

*Herbert W. Cockrel*

INTERIM REPORT  
of  
NORTHERN HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDY COMMITTEE

Detroit Public Schools  
June, 1966

NORTHERN HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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## PREFACE

From April 7th until April 26th the students of Northern High School engaged in a demonstration, the purpose of which was to protest inferior educational opportunities for themselves and for other inner-city youth, and to ask for specific changes in the administration and program at Northern High School. So that the responsible initiative of the students would not be lost and the cause of quality education for all could be further advanced, the Board of Education created this investigating committee to examine conditions at Northern High School and to make recommendations for any needed changes. Leaders of the student body, parents of students, and other concerned citizens agreed to serve on this committee, with the hope that their study of Northern High School would help bring about meaningful and constructive change.

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## PROCEDURES

In an effort to gather facts related to the quality of education in Northern High School, the Committee was divided into the following sub-committee study areas: administrators, teachers, pupils, other community residents, world of work entrance requirements, and college admissions. As a committee of the whole, we also sought to study curriculum offerings, school plant, pupil aptitude and achievement data.

The excellent cooperation that we received during our community hearings and staff interviews was offset by the failure of various central office departments to provide the "basic information" outlined by the High School Study Commission. A lack of substantial comparative data greatly limits our interim analysis of curriculum. Because of non-standardized city-wide high school course listings, for example, we are unable to compare either the quantity or the quality of courses offered at Northern High School with other Detroit high schools. While we understand that the data will be forthcoming within a few days, the nearness of the completion of the school semester rules out the possibility of our meaningfully evaluating curriculum before next fall.

Because of limited curriculum information and the nature of the forces causing the formation of this Committee, our interim report centers primarily on the attitudes of people related to Northern High School. We believe that quality education requires a concern for positive attitudes, democratic school government, as well as curriculum. Therefore, we believe that all three of these phases of quality education must be studied in depth.

FINDINGS



## ADMINISTRATORS

The Committee's information and conclusions with reference to the functioning and attitudes of administrators--and others--at Northern High School were obtained from a variety of sources. These sources included individual interviews with the field executive, the principal, the assistant principal, department heads, counselors, teachers, and through tours of the school. Opinions were also elicited from community residents and students, but these will be discussed under their separate sections in this report.

We must say at the outset that the Northern High School administrators are very much aware of the gaps in educational programming, inadequacies of the physical plant and equipment, as well as the need in a number of instances to reduce class size. The principal provided the Committee with evidence of requests for improvements in these areas which could have had, if implemented, some positive impact on the quality of education at Northern High School.

In reference to the current unrest at Northern High School, the administrators, with one exception, felt that if disgruntled "troublemakers" are allowed to transfer, then the quality of education will improve. Significant to their evaluations are their conclusions that: (1) such "troublemakers" are those teachers who are in disagreement with the administration's educational philosophy and (2) that immediately prior to the student eruption there were no major problems except those mentioned above.



Most department heads strongly feel that the geographical location of the school causes it to be a "blackboard jungle", controlled only by an overbearing police officer. The school's position between two main thoroughfares, they reason, makes it vulnerable to excessive automobile and pedestrian traffic, which increases the opportunity for outside influences on the students. A minority of department heads strongly disagree in reference to both the definitions of the situation and the methods needed to maintain order.

Many department heads (and other faculty members) view the students as being "culturally deprived" and, consequently, not able to achieve at a level comparable to non-inner city students. To substantiate their views, they referred the Committee members to standardized test results. Indeed, the test data showed that Northern High School students do not achieve at a rate comparable to non-inner city students. }\*

The following conditions were cited by several counselors and teachers as existing immediately prior to this investigation:

- Infrequent and ineffectual staff and department meetings to review progress and plan future programs.
- Inadequate programs to acquaint teachers new to the building with school and community conditions.
- Capricious enforcement of school regulations, with "favorites" being exempted from some duties.
- Counselors assumed an inordinate amount of student discipline and clerical functions which prevented them from "counseling".
- Decreasing parent and student involvement in school activities.
- A gradual lowering of school morale.



Most staff members complained that because of infrequent department meetings, they receive little guidance from their department heads. The department heads, on the other hand, stated that the frequency of department meetings do not accurately reflect the individual guidance teachers received. Many teachers complained that staff and department meetings were conducted under "dictatorial", "closed", authoritarian" conditions, thereby precluding a constructive but critical analysis of school conditions. These teachers, the principal explained, are "troublemakers".

Within the past few years there has been a growing emphasis upon in-service training of school personnel. A large number of teachers reported that Northern High School lags behind in providing orientation programs to acquaint new staff members with the community attitudes, aspirations and other pertinent information. One teacher bemoaned the recent (approximately three years ago) end of the "buddy" system which paired each entering new teacher with a teacher familiar with the school and community in order to facilitate a smoother transition for the new teacher.

Many teachers alleged that friends of the principal were relieved of specific assignments (i.e., hall duty and student clubs) and had the best opportunities for promotion. Three teachers who have been at Northern High School for less than four years stated that the principal cautioned them "not to get too friendly with the students" or otherwise "buck" his "commands". Other staff members believed that the principal was equally fair with all teachers.



All of the people interviewed agreed that counselors are spending too much time handling discipline cases and too little time counseling students. Reasons given for this condition, however, varied: Most administrators cited the unusually large number of students requiring discipline; most teachers blamed the inability of other teachers to maintain order; most counselors felt that the school program as currently administered, does not allow for optimum counseling conditions.

Finally, with the exception of the principal and a few other administrators and teachers, the interviewees noted a "decreasing amount of parent and student involvement." This condition, they further believe, is reflected in the lowering of school morale during the past few years.



## TEACHERS

The teacher interviews revealed that the younger (in terms of Northern High School service) teachers are more "progressive" in their attitudes; and the older teachers are more "conservative." While this was generally true of the teachers interviewed, it is significant to recognize that there are exceptions to this generalization.

On a whole, the older staff members believe mainly that, because of the changing quality of students, discipline is their foremost educational task. Of secondary importance, these teachers believe, is the channeling of the students into and through a general curriculum. Those of this persuasion firmly believe that the "system" is out of kilter without the presence of individuals who can first maintain order, and, second, understand the "inherently" limited abilities of the student body. Typical comments of this group were as follows:

- . The quality of students has changed over the past 5-10 years. . . . There are more transient students who lower the quality of students.
- . There is no discipline in this building lately.
- . School policy is good. . . . It fails because young teachers don't use it.
- . Parents don't care. There is a lack of interest.
- . Northern High is the same school as it was when it was the best school in the city.
- . The location necessitates a uniformed police officer.
- . The quality of education at Northern is on par with other schools. Teachers who complain about quality education are not qualified themselves.



- . The same group of people are behind games, field trips and student activities. Sort of a rally round the flag with the students. These teachers are too friendly.
- . When we get them, it's too late. The real attack on the education problem should begin in elementary schools.
- . We have some nice children, but we have our share of hoodlums.
- . This was a friendly school until the past 3 or 4 years. Now there are a group of teachers who don't do anything except stir up trouble.
- . I'm afraid to walk the halls without a police officer.
- . We give them (the students) what they can handle. There's no sense in giving them too much and having them flunk out and get discouraged.
- . I've kinda given up.

Unlike the older teachers, the younger ones seek to establish "rapport" and not discipline. In addition, they seek to motivate the oft-times educationally unmotivated students by sponsoring student activities and encouraging what the older staff members refer to as "a breakdown in student-staff roles." If the older staff members frequently engage in behaviors which reflect a lack of empathy, then the friendlier, younger ones may be vulnerable to charges of encouraging a lack of propriety. The most frequent concerns of the younger teachers are illustrated in the following remarks:

- . We have an atmosphere of negativism. The kids can't get an education if we don't give it to them.
- . There is too much discipline and not enough concern about curriculum.
- . Quality education requires quality ~~teachers~~ and administrators.
- . The students aren't going to hurt those (frightened) teachers, they're going to hurt themselves with their wrong attitudes.



- . If there had to be a choice between a faculty that is under-staffed or adequately staffed, I would rather have an under-staffed faculty who is qualified, dynamic and enthusiastic enough to get the students so involved in learning that they cannot keep from learning.
- . I believe that we should have an (police) officer who has had training in working with young people, who has feelings for and respect for human dignity, who can be firm and yet command the respect of youngsters.
- . The attitude of some teachers is that the youngsters are not educable. The conditions in the halls and in some classes exist because some teachers have assumed more of a "don't care attitude" than they had previously.

Sure I eat with students and kid with them. They need to know that somebody cares.

Generally, teachers employed at Northern High School have had little or no pre-employment training in preparing students of dissimilar backgrounds for living in a democratic society. Only a few teachers at Northern High School doubt that special techniques are needed to best teach students having varied backgrounds and different capabilities. Such teaching also requires specialized materials that are understandable to the teacher in order to encourage his planning and responsibility in areas new to him. Without this proper training and materials, few teachers can effectively communicate with a student whose background and interests "seem" radically different from their own. The "conservative" teachers at Northern High School have failed to significantly broaden their understandings of the students whom they seek to teach.



It is important to note that the teachers are divided in their views of discipline. Some, agreeing with most administrators, believe that a rigid form of classroom and general school discipline is required, including the presence of a police officer in the building.

It should be emphasized that all teachers agreed that "order" is not an issue. Most interviewees said that an official representative of the police department should be assigned to the school area to maintain order. The disagreement, then, grows out of perceptions related to the type of police officer, his specific areas of assignment, and his supervision.

There is also agreement by the teachers that prior to and shortly after the assignment of the previous police officer to Northern High School, it was in need of more internal and external control. The type of police officer initially assigned to Northern High School -- in the words of a teacher -- "is analogous to the old western bounty hunters. He, like the bounty hunters, served a useful purpose but changing environmental and social conditions made him operationally obsolete. His tactics, to be sure, had positive effects. However, their negative effects served as a triggering device to student and, to some extent, faculty discontent." The officer was, to quote another teacher: "A dinosaur in the twentieth century who no longer was considered a pet, but a threat."

It should be underscored that differences in attitudes seem to be maintained by individuals who believe that they are "right" in their respective views. Of equal importance is the apparent lack of middle-ground in beliefs. All teachers (and administrators) feel so strongly committed to their polar positions until ideological opponents do not even exchange morning salutations. In the words of one teacher: "Morale is very low. . . . If something isn't



done soon, we'll be fighting like the students. . . . I can hardly wait until summer vacation. At least then I won't have to go through this uncivilized treatment."

Most teachers interviewed wanted their programs to allow for more individualized help for all pupils, a wider variety of course offerings, and for more flexible schedules to permit team teaching and other such variations. Smaller classes are needed for those students who are not physically or emotionally suited for inclusion in regular classes. These are students who need smaller class size and individual attention so as to maximize their educational learning.

The present Northern High School average class is 32 pupils per class, above the Superintendent's perceived optimum average class of 25 pupils. Of course, this does not mean that optimally every class should have 25 pupils. The number of pupils in each class should vary with the purpose of the class and the age of the pupils. Research shows, for example, that students learn the fundamental skills of reading and numbers much better and much faster in small classes of 20 to 25 students. Other subjects are learned equally well -- or better -- in larger classes.

Most of the teachers interviewed stated that a large majority of Northern High School students are being poorly prepared to compete with non-inner city students for post high school jobs and educational offerings. Yet, the same teachers admitted passing students who lacked subject comprehension with a mark of "D".

Test data indicates that most students enter Northern High School 1 - 1½ years below the city school mean performances in subject areas. This condition does not improve during their stay at Northern. The non-promotion rate at



Northern High School is not significantly different than the city-wide rate, thereby failing to reflect the lower test results. Many teachers stated that "social" promotions and "watered down" courses are rampant at Northern High School.

Finally, on the basis of Committee interviews, the Northern High School faculty appears to be critically divided. All teachers agreed that the extent of this division - if not corrected - will extinguish what positive staff morale and, relatedly, quality education/<sup>which</sup> currently exists.



## COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

The effectiveness of school-community relations at Northern High School can be evaluated by a number of factors, including:

- . Whether citizens think favorably or unfavorably, in general, about their schools. (Northern High community residents think unfavorably about their school.)
- . The extent to which citizens feel at ease and welcome in schools, as a partial reflection of school administrators and teachers encouraging or discouraging community participation. (Northern High community residents feel ill at ease in their school.)
- . The degree to which each school is an integral part of the neighborhood it serves and whether it uses a substantial number of community residents in its programs. (Few neighborhood programs are carried out in the school.)
- . The amount of information or misinformation citizens have about their schools. (Citizens appear to have more misinformation than information about Northern High School.)

The community hearings brought out the following main concerns:

### Administration

- . Didn't take advantage of federal grants to improve the program.
- . Knew the problems, but couldn't buck the Board without stronger parent support.
- . Was prejudiced to the point of being unfair . . . didn't want teachers to teach too much.
- . Attitude was not to rock the boat; just keep the students moving.
- . Need . . . a human person, sincere. . . . It will be hard to find one.



- . There is need for a newsletter to parents, giving such information as where to purchase books.
- . Parent-teacher conference notices should be sent out by mail and not sent home with pupils.

### Teaching Staff

- . Our children are graduating unprepared.
- . In 1932 Northern was the best school. Since then curriculum and teacher's qualifications have slipped.
- . We have old teachers with old methods. The old teachers tend to be impatient. Many teachers don't care, won't give extra help.
- . We need an entirely new faculty at Northern.
- . Allow any teacher to transfer who wants to. A teacher who comes in just looking for problems will find them.
- . Why aren't students given more homework?
- . Marking shouldn't be on class average. Marking should indicate real progress. Flunk 49 and pass 1 if need be.
- . Remedial work should be given to some, even at high school.

### Policing of the School

- . Was too harsh.
- . He (first police officer) came to handle an outside problem (outsiders influencing the students). He should have stuck to his outside work and not come in the school.
- . More than one officer is needed to keep order at school.
- . It should be made clear what the limits of the officer are. He should work primarily outside the school. He should call the precinct when he needs help. He should just give the names of students to the principal and let the principal deal with their parents.



## Physical Plant

- . There should be an immediate start at improving the structure, including lighting and enlarging the outdoor area to a size large enough for football games and track, similar to what most high schools have.
- . A cafeteria should be built inside the school building.
- . We need a new school.

Since the student demonstration, many parents expressed the fear that some teachers were giving students low grades as a form of reprisal. They (parents) do not know whether the low grades are an estimate of the student accomplishment, or a punitive measure for not conforming to the attitudes endorsed by certain teachers and administrators. Other parents stated that some teachers refused to explain assignments or give assistance to those students who did not attend school during the demonstration.

There was considerable discussion about the form of the parents organization. Some advocate retaining the community club (or mothers club) which has existed for years. They claim its effectiveness has only been hindered by lack of parental participation. Others want to establish a PTA or PTSA, feeling it would be considerably more effective.

Wide variation exists in the effectiveness of relations between individual schools and the neighborhoods they serve. There exists a general feeling on the part of the community residents interviewed that Northern High School has been administered so rigidly until its faculty was unable to cope effectively with individual problems of parents and students. Many parents further feel that, prior to this investigation, most school administrators and teachers did not welcome and even resented community "interference" in what they deem their educational functions. This condition, they asserted, is a "lack of responsiveness" by school personnel to the needs of their school-community.



## STUDENTS

The students walked out of Northern High School because they felt that the quality of their education was inferior to non-inner city schools. Lacking comparable data, we cannot substantiate this claim. If the impressions of the teachers at Northern High School are important (and we think they are), the quality of education at Northern High School is below that of non-inner city schools.

With reference to their concerns about the quality of their educational experiences, the students expressed a need for the following:

- . Teachers who can and will teach at a level that will challenge their abilities.
- . More and varied remedial and advanced courses.
- . A coordinated curriculum which will allow them to secure the necessary prerequisites for post high school training or employment.
- . Improved methods of supervision by administrators and teachers.
- . More and varied extra-curricular activities which allow for the involvement of larger numbers of students.
- . Freedom from disciplinary reprisals for participating in the student walk-out as reflected in course grades.

In addition to the above general statements, students made the following specific complaints about the physical plant:

- . Poor lighting throughout the building.
- . Cracked plaster in the halls and some classrooms.
- . Railings and steps in need of repair.
- . The boys' gymnasium floor has weak boards and exposed nails.



- . Desks are in need of repair and are frequently too small for larger students.
- . Classrooms are frequently too small for scheduled classes.
- . Much of the equipment is in need of repair, including typewriters, sewing machines, and shop machines.
- . The lunch room is inadequate for the size of the student body.
- . There are too few and poorly illuminated clocks throughout the building.
- . The auditorium is too small.
- . More and better equipment is needed in science laboratories.
- . There is no area near the school that is suitably developed for athletic activities.

Finally, a majority of the students are antagonistic towards the current principal. He has, their observations continue, a dictatorial attitude which fosters a lowering of their self-esteem and a general feeling of oppression as symbolized by the techniques of the previous police officer. Their reaction to the assistant principal, while more positive, seems to be clouded by his previously close association with the principal. In addition, they expressed the belief that the principal's evaluation of their individual abilities greatly limits both the curriculum offerings and positive personal relationships between administration and the community. Furthermore, such an attitude allows for similar attitudes by other staff members and, eventually, is reflected in classroom performances.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



## ADMINISTRATORS

The chief administrator (principal) at Northern High School must approach the school's problems with an adequate degree of sensitivity to the needs, motivations and aspirations of the staff, the students and the community. This would include giving recognition and support to that portion of the teaching staff and the student body which states that the pupils at Northern have both the ability and are capable of the kind of motivation necessary to achieve at a higher level than current data indicates. This also involves developing the kind of atmosphere in which teachers, students and parents can participate in a common effort to reach these desired goals.

Although changes in the physical facilities and lowering of class sizes will be important to this endeavor, no such limited effort alone can compensate for the lack of administrative sensitivity to the more basic attitudinal considerations. It is the current administration's weakness in being sensitive to these basic problems which leads us to conclude that there is a need for a change to a more dynamic and flexible administration.

Even with such a change, however, the Committee recognizes the need for more involvement in the school program by the various departments of the central administration.

### Recommendations

1. Northern High School should be assigned a new principal in an effort to bring together the dissonant groups of school faculty, students and community residents. The new principal should be appointed and announced publicly within the next two weeks so that he or she can begin the monumental task of rebuilding the school-community team.



2. In order to meet individual needs so that each pupil will be enabled to develop his full potential, which is the meaning of equal opportunity for excellence in education, the principal has a considerable responsibility to review and, where needed, develop Northern's program in relation to the needs of the students in this particular community. This requires his authority to make adjustments in school curriculum to meet these specific needs. Further, it requires provision for intensive cooperative efforts by faculty and central administration, and by the faculty and community together, to determine and to implement ideas which may make maximum school improvements.

This involves:

- a. released staff time for curriculum improvement, development and implementation;
- b. provision for faculty-community discussions in depth, including workshops;
- c. frequent staff and department meetings in which school programs are critically analyzed and revised;
- d. in-service training, using resource experts; and a financial encouragement for teachers willing and able to make the extra effort needed for such creative educational approaches.



## TEACHERS

On the basis of Committee interviews, the Northern High School faculty appears to be critically divided. The extent of this division - if not corrected - will extinguish what positive staff morale and, relatedly, quality which education currently exists. The school is torn between two polar views in reference to attitudes towards the students and the community. The teachers are aware of the "problems" at Northern High School. In addition, they have "solutions" to these problems. Both the problems and the solutions reflect basic attitudes. Lately there has been a growing attitude of negativism and defeatism.

It should be noted that differences in attitudes seem to be maintained by individuals who believe that they are "right" in their respective views. Of equal importance is the apparent lack of middle-ground in beliefs. Northern High School teachers feel so strongly committed to their polar positions until it is questionable whether the gap will be bridged within the near future.

It is the feeling of this Committee that teachers who are empathetic to the students' needs and are able to teach so as to satisfy these needs are more likely to come out of the ranks of the "progressive" education group. We are not suggesting that teachers must adhere to any particular educational philosophy, only that they have an attitude that will allow them to view inner city students -- like all students -- as having the needs: (1) to be told where they are in their current skill development, (2) to be told what they must do in order to improve, and (3) to be given the assistance that they need to realize their educational potential.

We recognize the limitations of comparing test results. We also are aware of the fact that until something better is used, these measures greatly determine the success or failure of students who seek jobs or post high school



education that require suitable test and school performance records. Our preliminary observation is that: Northern High School graduates do not appear to be adequately prepared to compete for post high school opportunities. It is incomprehensible and deplorable to this Committee that students who fail to meet minimum teacher expectations are given passing grades.

Finally, it is questionable whether the present physical plant will lend itself to an expanded program and smaller class size. At best, only a few minor changes can be made. Inability to immediately reduce class size is not -- in the Committee's opinion -- a suitable excuse for failing to seek other ways of improving the quality education.

#### Recommendations

1. Teachers who desire to transfer out of Northern High School should be allowed to do so.
2. Teachers who desire to remain at Northern High School should be allowed to do so.
  - a. The three-year transfer policy should be waived for those teachers who can understand and successfully teach students at Northern High School.
3. Rational discussion of controversial issues should be an important part of the Northern High School school program. All teachers should encourage and help students identify relevant information, learn techniques of critical analysis, make independent judgments, and be prepared to present and support them. All teachers should also help students become sensitive to the continuing need for objective re-evaluation of issues in light of changing conditions in society.
4. Teachers should give grades that accurately reflect the students' performances. "Social promotions" should be discontinued.



## COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

When a parent or student feels that there is no opportunity to voice his particular concern or complaints and there will be no opportunity for fair and full consideration of them by the school system, he becomes frustrated and critical, refusing to cooperate with or support it. This, to be sure, reflected the community's opinion of Northern High School prior to this investigation.

Study after study concludes that direct personal communication is the most effective way to improve parent and other community involvement in motivating pupils to achieve. Despite this fact, Northern High School administrators were relatively ineffective in establishing this direct communication. Communication was a one-way process from the school to the community, with few channels open for the school to receive information, advice and comments from non-school sources.

Generally, local school-community committees are valuable and useful, but are not under present arrangements reaching most community residents, including the Northern High School residents. Regretfully, when it comes to assisting parents to help their children achieve more in school, the Northern High School frequently failed to reach the parents and children most in need of such assistance. It is now a standard criticism that too often school-community programs at Northern High School did not deal effectively with vital issues in education. This, we recognize, is an over-simplification of the issue. Although there were some school-parent programs that were effective in terms of involving large numbers of parents, most Northern High School parent programs were planned and executed by a few persons, with the community being invited only to observe.



## Recommendations

1. To increase community involvement in the educational process, the Northern High School staff should take the initiative to develop closer relations with parents, other citizens and community organizations. The principal should make periodic reports of progress to central administration in this respect.
  - a. Efforts should be expanded for the school staff to meet with citizens face to face in order to discuss such things as school needs, new programs, budgetary matters, boundary changes, good school objectives, complaint procedures and other mutual concerns.
  - b. Concurrently with the above efforts, studies should be conducted to determine the better ways to improve two-way communication between school and community, with special attention to communication involving community residents who do not normally attend school-community meetings.
  - c. The school staff should survey its community and compile a list of all community organizations in the school area, their leaders and directing board, and periodically meet with and communicate with such individuals.
  - d. Northern High School administrators and teachers should clearly indicate their interest and desire for community participation.
2. Community residents should seek to become involved in school-community activities.



3. The Board of Education should review and, if necessary, revise the existing complaint procedures. Parents should be informed of available procedures and encouraged to take proper steps in case of complaints regarding school personnel.



## STUDENTS

When the students walked out to protest a lack of quality in their education, they shattered an erroneous but popular notion that Northern High School students "do not want a good education" or "are indifferent to the kind of education that they get." The majority of students want: (1) teachers who can and will teach at a level that will challenge their abilities, (2) more and varied remedial and advanced courses, (3) an opportunity to be useful and recognized participants in school activities.

Most of the views of the students are duplications of views expressed by other people interviewed and, as a result, are covered elsewhere in this report. There is a specific area that relates to student government which should be considered.

The students are quite hopeful that the recently organized student-faculty council will provide an adequate outlet for their views and grievances. It should be pointed out that the by-laws of this organization, although providing machinery for student participation, leave the final responsibility for resolving conflicts with the principal (see Article X, Student-Faculty Council of Northern High School).

### Recommendations

1. The student-faculty council should be supported and closely observed for possible adaptation in other schools.
2. Along with their request for an improved quality of education, students must continue to improve their quality of school participation through such things as:
  - a. regularly attending classes,
  - b. turning in assigned class work when due,
  - c. utilizing established channels for redress, and
  - d. otherwise supporting the faculty efforts to provide a higher quality of education.



#### OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All Northern High School personnel should be required to engage periodically in recognized in-service training related to their work, with the Board of Education subsidizing enrollment costs. The skills of dealing with the extremely complex problems of children living in urban communities should be included in this training.
2. The Northern High School faculty should have an orientation, evaluation and planning period prior to opening of the school year.
3. In order to improve the internal operation, Northern High School should have two assistant principals. One assistant principal should relieve the counselors of their assigned responsibilities for handling discipline cases.
4. To reduce class size, Northern High School should become a senior high school for grades 10 - 12. Ninth grade students scheduled to attend Northern in the fall should be sent to other schools.
5. If a police officer is assigned to the school area, he should be assigned outside the school and responsible to the precinct inspector. Faculty, students and parents should be informed of the specific role of the police officer.
6. The Board of Education should begin immediately to plan a new physical plant for Northern High School.
  - a. During the intervening period, uncorrected building deficiencies outlined by the current



principal and also the students should be corrected.

Major deficiencies, such as lighting, inoperative equipment and faulty gymnasium floor, should be corrected before next fall.

7. The Board of Education should review existing procedures for handling problems involving inadequate administrators and teachers and, where necessary, take steps to improve them.
  - a. Inadequate administrators and teachers should be required to undergo personal counseling and be provided appropriate retraining opportunities.  
If such retraining is unsuccessful, administrators and teachers should be reclassified or released.
8. The Board of Education should convene immediately a special study committee to review and, where needed, recommend changes in the lines of authority between the schools and the central administration.
  - a. Clear lines of responsibility and coordination should be established between the superintendent, assistant superintendents, field executives, principals, department heads, curriculum supervisors, and other members of the education team.
9. Efforts should be made to encourage Wayne State University's College of Education to designate Northern High School as its demonstration school. Under such an arrangement, many innovations could be initiated in an effort to significantly raise the levels of educational achievement at Northern High School.



## SUMMARY

An evaluation of the problems of any high school should begin with the level of educational progress of the students. The data presented to our Committee by the Educational Research Department of the Detroit Public Schools indicates that the average 9th and 10th grade student entering Northern High School is performing at a level of at least one year below his or her grade. The Committee views this phenomenon as an indication of a great need for remedial work at the lower grade levels. It must be pointed out, however, that hope for future adjustments in the lower grades will have little or no impact on the current students at Northern High School or those anticipated in the near future. Therefore, the Committee's evaluation and recommendations for Northern High School must be considered in the light of these recognized deficiencies.

These deficiencies, while already recognized by the professional staff at Northern High School, have led to fundamental and conflicting opinions as to their implications for the students' academic achievement and behavior. This interim report has attempted to present some of the reactions of all those -- both within the school and in the surrounding community -- who have either identified with or reacted to these differing points of view. Our recommendations are an attempt to correct basic administrative and teaching conditions at Northern High School. We must say at this time, that it is our opinion that current conditions at the school reflect a dissatisfied student body, a divided teaching staff and an estranged community. It is our hope that the Detroit Board of Education will move quickly to implement as many of our recommendations as possible before school reopens in the fall.