

Dr. Frank Weaver Sees Bright Future For Schools

By Pam Banks

Dr. Weaver believes the wrong unwavering support of parents for the school system is not as dynamic today and that the changes in parental and student attitudes represent one of the major developments he has observed the last decade and a half.

He believes many of these changes came about as results of the socio-economic effects of the Korean and Vietnam Wars on the society as well as the introduction of television.

"With the coming of television, children's interest in reading and listening changed," said Weaver. "It began to get harder to excite minds of kids for learning in school."

Weaver said court cases concerning school discipline have taken the control over student behavior in the schools from teachers, especially for corporal punishment which can lead to teacher dismissals.

"Teachers have changed their techniques and methodologies in the classroom in order to deal with student behavior problems.

"I think this has been unfortunate and in fact has driven some teachers out of the classroom into other fields," Weaver said. "Even rural children are harder to discipline than they used to be."

However, Weaver cautioned he is not a believer in corporal punishment or a return to the "good ole days" when it was the undisputed remedy for wayward students.

He said the ambivalence among teachers and administrators over discipline generated by court cases, leads to disrespectful behavior in some students.

"Although most parents still want their children to behave in school, the small minority of parents who fail to discipline their children at home seem to cause the problems in school."

Weaver said he would like to see methods developed to bring educators and parents of problem students together to address the problem in the home as well as in the school.

Other distinct changes in education Weaver has seen in his career fall in the category he calls innovations, or new programs, designed to enhance in-

struction programs.

He said federal funding under the National Defense Education Act brought an intense emphasis in science and mathematics in the schools following the beginning of space exploration. Also, federal funding brought about foreign language studies.

But some innovations, such as modern math, team teaching, open classrooms, and quick achievement success programs introduced into some school systems by expensive consultants, have proved to be ineffective and thus have been abandoned.

"I have never believed in going for the frills and thrills in education at the expense of the basics," said Weaver. "I believe that it is incumbent upon educators to insure that every child will be able to read, write, spell and figure to the extent of his capabilities."

He said in all school systems where he has worked, the basics have always been emphasized, consequently there has never been a need to "return to the basics" as the popular movement across the nation advocates.

"I think that all of this has proved that in and of itself no scheme of organization, no methodology, or no technique of teaching really makes a difference in children's learning.

"What really matters is the teacher. A well-trained, dedicated teacher will find what it takes to help boys and girls to learn to their maximum abilities."

Weaver believes teacher education institutions are progressively turning out better professionals each year.

The problem is in the expectation of the public for teachers to do the impossible, Weaver said. "They are expected to solve the problems of the emotionally disturbed," he said, "the physically handicapped students, as well as students from broken homes.

"My hope is that teachers will not be expected to do more than they can," said Weaver, "and then be considered failures if they fail."

Weaver received his master's degree in education from Columbia University in 1952 and his doctoral degree in elementary education and administration from Pennsylvania State University in 1962.



Dr. Frank Weaver, retiring associate superintendent, Durham City Schools.

Photo By Silas Mayfield

He also holds a master of divinity degree from Shaw University which he earned in 1978. Since becoming a minister in 1951, he has found the profession compatible with his educational one.

The only conflict has been a lack a time to accomplish "all the good you desire to do," he said. Weaver hopes retirement will bring more time for his religious profession.

Weaver, who grew up as the sixth child in a family of seven children, followed his father's example when he entered the ministry. His father organized

Weaver's Chapel in Conetoc which is still in existence.

He considers his wife, Mrs. Queen Weaver, a model teacher who spent most of her 32 years in education teaching the third grade. In June, she preceded him in retirement from her position at Y.A. Smith Elementary School.

He has one son, Frank Cornell, an electrical engineer who serves as manager of communications satellites in the Astro-Electronics Division of RCA in Princeton, New Jersey.



LEXINGTON MISS.—Robert Clark, grandson of a former slave, talks to reporters after he became the first black in Mississippi history to win the democratic nomination for a congressional seat. Clark defeated three white opponents in primary voting. (UPI Photo)

Caucus

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