children, with greater power to make the decisions that shape their destiny.

2. Indian people must assume control of their lives without being involuntarily separated from their tribal groups.

3. Indian students must be encouraged and supported in maintaining their dignity and cultural identity while they are being offered an enlarged area of choice.

4. Indian youth must be taught to live in two cultures in order to function effectively and efficiently.

5. Schools must fully develop the capabilities of students to move comfortably between these two cultures - the larger community and the Indian.

6. Schools must develop styles of curriculum and instructional techniques that are appropriate to the special requirements, needs and learning styles of the Indian students.

7. School curricula must provide opportunities for the students to discuss and express the full extent of their creativity.

8. Schools must provide every student with the opportunities to develop the skills and competence necessary for the world of work, as well as fulfilling the responsibilities and understanding the rights of citizenship.

9. Schools with Indian student populations must have Indian professionals and para-professionals on their staffs.

10. School systems must provide means by which Indian parents can become well informed about the contemporary educational milieu, and must encourage, support and teach these parents to become more concerned and involved with their schools.

11. The school achievement of every child depends upon a mixture of influences in the family, the school and the local community. When one of these fails, the other two are seldom able to make up for it. School people must bear this in mind when planning educational improvements.

The overall goal of the school is to fully develop the capabilities of Indian students to move comfortably, efficiently and effectively between two cultures: that of the Indian world and that of the larger community. Through a program carefully designed with attention to each person's specific needs and lifestyle, Indian students will be encouraged and supported in maintaining their cultural identity and dignity, while they are being offered an enlarged area of choice through the learning of skills and attainment of competence in the non-Indian culture and economy.

Several groups co-operate to ensure the successful functioning of the school. The Board of Education, the community board, staff, Indian educators (who act as resource persons for the school) and parents. In fact, the close and vital involvement of parents at the school is one of its most distinctive features, especially when one considers that traditionally, Indians have had little or no say in the government schools. Parents, understandably, were initially sceptical about a program which requested their participation, but now respond enthusiastically.

One problem encountered by the school was to provide a curriculum for children whose backgrounds differed widely. For, although many of the children come from Uptown Chicago, they are able to trace their family heritages to any one of more than twenty different tribes. Some of the children come from tribes with reservations in Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota. Others come from tribes in Florida and the South-West, and there are even a few Eskimo students at the school.

Louis Delgado, the school's co-ordinator, indicated that to cater for the heterogeneity of the students, the school adopted a multi-tribal approach. As Delgado noted - "We offer several Native American languages, teach different tribal dances, consider current issues for different tribes, and study several forms of tribal government."

This multi-tribal approach is manifested in the art and craft displays which adorn the walls of the school. Each piece of pottery, Indian symbol or painting is labelled with the name of the tribe from which the child, who executed the work, comes.

Another problem confronted by the school was to reverse the effects of 100 years of inadequate and negative education in reservations and government schools.

Despite these problems, the school is proving to be very successful. In the words of Delgado -

> We've had great success. We have good parent input and good turnout for P.T.A. and community board functions. The kids like it here. Attendance is good. Test scores are up. Parents and children participate in the program and in the programs of the Indian community.

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