

A B C A BETTER CHANCE

The Beginning

In the Spring of 1963, twenty-three headmasters of leading independent college preparatory schools met at Phillips Academy. Their purpose was to search out economically disadvantaged students and give them the opportunity of receiving a better education. They established a program to identify students whose drive, maturity, and intellectual potential would assure their success in a more competitive academic environment. From this meeting, ABC was born. In only two years, there was a waiting list of more talented candidates than the private schools could absorb.

In 1967, Andover became the second community in the United States to establish a public school ABC program. The first students were chosen by a selection committee from youngsters recruited nationally by ABC in the same way students are chosen for independent schools. As of 1974, forty-four students have been enrolled in the Andover program, and more than four thousand young men and women have been enrolled in A BETTER CHANCE nationally.

From 1967 through 1973, Andover ABC was a program for young men at 134 Main Street. In the Fall of 1974, the program was expanded to include a second residence at 64 Bartlett Street for young women. Currently, we have 19 students in the Andover ABC program.

SELECTION OF STUDENTS

From the beginning, the purpose of A BETTER CHANCE has been to provide adequate preparation so that ABC students could not only get into college, but would have a good chance of succeeding there. A BETTER CHANCE searches for those minority students who, if not offered an educational alternative, would most likely be unable to realize their full intellectual and leadership potential.

Most ABC students come from urban and rural poverty areas of the United States from school environments which may prevent them from developing their particular resources to the fullest. Most of the students are Black, some are Puerto Rican, Native American, Mexican-American, Oriental, and White. All have exhibited college potential which needs a more rigorous academic challenge than is available in their local schools.

In addition to economic hardship and limited educational opportunity, three basic criteria are applied in selecting ABC candidates:

1. The student must be highly motivated towards academic and personal achievement. One purpose of A BETTER CHANCE is to develop this basic motivation in whatever way most benefits the student.
2. The student must show evidence of maturity and stability. Assimilation of identity is not an objective of the program. Rather, the student should protect and preserve his or her many special qualities, develop confidence, and maintain a strong self-image.
3. The student should possess significant leadership potential. The ultimate goal of A BETTER CHANCE is to reinforce the student's determination to exercise leadership in his/her community and to contribute to positive social change.

Upon selection, each new ABC student attends a special orientation program in a college or boarding school; whenever possible, students may visit their new resident program in the Spring. This program provides the preparation for a successful transition by ABC students to their new and challenging high school experience.

THE ABC PHILOSOPHY

Through A BETTER CHANCE, young men and women are experiencing an educational alternative which is helping them to develop broader perspectives. Perhaps most revealing is the comment of an ABC student: "ABC has put many doors in front of me," he said; "the doors are not yet open, but for the first time in my life, the doorknobs are within reach."

We believe that ABC students who have the abilities and the perseverance to accept the challenge of an academically rigorous high school will develop the confidence and self-esteem that will enable them to successfully compete in any college or university. We believe further that the ABC experience will enable them subsequently to provide the leadership so urgently desired by our country. And, we believe that such students bring to a public school community a valuable opportunity for an exchange of ideas and goals.

We believe that an Andover High School education [will] continue to provide our ABC students with a better chance to achieve the goals which Andover children take for granted.

We believe that these young men and women will continue to provide a new and enriching contact for Andover young people who will thereby be better able to relate to the changing world of the second half of the twentieth century.

We also believe that this is a rewarding experience for all of us who live in this community.