

Second workshop series in project areas slated for Nov. 30-Dec. 6

From Chronicle staff reports

Parents will have another opportunity to question education experts in the city-county system during the second series of seminars sponsored by the superintendent-appointed Community Human

Relations/Cultural Diversity Committee (CHR/CDC).

Beginning Nov. 30, the committee will sponsor workshops in the city's four housing project communities to allow parents to speak to concerns they identified in the first series of meetings in September.

Tracking students in non-college preparatory classes, drop-out prevention, communication and cooperation between teachers, parents and administrators, and substance abuse were some major areas of concern in the first workshop series.

The second series is scheduled as follows: Nov. 30, Kimberley Park Community Center, 6-8 p.m.; Dec. 1, Happy Hill Gardens Community Center, 9-11 a.m.; Dec. 4, Piedmont Park Community Center, 9-11 a.m.; and Dec. 6, Cleveland Avenue Homes Community Center,

9-11 a.m.

Central office personnel, Superintendent Larry D. Coble, school board member Beaufort Bailey and others will be available for questions and comments on academic concerns, student services, communication/cooperation and to

give a progress report on the system's accomplishments since the first workshop series.

Palmer Friende, the executive assistant to the superintendent, is coordinating the workshops. Lee Faye Mack and Delores Smith are co-chairs of the CHR/CDC.

Biased, prejudiced materials still exist in nation's classrooms

By TONYA V. SMITH
Chronicle Staff Writer

Remember the "Dick and Jane" readers where the two were portrayed as blond, blue-eyed Caucasians? While many of today's students learn about people who are more representative of America's multicultural society in their school books, prejudiced and biased views are still prevalent in teaching materials.

In 1965, the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) was organized out of a belief that children should be nurtured in a bias-free environment in order for them to foster positive self-images and be open to people of other races and cultures.

Characters in the majority of children's books were white, as were the writers and publishers of the literature. CIBC launched an anti-racism battle, linking racism with other forms of bias, such as, sexism, ageism and handicapism. The council established in 1975 the Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, which develops and circulates teaching and training materials designed to reduce bias in school and society. The CIBC also publishes a catalog of sexually and racially integrated filmstrips, tapes, video cassettes, textbooks and workbooks.

Because of the CIBC and other groups and individuals putting pressure on publishing companies and school systems, the complexion of children's books have changed, said Patricia Russian, field worker and staff associate with the Miami Desegregation Assistance Center at the University of Miami School of Education. Ms. Russian's specialty is educating parents and teachers on what she calls a "sex-fair, multicultural"

Americans," Ms. Russian said. "We're not asking that history be rewritten, but that the interpretation on American history include the perspectives of all involved in that event."

The first books published in response to the problem of textbook biases against minorities came in the 1970s. It was called the "color me brown" concept, and the books looked as if an illustrator went through the pages coloring an occasional child or family brown in an

attempt to integrate the publication. Seventy-five percent of children's class work and 90 percent of their homework focuses on textbooks, according to "Fair Textbooks: A Resource Guide," published in 1979 by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. The report is an important one, said Ms. Russian, because it represents the thought and action-provoking studies the commission did prior to the Reagan Administration.

Teachers, local systems and state entities must be responsible for providing supplementary information that will give a complete and accurate picture of America's past, present and future society, Ms. Russian said.

How do you determine if, for example, a history book contains biased information that must be supplemented? If women are only described as barefoot and pregnant, and Native Americans are portrayed as warriors, Afro-Americans as slaves and ghetto dwellers, Asian Americans as railroad workers and inhabitants of "Chinatowns," Latino Americans as migrants and union

Organizations which advocate eliminating biased and prejudiced materials from the classroom say teachers must supplement their lesson plans with information about persons from all races and cultures.



activists. If the elderly image is one of dependence and incompetence, and if the contributions of America's working class are ignored, the textbook needs help, Ms. Russian said, in representing a sex-fair, multicultural society.

"Textbooks are intended not only to teach facts, but also to influence values and behavior," according to the study. "... Values and attitudes concerning the race, ethnicity, gender, social class, age or physical appearance of people may be altered by the presence of subtle distortions as well as gross stereotypes in children's textbooks."

Today's inclusion of minorities,

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-- Patricia Russian

the handicapped, elderly and women in children's books is merely tokenism, and it does not indicate an awareness of the important contributions these people have made to American culture, Ms. Russian said.

"Every school child today has to learn the dates on which Columbus discovered America and the Constitution was signed, but they are not given details on the rise of the renaissance in black literature in the 1920s in Harlem, New York," she explained. "This exclusion indicates a certain willingness to list the importance of some things, and with others they're saying we'll get to if we have time for it."

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State education officials must recognize that textbook publishers are and will continue to be more concerned about the almighty dollar than how well their products represent the population, Ms. Russian

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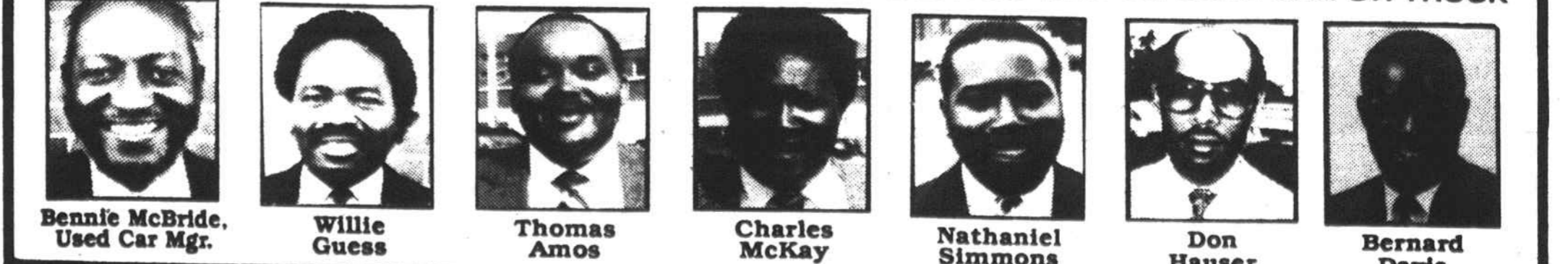
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