



**The Negro School Movement in Virginia: From "Equalization" to "Integration"**

Doxey A. Wilkerson

*Journal of Negro Education*, Volume 29, Issue 1 (Winter, 1960), 17-29.

---

Your use of the JSTOR database indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use. A copy of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use is available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>, by contacting JSTOR at [jstor-info@umich.edu](mailto:jstor-info@umich.edu), or by calling JSTOR at (888)388-3574, (734)998-9101 or (FAX) (734)998-9113. No part of a JSTOR transmission may be copied, downloaded, stored, further transmitted, transferred, distributed, altered, or otherwise used, in any form or by any means, except: (1) one stored electronic and one paper copy of any article solely for your personal, non-commercial use, or (2) with prior written permission of JSTOR and the publisher of the article or other text.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

*Journal of Negro Education* is published by Journal of Negro Education. Please contact the publisher for further permissions regarding the use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/jne.html>.

---

*Journal of Negro Education*  
©1960 Journal of Negro Education

JSTOR and the JSTOR logo are trademarks of JSTOR, and are Registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. For more information on JSTOR contact [jstor-info@umich.edu](mailto:jstor-info@umich.edu).

©2001 JSTOR

# The Negro School Movement in Virginia: From "Equalization" to "Integration"

DOXEY A. WILKERSON

*Professor of Education, Bishop College*

The rapidly-growing literature on "the changing South" emphasizes urban-industrial development and Federal court decisions as the main forces underlying recent progress toward equalizing white and Negro schools in that area; but it hardly ever mentions that dynamic force which is most directly involved—the organized efforts of the Negro people. There is no doubt that urban and industrial development helps to create an environment congenial to progress; yet, the purposeful activities of human beings are always the *immediate* causes of social change. And as for the Federal courts, they would hardly be active in this realm without prior action by people bent on changing school conditions. As McIver has noted: "Courts are not themselves primary agents of social change. They register, often laggingly, the changes that move in the community."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, clarity on the rôle of the Negro school movement is essential to an understanding of recent developments around Negro schools in the South; and it is the purpose of this article to interpret that rôle in one of the Southern states. Specifically, analysis is here made of recent stages in the development of organized efforts by Negroes first to "equalize" and then to "integrate" the public elementary schools of

Virginia, with special attention to the results of such efforts.<sup>2</sup>

The desire for education has long been a powerful driving force among Negroes in the South; and it is probable that during recent decades the Negro community has undertaken much more organized activity directed toward improving the schools than around any other local issue. For a long time such activity centered chiefly in the maintenance of private Negro schools, pleas to public school authorities, and private money-raising to help improve the public schools—to lengthen the term, or increase the teacher's salary, or buy a plot of land to be donated to the county for the erection of a school building.<sup>3</sup> The story of such efforts as these in the whole South is one of the moving sagas of Negro education that is yet to be adequately told.

It was not until the late 1930's and early 1940's that Negroes in the South—encouraged by the 1938 decision of the Supreme Court in the "Gaines Case" on the university level—turned to the Federal courts as a major resort in their fight for better elementary and second-

---

<sup>2</sup>The analysis is based on one section of the writer's "Some Correlates of Recent Progress Toward Equalizing White and Negro Schools in Virginia". Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1958. Pp. xii, 372.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Fred M. Alexander, *Education for the Needs of the Negro in Virginia*. Washington: Southern Education Foundation, Inc., 1943. Chapter V, "Case Studies on Efforts of the Negro to Improve His Condition."

---

<sup>1</sup>R. M. McIver (ed.), *The More Perfect Union*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948. p. 169.

ary schools for their children. Thereafter, protests against and appeals for the correction of inequalities between white and Negro schools came increasingly to be followed by litigation. In Virginia, there were three successive emphases in this developing interaction between the Negro school movement and the Federal courts—for equal teachers' salaries, for equal school physical facilities, and for integration. The progressive impact of each on the relative status of Negro schools is impressive.

#### EQUAL SALARIES

Proposals for court action to equalize white and Negro teachers' salaries were discussed at least as early as 1934 in annual conventions of the Virginia State Teachers Association;<sup>4</sup> and at the Association's Golden Jubilee Convention, in November, 1937 a resolution embracing this policy "was adopted by the more than one thousand delegates without a dissenting vote."

The resolution proposed: (1) joint action with N.A.A.C.P. to raise \$5,000 for court action toward the equalization of salaries, (2) appropriation of \$1,000 of the Association's funds to begin the action at once, (3) that each local association be urged to raise funds and send them to the joint committee of the N.A.A.C.P. and the State Teachers Association, and (4) that each teacher be asked to contribute at least one dollar immediately to the cause.<sup>5</sup>

The first case was that of Aline E. Black, a high school teacher in the city of Norfolk who petitioned the School

Board in the fall of 1938 to fix her salary by the same schedule as that for teachers in white high schools. When the Board rejected her petition, she sought a writ of mandamus in the Circuit Court of Norfolk acting through attorneys of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Again rebuffed, she appealed to the Virginia Supreme Court; but her case was rendered moot when the School Board refused to renew her contract for the following term.

In the fall of 1939, Melvin O. Alston, another high school teacher in Norfolk, submitted a similar petition to the Board. When it was turned down, he filed suit in the United States District Court, charging that salary discrimination on the basis of race was in violation of the Constitution. He, too, was discharged; and the Court refused to consider the merits of his case on the ground that he had waived his constitutional rights by entering into a contract with the Norfolk School Board. Alston then appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals; and in June, 1940, he won a reversal of the District Court's decision.

The Norfolk School Board sought a review in the United States Supreme Court; but *certiorari* was denied in November, 1940. The case was remanded to the District Court, where an order was entered declaring racial discrimination in salary payments "unlawful and unconstitutional and . . . in violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment." Defendants were "perpetually enjoined and restrained" from such discrimination; and specific steps were set forth by which the salaries of white and Negro teachers should be "completely equalized" by

<sup>4</sup>Luther P. Jackson, *A History of the Virginia State Teachers Association*. Norfolk; The Guide Publishing Company, Inc., 1937. pp. 108-10.

<sup>5</sup>J. Rupert Picott, "Desegregation in Higher Education in Virginia." *The Journal of Negro Education*, 27: 324-31, Summer, 1958. p. 325.

January, 1943.<sup>6</sup> The minutes of the Norfolk School Board for December 2, 1940, record the details of a plan for implementing this decision — agreed upon at a joint meeting of the Board and City Council, the City Manager, and representatives of the Negro teachers of Norfolk.

This conclusion of the "Alston Case" was followed immediately by equal-

orders or consent decrees for salary equalization.

The most bitterly contested of all the Virginia equal-salary cases arose in Newport News, where, in 1942, Dorothy E. Roles and the Newport News Teachers Association filed suit in the United States District Court. In January, 1943, the Court entered an injunction restraining school authorities from further dis-

TABLE I

AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY OF WHITE AND NEGRO TEACHERS OF VIRGINIA, PER CENT NEGRO OF WHITE, BY TERMS AND BY SEX: 1940-41 to 1949-50  
Average Annual Salary\*

School Term	Women		Men		Per Cent Negro of White	
	White	Negro	White	Negro	Women	Men
1949-50	\$2,160	\$2,209	\$2,719	\$2,520	102.3	92.7
1948-49	2,081	2,124	2,613	2,434	102.1	97.2
1947-48	1,927	1,962	2,515	2,300	101.8	91.4
1946-47	1,735	1,724	2,315	2,040	99.4	88.1
1945-46	1,486	1,418	1,987	1,956	95.4	98.4
1944-45	1,360	1,264	2,030	1,661	92.9	81.8
1943-44	1,254	1,124	1,877	1,440	89.6	76.7
1942-43	1,081	910	1,431	1,071	84.2	74.8
1941-42	857	632	1,400	824	73.7	58.9
1940-41	805	553	1,272	726	68.7	57.1

\*Superintendent of Public Instruction, Commonwealth of Virginia, *Annual Report*, for the terms listed. Figures for 1940-41 and 1941-42 are medians; all others are means.

salary suits and threats of suits in many communities, including the cities of Petersburg, Danville and Richmond, the counties of Chesterfield, Mecklenburg and Goochland, and elsewhere. Some of these cases—as in Mecklenburg and Goochland counties—were settled without litigation, on the basis of school board agreement to equalize salaries. Others—as in Chesterfield County and Richmond—were settled through court

crimination in the payment of salaries. However, it was more than two years later when the Board of School Trustees and Superintendent complied with this ruling—and then only after being adjudged in contempt of court. Meanwhile, they discharged three Negro teachers, two elementary school principals, and the high school principal—the late Lutrelle F. Palmer, Executive Secretary of the Virginia State Teachers Association and spark-plug of the whole equal-salary movement.

<sup>6</sup>Unless otherwise noted, these and subsequent such quotations are from the texts of court decisions and related documents.

These cases exerted a progressive in-

fluence far beyond the immediate communities in which they arose. On this point the writer found general agreement among school officials and lay citizens interviewed during a recent field trip to many parts of Virginia. Moreover, there is persuasive evidence of this influence in teacher-salary trends for the public elementary and secondary schools of the State.

Table I lists the average annual salaries of all white and Negro teachers (excluding supervisors and principals) for each term from 1940-41 to 1949-50—the last term for which the Superintendent's Annual Report gives these figures by race. During this period, the average for women teachers increased by about 168 per cent in white schools, and by about 300 per cent in Negro schools. The average for men teachers increased by about 114 per cent in white schools, and by about 250 per cent in Negro schools. The average for Negro women was only 69 per cent as large as that for white women in 1940-41; but it approximated or exceeded that for white women in each term from 1946-47 to 1949-50. The average for Negro men was about 57 per cent of that for white men in 1940-41; and although full parity was not attained at any time during this period, it was approached very closely in 1945-46 and 1948-1949.

There were a few more court actions around the equal-salary issue after conclusion of the Newport News case; but most such litigation was over by the mid-1940's, its purpose largely—but not entirely—accomplished.

#### EQUAL FACILITIES

During the late 1940's, the main efforts of the Negro school movement in Virginia were directed toward equaliz-

ing physical facilities and curricula in white and Negro schools. Inequalities in bus transportation, buildings and equipment, and programs of study were the chief issues involved. Organized activity around these questions became especially widespread between 1947 and 1949; and resort to the Federal courts developed as the prevailing practice.

One of the most important and influential cases arose in Surry County, one of the "peanut counties" in the Southern Tidewater area. During July, 1947, a suit was filed in the United State District Court charging the School Board and Superintendent with discrimination in the conduct of the schools. Specifically cited were the unavailability of an accredited Negro high school and many other types of inequality. In March, 1948, the Court decreed that these charges were valid, and the practices complained of unlawful. It was ordered that, beginning September 1, 1948, the Board and Superintendent were "perpetually enjoined and restrained from discriminating" against plaintiffs and other Negroes in

providing and maintaining school facilities, including buildings, equipment, bus transportation, libraries and qualified instructional and janitorial personnel, and from paying Negro teachers in Surry County, Virginia, less salaries, on account of their race and color, than that paid to white teachers and janitors similarly situated.

The Court also ordered that half of the Negro-white differential in teachers' salaries be eliminated by the start of the 1948-49 school term, and the other half by the following term; that the State Board of Education be asked to conduct a survey of Negro school building needs in the County; and that the local school authorities report their over-all equaliza-

tion plans to the court by mid-September, 1948.

This ruling, said *The Richmond News Leader*, "marked the first clear-cut victory for Negro educators and attorneys who have fought in the Federal courts over the past several months to bring Negro education in Virginia counties to a par with that provided for white pupils."<sup>7</sup> This case also did much to stimulate similar actions in other communities.

Another notable case arose in Gloucester County, in the Middle Peninsula area. Negro citizens petitioned the School Board to correct gross inequalities in the buildings and equipment of the Negro high school and all other schools for Negro children. Getting no relief, they brought suit in the United States District Court, during February, 1947. In April of the following year, the Court filed a written memorandum which concluded that "there is discrimination against the colored children by the school authorities of Gloucester County in the particulars here enumerated. . . ." The practical difficulties cited by defendants as precluding any early equalization were said by the Court to be without "any bearing on the legal or factual questions here involved." Later, a declaratory judgment was entered; and an injunction was issued ordering an end to the discrimination, "effective immediately". Almost simultaneously, a similar case arose in Prince George County, in the Northern Neck area, and was handled by the same Court in the same manner.

In the fall of 1948, attorneys for the Negro plaintiffs, parents, and represen-

tatives of the Virginia State Teachers Association inspected the schools of both counties, and found no substantial improvement. One attorney then took a group of Negro children and sought their admittance to a white school in King George County—"to get equal school facilities for my clients, as ordered by the Federal District Court on July 31." At the same time, another attorney took a group of Negro children and asked for their admittance to a white school in Gloucester County.<sup>8</sup>

Both groups, of course, were turned down; whereupon petitions in their behalf were filed with the United States District Court, claiming that defendants had not discontinued the forbidden discrimination, and asking that they be adjudged in contempt of court. During the course of the hearings which followed, school officials in King George County—in a move "to equalize curricula"—discontinued the teaching of Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Geometry at the white high school.<sup>9</sup> In December, 1948, the District Court ruled that the school-official defendants "are in contempt and it is so adjudged." The following May they were fined and told that the injunction against further discrimination remained in force.

When the Court entered its memorandum opinion in the Gloucester and King George cases, it also decided in favor of the Negro plaintiffs in the Chesterfield County equal-salary case, one of those initiated in the winter of 1940. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch*

<sup>8</sup>"Great Dilemma in Virginia", *Virginia Education Bulletin*, 25: 48-9, October, 1948.

<sup>9</sup>"King George Drops Four Courses for Whites; Move to Equalize Curricula Draws Parents' Protests, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 5, 1948.

<sup>7</sup>"Equal Educational Facilities Are Ordered in Surry County", March 31, 1948.

report on this three-county decision said:

The opinion, coming on the heels of the precedent-setting Surry judgment, left little doubt as to the stand the Federal courts inevitably would take on all school discrimination allegations. And it apparently left the way clear for a barrage of similar suits to descend upon the courts.<sup>10</sup>

A barrage of similar suits did, indeed, descend—in Arlington, Essex, King and Queen, and Dinwiddie counties, in the town of South Boston (Halifax County), and in other communities—all within this 1947-1949 period. Some went to trial; but many were settled otherwise. The N.A.A.C.P. lawyer most actively involved in these cases told the writer that “between ’48 and ’50, half of the counties with large Negro populations were ready for suits—if we had had the money to handle them.”

Such actions became so widespread that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction issued a statement in the fall of 1948, detailing improvements in Negro schools over the previous decade, and appealing for surcease.<sup>11</sup> But the official organ of the Virginia State Teachers Association exulted: “Thank God for the Federal Courts!”<sup>12</sup>

Still another of the celebrated equalization cases arose in Pulaski County, located in the mountainous western part of the State where Negro populations are sparse. There was no public Negro high school in the County; and pupils were transported by bus to the Christiansburg Industrial Institute, in Montgomery County, which was operated on

a regional basis with about 250 students from the two counties and the city of Radford. Negro citizens filed a suit in the United States District Court to compel school officials to provide a high school for Negro children within Pulaski County. The District Court denied their petition; and they appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. In November, 1949, that Court reversed the lower court decision, and remanded the case with instructions to give relief to the plaintiffs. The decision noted that the courts have “a solemn duty” to strike down “forbidden racial discrimination”.

State school officials promptly expressed concern over the Pulaski decision, pointing out that there were six Negro high schools then operating on a regional basis in Virginia.<sup>13</sup> And an indignant editorial in *The Richmond News Leader* professed to see in such litigation a plot by “some local liberals” to force the State to do away with school segregation. “*Virginia is not about to abandon segregation in its public schools*”, the newspaper declared, “and no mandate of any court, as we see it, is likely to chip the rock of that determination by so much as a pebble.”<sup>14</sup>

The ten equal-facilities actions here reviewed or cited are by no means the only ones during this period of the late 1940's; but they are the ones which seemed to get the most attention in the newspapers. Moreover, there appears to be agreement among informed persons in Virginia that most of these cases

<sup>10</sup>April 9, 1948.

<sup>11</sup>“Miller Cites Gains by Negro Schools in Reply to Suits”, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 19, 1948.

<sup>12</sup>Title of editorial, *Virginia Education Bulletin*, 25: 29, May, 1948.

<sup>13</sup>“State Education Officials Feel Pulaski Decision May Do Harm”, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 16, 1949.

<sup>14</sup>“Stunning Decision in Pulaski” (editorial), *The Richmond News Leader*, November 23, 1949.

were very influential in furthering general progress toward equalizing white and Negro schools.<sup>15</sup>

One type of evidence suggestive of this influence is found in trends in the per capita value of buses serving Negro and white schools in the counties of Virginia. As is noted in Table II, the value of buses per pupils in average daily attend-

TABLE II

PER CAPITA VALUE OF BUSES SERVING WHITE AND NEGRO SCHOOLS IN THE COUNTIES OF VIRGINIA; PER CENT NEGRO OF WHITE: 1940-41, 1947-48, 1956-57

School Term	Value of Buses Per Pupil in Average Daily Attendance*		
	White	Negro	Per Cent Negro of White
1956-57	\$19.82	\$21.06	106
1947-48	11.64	7.29	63
1940-41	3.80	1.02	27

\*Derived from Superintendent of Public Instruction, Commonwealth of Virginia, *Annual Report: 1940-41, 1947-48, 1956-57*.

ance was only 27 per cent as large for Negro schools as for white schools in 1940-41; and it was 63 per cent as large in 1947-48, just about the time the flurry of equalization cases was developing. During the following nine years, however, the per capita value of buses serving Negro schools increased to more than that for buses serving white schools.

A more comprehensive type of evidence suggestive of the influence of these equalization cases is found in the im-

provement that took place in the over-all relative status of Negro schools. A rough, purely quantitative, index of that improvement is afforded by trends in the degree to which Negro schools approximate white schools as regards (a) per cent of the population 7 to 19 years old in average daily attendance, (b) cost of elementary salaries per pupil in A.D.A., (c) cost of secondary salaries per pupil in A.D.A., and (d) value of school property (including buses) per pupil in A.D.A. The mean of the four Negro-to-white ratios on these measures defines the "relative status" of Negro schools, and is designated the *Index of Relative Status*. Term-to-term increases in this index reflect improvement in the relative status of Negro schools or, stated in other words, "progress toward equality". A relative-status rating of 100.0 indicates approximate equality of status on the four measures here involved.<sup>16</sup>

It may be seen from Table III that, in the group of ten counties here cited for their notable equal-facilities cases during the late 1940's, the average over-all status of Negro schools approximated that of white schools by about 60 per cent in 1940-41, by about 73 per cent in 1947-48, and by about 94 per cent in 1956-57. Thus, there was about 56 per cent improvement in the relative status of Negro schools in this group of counties during the whole period, as compared with substantially less such improvement in all counties, or in all cities, or in the State as a whole.

Between 1940-41 and 1947-48, there

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, "State N.A.A.C.P. Makes Annual Report: School Cases, Civic Program Summed Up", [Norfolk] *Journal and Guide*, October 2, 1948; and "Swift Improvement For Schools Follows N.A.A.C.P. Suits in Virginia", [Norfolk] *Journal and Guide*, September 17, 1949.

<sup>16</sup>It will be noted that the Index of Relative Status expresses a *relationship* between the status of white and Negro schools; it expresses nothing about the absolute status of either group of schools.

TABLE III

INDEX OF RELATIVE STATUS OF NEGRO SCHOOLS IN 10 COUNTIES OF VIRGINIA AND IN ALL COUNTIES, ALL CITIES AND THE STATE: 1940-41, 1947-48, 1956-57; PER CENT INCREASE: 1941-1957

<i>Index of Relative Status*</i>				
County	1940-41	1947-48	1956-57	Per Cent Increase 1941-1957
King George	58.2	71.3	107.8	85.2
Surry	43.4	58.6	78.8	81.6
Essex	48.5	64.0	87.7	80.8
Dinwiddie	46.4	58.2	78.4	69.0
Gloucester	62.0	87.4	104.8	69.0
Arlington	74.8	95.2	118.0	57.8
Halifax	53.0	64.7	82.5	55.7
Chesterfield	71.1	73.9	100.6	41.5
King and Queen	63.9	61.7	87.3	36.6
Pulaski	80.8	97.7	95.8	18.6
10 Counties (mean)	60.2	73.3	94.2	56.5
All Counties (mean)	63.1	75.9	89.6	42.2
All Cities (mean)	75.0	79.9	99.8	32.3
State (mean)	67.5	78.1	92.8	37.5

\*Derived from Superintendent of Public Instruction, Commonwealth of Virginia, *Annual Report: 1940-41, 1947-48, 1956-57.*

was about 22 per cent improvement in the relative status of Negro schools in these ten counties, and about 20 per cent improvement in all counties. However, following 1947-48 — the term when equal-facilities cases were most widespread—the relative status of Negro schools improved by about 29 per cent in the ten counties, as compared with only 18 per cent in all counties.

These trends are pretty convincing evidence of a causal relationship between recent progress *toward* equalizing white and Negro schools in Virginia and the series of equalization suits and related activities which burgeoned in the late 1940's. In the years immediately following, still another obviously dynamic influence entered upon the scene.

#### INTEGRATION

During the summer of 1950, The Richmond *Times-Dispatch* published a very perceptive review of recent Federal court decisions affecting the education of Negroes in Virginia and elsewhere. The staff writer recognized the 1950 Supreme Court decision in the "Sweatt Case", at the University of Texas, as applicable in Virginia; and within three months the matriculation of Gregory Swanson at the University of Virginia confirmed her forecast. She also saw in such "integration" cases on the graduate level and recent "equalization" cases on the public school level a threat to the whole system of school segregation. "Ever present", she said, "is the possibility that if Virginia suc-

ceeds in equalizing her system of public schools at enormous cost of duplicate facilities, the United States Supreme Court could decide that segregation itself constitutes discrimination."<sup>17</sup>

Leaders of the Negro movement were also looking ahead to a new stage of the struggle. As the lawyer most involved in these cases told the writer: "Although we concentrated on equalization suits during the 'forties, we were careful never to affirm the validity of segregation. We looked to the time when integration would become the issue."

In 1950, the National Legal Committee of the N.A.A.C.P. recommended, and the National Board approved, the policy of undertaking no further equalization suits, but of supporting litigation directed toward abolishing segregation in the public schools. In the spring of 1951, the first suit aimed at school integration below the college level in Virginia—in Prince Edward County—was filed in the United States District Court.<sup>18</sup> It is important to understand that this case—as, indeed, the whole development of this kind of litigation—emerged directly out of organized efforts to equalize facilities in the separate white and Negro schools.

Prince Edward is one of the "tobacco counties" in the traditional slave-plantation area of Southside Virginia; and in 1950 its Negro population constituted 45 per cent of the total. The Negro schools of the County had long been grossly inferior to the white schools, in

all respects; and Negro citizens repeatedly appealed to school authorities for improvements. Especially were they concerned over the Negro high school, which was built in 1927 and had become greatly over-crowded and decrepit by the late 1940's.

In 1950, the Parent-Teachers Association appointed a committee to negotiate with the County School Board for a new high school. It was headed by a local minister, and consisted of one representative from each school district. This committee is said to have "met with the School Board once a month for more than a year, presenting facts and figures, listing the needs of our schools. But we go nowhere. Constantly they told us there was no money." Continuing the quotation from one of the leaders involved: "Finally, we got them to agree to secure land for a new high school—if we could find a suitable plot, they'd buy it. We found a place, up where the new high school is now located, 60 acres or more. But the Board then said they had no money to build with, and that we need not come back; they'd notify us through the press when they were in position to build."

Meanwhile, students at the Negro high school took action on their own: "While we were considering this in the P.T.A., the kids walked out." It is reported that the students got the principal to leave the building on a ruse—saying that a student was in trouble in town—hoping, among other things, thereby to absolve him from blame for their contemplated action. They then called a meeting and proposed a strike. The suggestion that they first consult their parents was voted down. The strike was agreed to with only one dissenting vote. The students walked out,

<sup>17</sup>Nita Morse, "Segregation Rulings Pose New Issues", *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 25, 1950.

<sup>18</sup>A similar suit, which arose in Clarendon County, South Carolina, was filed a few months earlier.

set up picket-lines, and established headquarters in the basement of a local church.

Leaders of the strike sought a conference with the County Superintendent of Schools; but he refused to see them unless they first returned to their classes—which they refused to do. They wrote to N.A.A.C.P. attorneys in Richmond, asking them to come to Farmville and start a suit for a new high school. Two attorneys did come; but they explained that, in view of the new policy of the N.A.A.C.P., they could not help with litigation unless a suit was filed to abolish school segregation.

Following this visit by the lawyers, the Parent-Teachers Association called a meeting to consider developments. They decided, by unanimous vote, to sue for integration—which they did, in April, 1951. Thus began the case of *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia*, the only such case in a Southside rural area, and one of those decided by the United States Supreme Court on May 17, 1954.

The story of the developments which followed in and around Farmville is a moving one—truly heroic leadership by the local minister in the face of varied threats and persecutions, efforts (often successful) by the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties and other racist forces to intimidate Negro parents in the town, solid support for the integration movement by independent Negro farmers in the countryside, etc.—but this story cannot be told here. What happened meanwhile to the relative status of Negro schools is most significant.

A new Robert R. Moton High School was completed during the 1953-54 school term, at a cost of nearly \$900,000.

It is a fine structure, with separate auditorium, cafeteria, and gymnasium; an intercommunication system; a comprehensive program of studies; well equipped laboratories and shops for science, art, commercial subjects, home economics, agriculture, and industrial arts; and an apparently able faculty of twenty-five teachers, all paid according to the same scale that applied in the white high schools. Between 1947-48 and 1956-57, the Index of Relative Status of Negro schools for the whole of Prince Edward County increased from 63.6 to 86.2. This increase of about 35 per cent is to be compared with a corresponding increase of only 7 per cent between 1949-41 and 1947-48.

After the Prince Edward County case began, integration suits of one kind or another were initiated in many parts of the State. In the fall of 1957, The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* listed five suits to abolish segregated schools—in Arlington and Prince Edward counties, and in the cities of Charlottesville, Newport News and Norfolk. It also listed eight communities where court challenges of the Virginia "Pupil Placement Law" (designed to circumvent court integration orders) had been filed—Arlington, Fairfax and Nansemond counties, and the cities of Charlottesville, Newport News, Norfolk, Richmond and Suffolk.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, there were threats of integration suits in many other communities—in Petersburg, in the counties of Pittsylvania, Pulaski, Culpeper, Lancaster and King William, and elsewhere—especially during 1956.

These developments undoubtedly influenced the relative-status trends noted for the latter part of the period repre-

<sup>19</sup>"Nine Localities Now Involved in School Integration Cases," September 30, 1957.

sented in Table III. Their influence is even more strikingly revealed in the rapid growth of capital outlay for Negro schools; and in this a big part was played by the so-called "Battle Fund", popularly known by the name of the then Governor of the Commonwealth.

The "Battle Fund" was created by action of the General Assembly early in 1950—"for the purpose of meeting the emergency need for school construction caused by cessation of building during the war, the increase in the birth rate, and *other special problems*."<sup>20</sup> The initial appropriation was \$45,000,000, of which \$30,000,000 became available immediately, and the remainder during the fiscal year of 1951-52. A further appropriation of \$30,000,000 was made available during 1952, bringing the total to \$75,000,000.

There is nothing in the act creating the "Battle Fund" which connects it with the mounting pressure from the Negro school movement; but the undefined "other special problems" phrase is suggestive. Moreover, it was generally understood in the State that the original legislation was mainly to help meet the "Negro school crisis", and that the supplementary appropriation was largely stimulated by events in Prince Edward County. In any case, according to a State school official, "Negroes got the biggest part of the money."

Local school officials and lay citizens interviewed in many parts of Virginia affirmed that "Battle Fund" allocations to their communities were used chiefly to build Negro schools, especially high schools; and many of them also said that the fear of integration suits gave

great impetus to these Negro school building programs. There follow a few anecdotic illustrations.

About one-third of the cost of the new high school in Prince Edward County was covered by "Battle Fund" allocations. The County spent less than \$600,000.

Dinwiddie County got \$500,000 from the "Battle Fund"; and \$400,000 of it went into the very fine Negro high school built in 1953-54 at a cost of \$805,000. Telling the story of long and futile efforts to get such a school, a civic leader there remarked: "Before the Prince Edward case, nothing happened in Dinwiddie County."

Following the Supreme Court decision in 1954, Negro citizens in Hopewell renewed long-standing pleas for a new high school. Their attorney advised them, when appearing before the School Board, to be careful to explain: "We want a school that is good enough for *any* child, when the time comes." The city voted a \$1,000,000 bond issue in 1955, of which \$700,000 was allocated for a beautiful, campus-style high school for Negro children, scheduled for occupancy in the fall of 1958.

In one community where there was this kind of development, the Superintendent cited the new Negro high school as an expression of "our basic philosophy of equality of educational opportunity". However, Negro leaders there had another explanation.

The Superintendent of Schools in a city in the Hampton Roads area reported that "we won our last bond issue [shortly after the 1954 Supreme Court decision] by the largest margin ever in the State of Virginia. It was believed, especially by the people, that if we

<sup>20</sup>H-96, approved February 11, 1950. *Acts of the Virginia Assembly 1950*. Chapter 14. (Emphasis by the writer.)

equalized we wouldn't have to integrate."

In one of the cities under court order to integrate its schools, the Superintendent said that the Supreme Court decision did not affect their equalization program "one way or another", but that in Virginia as a whole "it had considerable effect. Since 1954, there has been more construction of Negro schools than of white schools in the State."

The Superintendent of a county not far from Petersburg explained substantial progress toward equality with the statement: "Since the 1954 decision, thinking people here have taken the attitude that to equalize facilities is their best hope to maintain separate schools. That's what it is; and I might as well call it that."

These reports are strongly corroborated by trends in property values in public elementary and secondary schools. It will be recalled that the "Battle Fund" was created in 1950 and the Prince Edward County case began in 1951. The total value of property in white schools in Virginia increased from \$192,701,982 in 1950-51 to \$319,753,684 in 1953-54—an increase of 66 per cent; whereas the corresponding increase in Negro schools was from \$40,957,738 to \$89,434,926—an increase of 118 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

This rapid narrowing of the "gap" during the three terms following 1950-51 is also evident in trends in the per capita value of school property. The degree to which the value of school property per pupil in average daily attendance in Negro schools approximated that in white schools is shown

in Table IV for each term from 1940-41 to 1956-57. It will be noted that, between 1950-51 and 1953-54, the degree to which the per capita value of school property for Negro children approximated that for white children increased from 62.2 per cent to 86.2 per cent. This increase of 24 percentage points during this 3-year period is more than one-third larger than the corre-

TABLE IV  
PER CENT NEGRO OF WHITE VALUE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY PER PUPIL IN AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE IN VIRGINIA, BY TERMS: 1940-41 to 1956-57\*

School Term	Per Cent Negro of White	School Term	Per Cent Negro of White
1956-57	78.1	1947-48	47.3
1955-56	81.4	1946-47	44.7
1954-55	86.3	1945-46	43.0
1953-54	86.2	1944-45	41.0
1952-53	80.2	1943-44	45.0
1951-52	64.9	1942-43	44.5
1950-51	62.2	1941-42	44.8
1949-50	56.2	1940-41	44.6
1948-49	53.8		

\*Derived from Superintendent of Public Instruction, Commonwealth of Virginia, *Annual Report: 1940-41 through 1956-57*.

sponding increase during the 10-year period from 1940-41 to 1950-51.

It will also be noted from Table IV that the ratio of Negro-to-white per capita value of school property in 1954-55 was 86.3 per cent, about the same as in the preceding term; but that it decreased in the next term to 81.4 per cent, and again in 1956-57 to 78.1 per cent — below that for 1952-53. Thus, the *relative* per capita value of property in Virginia's Negro schools increased very rapidly during the period when the several integration cases were making their way

<sup>21</sup>Superintendent of Public Instruction, Commonwealth of Virginia, *Annual Report: 1950-51 and 1953-54*.

through the Federal courts; remained constant between the first decision of the Supreme Court in "The Segregation Cases" (1954) and its subsequent implementing decree (1955); and then entered upon a sharp decline. It was as if the motivation for rapid progress toward equalizing property values in white and Negro schools following 1950-51 was no longer operative after the Supreme Court struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine and ordered that school integration proceed "with all deliberate speed".

#### SOME QUESTIONS OF DYNAMICS

The considerable recent progress toward equality between white and Negro schools in Virginia, which this analysis only partially reveals, is a function of a complex of interrelated events and developments—extending from the local to the international scene. It is a part of the substantial over-all improvement in the Negro's social status since the beginning of World War II; and it reflects the operation of "impersonal" as well as "conscious" forces in the society. It is clear, however, that conscious interaction between the Negro school movement and the Federal courts played the decisive rôle.

No systematic analysis is here available of the extent to which developments around Negro schools in Virginia during the past two decades were paralleled in other Southern states; but there is much fragmentary information which suggests that the Virginia experience, despite peculiarities, is by no means unique. Hence, the expanding corps of interpreters of "the changing South" would do well to give greater emphasis than heretofore to the activities of the Negro school movement, supported by the Federal courts, in their explanations of the narrowing "gap" between Southern white and Negro schools. Such emphasis does not detract from the importance of such impersonal forces as industrialization and urbanization; but it does focus attention on those dynamic forces which are most immediately and directly involved.

Illustrative of the practical importance of this insight is the tendency here noted toward increasing inequality between white and Negro schools in Virginia since the Supreme Court decision in "The Segregation Cases". This tendency could mark the beginning of a retrogressive trend; and it is probable that only the purposeful and concerted efforts of *people* can now suffice to prevent its further development.