

A Guide to the Virginia. Dept. of Education. School Division. Desegregation files, 1965-1971

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1965-1971

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The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

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Scope and Content

Records, 1965-1971, including clippings, correspondence, forms, maps, and reports between Virginia public school boards and superintendents and the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, regarding efforts to desegregate Virginia schools. The records are housed in 18 boxes and arranged alphabetically by city or county name. The Library only has files for Fairfax-York Cities/Counties but nothing for cities/counties A-E.

After the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision which ruled "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," state officials in Virginia continued to evade school desegregation and maintained a policy aimed at minimizing desegregation. State officials passed legislation making the school desegregation process more difficult through a policy known as Massive Resistance. It wasn't until 1959 when the federal courts overturned many of Virginia's antidesegregation laws that the process of desegregation began, although it proceeded very slowly and as late as 1965 few black students in Virginia went to desegregated schools.

At first Virginia adopted "Freedom of Choice" plans which did nothing to ensure school integration as it did not "ensure racial balance in schools." It wasn't until the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare began to use portions of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to threaten localities with the loss of federal funding if they did not integrate their schools, that progress was made. Additionally a series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions increased the pace of school desegregation even more. In 1968 the *Charles C. Green et. al. v. County School Board of New Kent County, Virginia*, decision ended the "Freedom of Choice" plan and used other factors, such as the ratio of black to white students and faculty, to determine whether a desegregation plan was acceptable. Further Supreme Court decisions and pressure from the federal government helped to achieve the goal of school desegregation by the mid 1970s.

The desegregation files, 1965-1971, can be used to track the process of desegregation as city and county school boards had to show their progress through numerous forms and plans submitted to the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare. Local school boards had to submit forms (Summary of enrollment and staff; and Estimated enrollment and staff) and desegregation plans to show their compliance with School Desegregation Plans Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The forms contain the name of the school, county, total number of students, total number by race (White, American Indian, Black, Other), total number of Full time and part time teachers (also categorized by race) and Office staff. These numbers were used to show the ratio of black to white students and faculty to help determine if a school board had an acceptable ratio at each school. The plans included maps outlining school locations, changes to schools, and notices put in local newspapers showing the local adoption of school desegregation plans. The plans listed the steps being taken to desegregate the schools, such as changing a former white high school to now serve all high school students and to reassign faculty across the schools without any regard to race.

Included are school board resolutions and signed Assurances (or Statements) of Compliance with Policies for School Desegregation Plans, copies of court cases, notices sent to parents, and copies of hearings before the Commissioner of Education, Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare. Also included is correspondence from the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare about the schools plans, stating whether or not the school boards have adequately met the purpose of the Civil Rights Act and whether they would receive federal funding or not.

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