

UPHOLDING “SEPARATE BUT EQUAL:”
SOUTH CAROLINA’S SCHOOL EQUALIZATION PROGRAM, 1951-1955

by

Rebekah Dobrasko

Bachelor of Arts
Tulane University, 2001

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the
Department of History
University of South Carolina
2005

Department of History
Director of Thesis

Department of History
2nd Reader

Dean of the Graduate School

Upholding “Separate but Equal:”

South Carolina’s School Equalization Program, 1951-1955

In 1951, under the governorship of James F. Byrnes, South Carolina began an extensive program to equalize and reform education in its black and white schools. During his campaign for governor, Byrnes had called for an “educational revival,” promising to improve school buildings and education for all children in South Carolina.¹ Although Byrnes advocated changing education even before he became governor, *Briggs v. Elliott*, a lawsuit from Clarendon County that challenged segregation in South Carolina’s public schools provided impetus to the General Assembly to address the poor state of South Carolina’s schools. In an effort to prevent an adverse court decision in *Briggs*, the legislature passed a three-cent sales tax designed to fund improvements to black school facilities. The *Briggs* case eventually merged with four other school desegregation cases on appeal before the United States Supreme Court to become part of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. While the story of massive resistance to the *Brown* decision is well known, less well known is the effort in South Carolina to preempt such a decision.²

¹ James F. Byrnes, *All in One Lifetime* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 408.

² For histories and discussion of the massive resistance movement, see Numan Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950’s* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Francis M. Wilhoit, *The Politics of Massive Resistance* (New York: George Braziller, 1973); Earl Black, *Southern Governors and Civil Rights: Racial Segregation as a Campaign Issue in the Second Reconstruction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976). Michael Klarman’s “How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis,” *Journal of American History* 81 (June 1994): 81-118 and “It Could Have Gone the Other Way,” *The Nation*, 3 May 2004 claim that the Supreme Court set back race relations in the South as whites mobilized politically and violently to maintain school segregation. In Derrick Bell’s *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), Bell argues that the white response following *Brown* could have been prevented if the Supreme Court chose to force adherence to “separate but

This thesis looks first at the origins of the school equalization program and the decisive role played by Governor Byrnes in funding and implementing the program. The study then turns to an examination of how the program operated through the State Educational Finance Commission, which established statewide criteria for constructing buildings, consolidating school districts, and improving access and transportation for students. Finally, the thesis analyzes how the school equalization program worked at the local level, using Charleston County as a case study.

Charleston County provides a typical case study of the effects of South Carolina's school equalization program on local communities. Located in the South Carolina Lowcountry, the county contains both rural and urban populations. The implementation of the equalization program in Charleston County resulted in an initial clash between school officials and black parents, although the county eventually constructed over thirty-three new schools for students between 1951 and 1955 and provided needed expansion and renovations to existing school plants. An examination of the schools constructed through the program reveals the influence of national changes in school architecture in both black and white schools. Charleston County's experience with implementing the equalization program illustrates well the nature of white resistance to black demands for equality, important changes in the architectural design of schools in the postwar period, and the ultimate failure of the program to maintain legally enforced segregation in the public school system.

equal" instead of ordering desegregation. Although most of these works acknowledge the preventative movements of many southern states to maintain segregation, the legislation of the states, especially in the movement of equalize black and white school facilities, receives only a mention.

The school equalization program materially improved education for both black and white students throughout the state, yet it was unsuccessful in maintaining segregated public schools. Local struggles over the distribution of state funds to black schools prevented true equalization. Black parents struggled to compel reluctant school boards to equalize schools, but in the end South Carolina's equalization program made only a gesture toward correcting the historical lack of funding for black education.

* * *

South Carolina's school equalization program emerged in response to a burgeoning black challenge to the Jim Crow system. The end of World War II brought economic, social, and racial changes to the state. Black soldiers returned from World War II with a determination to secure the democratic freedoms they had fought to defend abroad. The black civil rights movement accelerated during World War II and challenged voter restrictions, unequal teacher salaries, segregation in public transportation, and segregation in higher education. Through several victories in court, blacks gained the right to vote in state primaries, desegregated seating on interstate transportation, and equal salaries for black and white teachers in many states. Southern whites fought these court decisions and devised other ways to maintain white supremacy.³

African Americans demanded equality in education as well as in politics. In the late 1940s the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the main organization dedicated to racial justice in the United States, initiated lawsuits in

³ See Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996) for a discussion of the emerging civil rights movement during World War II and in the postwar era.

several southern states demanding racial equalization in higher education facilities to improve black education. Southern politicians and school officials kept a wary eye on the results of these court cases. States such as Georgia and Mississippi began to make superficial attempts to equalize black and white schools. Upon the recommendation of a Mississippi legislative committee appointed to study the state's school system in 1946, Governor Thomas Bailey and the legislature approved \$3 million to build public schools. The Mississippi legislature supposedly intended the funds to be spent on black school construction, but most of the money went to white schools. Georgia's 1949 legislative session included a bill changing state appropriations for teacher salaries and school construction. The bill did not provide any new funding, but required equalization of state allotments for white and black public schools.⁴

Despite these last-minute efforts on the part of southern politicians, the NAACP continued to fight state funding inequalities in education through persistent lawsuits throughout the South. However, the NAACP shifted tactics in its higher education cases away from equalization. Two NAACP-supported lawsuits, *Sweatt v. Painter* originating in Texas and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*, argued that Texas' and Oklahoma's practices of segregation in higher education did not provide blacks with the educational and professional opportunities as those provided to whites. Deciding in favor of the plaintiffs, the Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of the University of Texas law school and the University of Oklahoma graduate school on 5

⁴ Thomas Victor O'Brien, "Georgia's Response to *Brown v. Board of Education*: The Rise and Fall of Massive Resistance, 1949-1961" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1992), 57-58; Charles C. Bolton, "Mississippi's School Equalization Program, 1945-1954: 'A Last Gasp to Try to Maintain a Segregated Educational System,'" *Journal of Southern History* 66 (November 2000), 794-795.

June 1950.⁵ To white politicians and lawyers, it seemed likely that the NAACP's next target for integration would be the South's elementary and secondary schools.

On the day that the Supreme Court issued its ruling in the Texas and Oklahoma cases, James Byrnes announced his candidacy for governor of South Carolina. As a lawyer and former associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, Byrnes understood the implications of the school equalization and desegregation cases. Byrnes had a long and distinguished political career before campaigning for governor of his home state. Born in 1882 in Charleston, South Carolina, Byrnes studied law, clerked for a district court judge in Aiken, and entered political life as court solicitor in 1908. Byrnes became the United States representative for the Second District of South Carolina in 1910, and later served as United States senator, justice of the Supreme Court, the United States Secretary of State, and Franklin Roosevelt's "assistant president." Byrnes enjoyed a short retirement from public life before he decided to run for governor of South Carolina at the age of sixty-eight.⁶

Conscious of the recent Supreme Court decisions in the *Sweatt* and *McLaurin* cases, the poor system of black education in South Carolina, and the implications for future cases involving segregation in elementary schools, Byrnes believed the state needed to improve schools for both black and white students. "We should provide [equal schools] because it is right and not wait until we are forced by the United States courts to

⁵ Mark Tushnet, *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925-1950* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 131-136; Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 259-268.

⁶ See David Robertson, *Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994). Although many sources cite Byrnes' age as seventy-one when he became governor, Robertson relates that Byrnes' assumed his older sister's birth date, in order to enter the workforce at an earlier age.

provide them.” By eliminating inequalities in education, Byrnes hoped to reduce the rates of adult illiteracy in South Carolina and promised to draft legislation and push for educational reform if South Carolinians elected him governor.⁷

In promising to improve South Carolina’s schools, Byrnes addressed a significant problem. Several recently issued reports and statistics highlighted the poor state of South Carolina’s schools. A study commissioned by Governor Burnet Maybank in 1941 reported that nineteen counties in South Carolina lacked a high school for black students while only eight buses in the state transported black children to school.⁸ In 1947, with the support of Governor Strom Thurmond, the General Assembly commissioned another statewide survey of the public school system. The George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee conducted the survey and presented their findings to the General Assembly in 1948.⁹

The Peabody survey revealed the inequalities between rural and urban schools as well as differences in funding, transportation, teacher training, and school facilities between black and white schools. The statistics on school buildings published in the report reflected the extreme disparity between black and white schools both in rural and urban areas. In 1947, the school plant investment for whites totaled approximately \$221

⁷ Speech announcing candidacy for governor, 5 June 1950; James F. Byrnes, Re: Supreme Court Decisions, n.d., folder 4, box 12, Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, SC (hereafter CSC); Address by James F. Byrnes, 12 June 1950, folder 13, box 11, CSC; James F. Byrnes Radio Speech, 26 June 1950, folder 16, box 11, CSC.

⁸ For statistics on local spending and yearly reports of the Supervisor of Rural Schools and the State Agent for Negro Schools, see the Annual Reports of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, published in the *Reports and Resolutions of South Carolina to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina.*; Howard Quint, *Profile in Black and White: A Frank Portrait of South Carolina* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1958), 9.

⁹ *Public Schools of South Carolina: A Report of the South Carolina Education Survey Committee* (Nashville, TN: Division of Surveys and Field Services, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1948), hereafter Peabody Survey.

per pupil. The school plants for blacks reflected an investment of \$45 per pupil. Economic pressures during the Depression and the scarcity of building materials during World War II meant that the state constructed few schools for several decades. Schools across the state were in varying stages of disrepair, and the differences between rural and urban schools were especially stark. Overcrowded classrooms, overworked teachers, and the lack of running water and electricity in many of the rural schools compounded educational problems (Figure 1). The survey estimated that the state and local school boards needed to invest ninety million dollars to improve school building facilities and bring South Carolina's schools close to the national average in school buildings and equipment.¹⁰



Figure 1. Ladson Elementary School, Charleston County, photograph c.1920.¹¹

¹⁰ Peabody Survey, 192-208.

¹¹ Photograph Collection, Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC.

In addition to the Peabody report, well-publicized figures conveyed that approximately one-third of all of South Carolina's World War II draftees did not pass the Army's intelligence tests, which measured the level of education and critical thinking ability of the draftees. In 1950, the Army continued to reject 60.7 percent of South Carolina's young men for failing intelligence tests or because they lacked a high school education. Byrnes often quoted these statistics in his campaign to garner support for improving education in the public schools. In his autobiography and speeches given after his term as governor, Byrnes declared that "the most influential cause of my return to public life was a desire to make a contribution to the improvement of our educational facilities."¹²

Byrnes easily won the election. In his inaugural address in 1951, he detailed his plans to improve education. Acknowledging the disparities in taxes between the rural and urban areas, Byrnes declared, "We will never be able to give the boys and girls in the rural sections of the State the school buildings and equipment to which they are entitled as long as these facilities are furnished only by taxes on the real property of a school district."¹³ Byrnes revealed more details of his educational plan to the General Assembly on 24 January 1951. Governor Byrnes based his recommendations on the 1948 Peabody survey and a 1950 report from the House of Representatives supporting a sales tax to fund educational improvements. Byrnes recommended a three-cent sales tax to fund a

¹² Address by James F. Byrnes, 12 June 1950, folder 13, box 1, James Byrnes Collection, CSC; James Byrnes, "Election Eve," November 1950, folder 1, box 12, CSC; "38.7% in South Fail Draft Mental Test," *New York Times*, 18 February 1951; James F. Byrnes, *All in One Lifetime* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 407-409; James F. Byrnes, "The Crisis in Schools: Politics Has No Place in Education," Bennettsville, SC, 27 September 1957, folder 4, box 16, CSC.

¹³ Inaugural Address of James F. Byrnes as Governor of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina, January 16, 1951, Speeches and Press Releases, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

statewide school building program. He also recommended a bond issue of \$75 million as a quick fundraiser for the educational program. The General Assembly would use the proceeds from the sales tax to pay the interest and principal on these bonds.¹⁴ While a sales tax and bond issue would lessen the disparities between black and white schools and improve education, the General Assembly had not supported sales taxes in the past. Byrnes' educational improvements could stall without the approval of the legislators.

Byrnes attempted to use the 1950 Supreme Court decisions in the Texas and Oklahoma cases and his political stature to convince legislators to pass his school equalization package before a court decision forced the state to equalize its schools. Yet Byrnes received the General Assembly's support for his three-cent school tax after a direct threat to South Carolina's racially segregated schools. In 1949, encouraged by the leadership of Reverend J.A. DeLaine and the support of the NAACP, black parents in the Summerton area of Clarendon County filed a petition with the local school district. This petition requested equal school facilities and equipment for black children in Summerton. The petitioners insisted on their right to equal educational opportunities, although many suffered harsh economic reprisals implemented by whites in the Summerton area. On 17 May 1950, undeterred by the white response in Clarendon, the NAACP filed the school equalization case known as *Briggs v. Elliott* in the federal district court in Charleston, South Carolina.¹⁵

¹⁴ Address of the Honorable James F. Byrnes, Governor of South Carolina to the General Assembly, Columbia, SC, Wednesday, January 24, 1951; Address of James F. Byrnes, Governor of South Carolina, to the South Carolina Education Association in Annual Meeting in Township Auditorium at Columbia, S.C., at 8 p.m., March 16, 1951, Speeches and Press Releases, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

¹⁵ Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 18-25; Benjamin F. Hornsby, *Stepping Stone to the Supreme Court: Clarendon County, South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1992), 7.

The case, as originally filed, accused white Clarendon County school officials of refusing to uphold the law requiring that segregated facilities be equal. Judge J. Waites Waring, the federal district court judge assigned to *Briggs v. Elliott*, conferred with attorney Thurgood Marshall after Marshall filed the suit. Waring believed that Marshall and the NAACP should challenge the system of segregation itself, and encouraged Marshall to refile the case to reflect an attack on segregation. After debate within the NAACP over the chances of winning the case based on segregation as opposed to equalization, Marshall refiled *Briggs v. Elliott* and went to trial on 28 May 1951 before a three-judge panel.¹⁶ Whites in Clarendon County needed Byrnes' school equalization program to support the judicial precedent of "separate but equal" to maintain segregated schools.

South Carolina's white politicians scrambled to put Byrnes' proposed legislation in place to bolster their defense of segregation. Attorney Robert McCormick Figg, counsel for the Clarendon County school district in the lawsuit, relied heavily on the promise of increased funding for black schools in preparing his defense before the federal district court. To counter the plaintiffs' key point of unequal school facilities, Figg needed to prove to the court that the state was committed to equalizing black and white schools. Figg pressured Byrnes to pass the equalization bond issue and sales tax before the *Briggs* case went to trial. The bill became law one month before the trial began, and the State Educational Finance Commission, created to administer the equalization funds,

¹⁶ David W. Southern, "Beyond Jim Crow Liberalism: Judge Waring's Fight Against Segregation in South Carolina, 1942-52," *The Journal of Negro History* 66 (Autumn 1981): 219-220; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 72-73.

began meeting only three weeks before Figg had to argue his case before the district court.¹⁷

The General Assembly finally understood the implications of unequal funding and the threat of the pending desegregation case. The stated intent of the new sales tax was “to insure equality of educational opportunity for all such children in respect to said schools and school system.”¹⁸ Despite a lack of support in the past for a sales tax, the legislators agreed with Byrnes’ argument that a tax was the easiest way to help local school districts adequately fund education and eliminate disparities between black and white schools, thus stalling the threat of lawsuits demanding equality or desegregation of the public schools.

The 1951 appropriations act incorporated recommendations from the 1947 Peabody survey and a plethora of educational planning guides in an effort to enhance the administration of South Carolina’s schools in addition to providing funding for new construction. Following national trends in educational administration and planning, the General Assembly required counties to consolidate schools and districts, abolished all local boards of education with less than seven members, and required newly-created school districts to survey the building and educational needs of their schools before receiving money from the state.¹⁹ The State Educational Finance Commission supervised

¹⁷ Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 344-345.

¹⁸ State Resource Committee, “Significant Changes in the Public School System of South Carolina Since 1951,” n.d., Records of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, box 21, folder Education: School Amendment, Modern Political Collections, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

¹⁹ N.L. Engelhardt, N.L. Engelhardt, Jr. and Stanton Leggett, *Planning Elementary School Buildings* (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1953); *Guide for Planning School Plants, 1958 Edition* (Washington, DC: National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, 1958) (hereafter 1958 NSCS Guide), 4;

these changes and reviewed applications for building funds. The commission was to oversee “the needs for new construction, new equipment, new transportation facilities, and such other improvements as are necessary to enable all children of South Carolina to have adequate and equal educational advances.” A state-controlled, centralized agency ensured that funds would be used for equalization purposes to maintain segregation.²⁰

The members of the Educational Finance Commission included the governor as ex-officio chairman, the state superintendent of education as ex-officio member, and five additional members appointed by the governor. Governor Byrnes, as chairman, appointed businessman Elliott White Springs of Lancaster, bank president Dewey H. Johnson of Greenwood, attorney David W. Robinson of Columbia, attorney J.C. Long of Charleston, and Dr. Lawrence Peter Hollis, retired superintendent of schools in Greenville as the first members of the commission. The Educational Finance Commission had the power to approve school construction plans and district consolidation and to implement and oversee the new transportation program controlled by the state.²¹

The new law required all revenue from the tax be spent on equalizing educational facilities. Each school district would receive fifteen dollars per year per pupil in average daily attendance for twenty years, until 1971. However, as Byrnes explained, “instead of spreading it out over [twenty years], we issued bonds in order to make possible at an

National Council of Chief State School Officers, *Planning Rural Community School Buildings* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949), xiii.

²⁰ “Excerpts from General Appropriations Act,” Publications, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH; “School Building Return to Local Boards Sought,” *News and Courier*, 30 January 1953, 1-A.

²¹ “Excerpts from General Appropriations Act,” Publications; Press-radio release, 22 April 1951, Speeches and Press Releases, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

earlier date the equalization of facilities as between races.”²² Counties could borrow money from the state for current projects based on the projection of the total amount of money the county would receive over twenty years. For example, Charleston County had 27,728 students in average daily attendance for the 1949-1950 school year. With the allotment of fifteen dollars per child for the next twenty years, Charleston County would receive \$6,238,800 to spend on equalization projects throughout the county. Money distributed to local school boards through this program could only be used for “establishing and maintaining adequate physical facilities for the public school system, and/or the payment of existing debt therefore, and for no other purpose.”²³

Citizens across the state opposed the new sales tax. White citizens resented paying taxes to support black schools. Other whites believed that the school building campaign and the sales tax did not need to be implemented until the court ruled in the *Briggs v. Elliott* case. A group of businessmen filed an unsuccessful suit against Governor James Byrnes and the Educational Finance Commission challenging the constitutionality of the sales tax and bond referendum. Merchants opposed the extra paperwork and bureaucracy imposed by the sales tax. Both black and white citizens of South Carolina requested that food and clothing be exempt from the tax to ease the burden on poorer taxpayers. The *Lighthouse and Informer*, an African-American newspaper based in Columbia, criticized taxing poor black citizens to pay for a “theory politically conceived some 53 years ago aimed at Negroes.” Black political leaders

²² James F. Byrnes to L. Marion Gressette, 29 January 1954, *Briggs v. Elliott*, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH

²³ “Excerpts from General Appropriations Act,” Publications; “Estimate of State Apportionment of Building Funds Under Proposed Building Program (Based on Average Daily Attendance for 1949-50), General Subjects, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

opposed the tax and the equalization program because the tax was devised in response to the *Briggs* decision. Byrnes dismissed African-American concerns as misplaced, and the voters of South Carolina reelected about eighty-two percent of their local representatives to the General Assembly, providing Byrnes with “proof of [the] intelligent and patriotic attitude of the people.”²⁴

Although the purpose of the sales tax was to prevent desegregation, the appropriations act did incorporate provisions for educational change and improvements. The act required counties to survey their existing school plants to assist in planning new construction. Surveys ensured that districts planned schools according to population needs. Counties also submitted plans for consolidation of districts and schools within the county. Consolidation reduced administrative costs and improved efficiency in school administration. The Educational Finance Commission approved the survey and consolidation plans of each county. To oversee and implement these requirements, the commission hired former superintendent of Sumter schools Dr. E.R. Crow as its director. In addition to directing the surveys and consolidation plans, Crow’s duties also included speaking to the press on behalf of the commission, compiling statistics and reports for members of the commission, and even testifying in the *Briggs v. Elliott* case on behalf of the school equalization program. The equalization program moved quickly and by October 1952 forty-two counties filed district reorganization plans. At the end of

²⁴ “Third Annual Message of Governor James F. Byrnes to the South Carolina General Assembly, prepared for delivery expected at 12:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 14, 1953,” Speeches and Press Releases; “Radio Report to the People by Governor James F. Byrnes,” 11 May 1951, Speeches and Press Releases, McCullough, “Educational Revolution,” Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH; James F. Byrnes to Mrs. Samuel C. Brown, 17 December 1951, Legislative, Sales, Tax, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH; “The Byrnes Tax,” *Lighthouse and Informer*, 7 July 1951; “Suit Not to Halt School Plans, Byrnes Reports,” *News and Courier*, 21 July 1951, 1.

statewide consolidation the number of school districts in South Carolina fell from 1,220 to 102.²⁵

To assist counties in preparing applications for funds, the Educational Finance Commission established criteria for school consolidation. The commission required that elementary schools have at least one teacher for each grade, while high schools must have an enrollment of at least eighty-three students in each grade. Based on the advice of the state Attorney General and the results of previous equalization cases decided by the Supreme Court, the commission required that districts must operate one high school for each race. If a district had more than one high school for each race, the commission encouraged consolidation. In an effort to recognize the importance of schools to communities, the commission encouraged counties to disregard county lines for certain communities that sent students to a school in an adjoining county.²⁶ The Educational Finance Commission distributed state funds to school districts with the intent of equalizing facilities between the races, and gave districts with obvious disparities in black school buildings priority in receiving funding.²⁷

The commission also distributed a guide for project architects and administrators applying for funds, as the law required school districts to hire registered architects to draw plans and to hire licensed contractors to complete the work. The commission approved all new school sites before the architect drew plans for a new school building.

²⁵ “South Carolina’s Educational Revolution: A Report of Progress in South Carolina,” (Columbia, SC: The State Educational Finance Commission, n.d.), 1.

²⁶ Untitled, undated, typewritten sheet, State Agencies, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

²⁷ E.R. Crow, director, to County Superintendents of Education, 6 April 1954, Speeches and Press Releases, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

Plans submitted for approval were required to include topographical plots, plans of all floors of the new school, elevations, furniture layouts that represented specialized classrooms like home economic rooms or science laboratories, and a description of materials planned for the building. Architects submitted preliminary and final plans for approval as well as any plans for the remodeling or rehabilitation for existing school buildings.²⁸ The commission's control over local building plans ensured that schools would be properly planned according to the county's previously-submitted school plant survey.

Many local school board officials and parents resisted the changes imposed by the equalization program. School board trustees opposed the consolidation of schools and districts which resulted in a loss of political power for the many trustees out of a position. Since a state agency, the Educational Finance Commission, administered the funds for the new building program, many school officials and politicians resented the lack of local political control over the distribution of state funds. In 1953, the South Carolina Senate unsuccessfully proposed returning control over school construction plans to the counties. Schools, no matter how small, often provided a community center for a rural area, and many small towns and communities opposed consolidation and closing the school in their district. Furthermore, consolidation meant that children would often need transportation to school and many parents protested the bus routes, especially the commission's

²⁸ "A Guide for School Architects and School Administrators Dealing with School Plants," State Agencies, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

directive that no child within a one-and-a-half mile radius would be eligible for state-supported transportation.²⁹

The school equalization program authorized state oversight on transportation and building equalization projects, yet the Educational Finance Commission relied on local school board officials to survey the needs of their schools and apply for sufficient funds to equalize schools. However, some districts built black schools and did not appropriate enough money to furnish equipment for the new schools. For example, officials did not fully complete a building project in Saluda. The new black school lacked a planned wing providing twelve additional classrooms and lacked adequate equipment. Administrators in Charleston County refused to authorize construction of an additional black high school to replace one that had previously closed.³⁰

The major obstacle to the school equalization programs and educational reform on the local level stemmed from the resistance of local school officials. Local officials refused to supplement the statewide equalization campaign by appropriating local funds to support equalization. Furthermore, white officials and parents wanted to secure funds solely for white school building projects, and the Educational Finance Commission denied many local requests for funding because the school district had not addressed the needs of black schools. The commission refused to authorize white school construction

²⁹ "School Building Return to Local Boards Sought," *News and Courier*, 30 January 1953, 1-A; McCullough, "Educational Revolution," State Educational Finance Commission Agenda, 10 December 1951, State Agencies, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH. The commission later repealed its directive on transportation as long as the school district was willing to reimburse the state for providing transportation to students living within one-and-a-half miles of a school.

³⁰ Robert S. Logan to Thurgood Marshall, 27 September 1954; Dorothy Cable, "New Negro School Finished but Empty of all Equipment," no newspaper name, 20 January 1955, Part 3, Series C, reel 2, NAACP Papers; Millicent Brown, "Civil Rights Activism in Charleston, South Carolina, 1940-1970," (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1997), 74.

projects for a district if the district had not filed plans for black school construction. Many local officials opposed equalization to the point where they did not apply for any funding from the state. In Lee County, the first building construction project did not occur until 1953, two years after the state began granting funds. To combat the maneuverings of local white school officials, the Educational Finance Commission maintained their right to approve or disapprove building projects to ensure equalization. In addition to school officials' reluctance to fund black school improvements, many districts reduced funding in other areas. Although the state continually raised its appropriations for teacher salaries, many local school boards decreased their allotments to teachers, resulting in very few teachers benefiting from a raise in salary.³¹

Charleston County provides a case study of the local struggle to implement the state's school equalization program. The county, with an urban center and rural outlying areas on the coast of South Carolina, is illustrative of the movement throughout the state toward consolidation, racial equalization, and new school design. Charleston school board officials confronted angry black parents over the distribution of the building funds and their lack of attention to deficiencies in black schools. Despite these conflicts, the county's school equalization and construction program proceeded rapidly and implemented architectural and educational design trends in the new schools.

World War II contributed to a rapid growth in population throughout the county, as the Charleston Naval Base and Shipyard, Naval Weapons Station, and Charleston Air

³¹ McCullough, "Educational Revolution," Speeches and Press Releases; E.R. Crow to James F. Byrnes, 7 October 1952, State Agencies, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH; Address of Governor James F. Byrnes to the South Carolina Education Association in Columbia, SC, March 25, 1954, folder 7, box 14, James F. Byrnes Collection, CSC; "Contract for Half Million Dollar Negro School Let," *Lee County Messenger*, 5 November 1953.

Force Base drew workers to the area.³² The 1950 census reported that out of 164,856 residents of the county, seventy-three percent of these residents lived in the city of Charleston. Forty-one percent of the county's residents were African American. In 1949, Charleston County had the second-largest number of students attending its public schools. The county school system was sharply divided between the city of Charleston and the outlying rural areas that comprised most of the county. The county school population included twenty-nine white schools with 379 teachers and 10,410 students, while sixty-seven black schools held 9,471 students with 234 teachers. The county school districts only operated three black high schools for students as opposed to seven for whites. Charleston County's schools were divided into twenty-three school districts.³³

In 1948, the city of Charleston's school district voted to conduct a citywide survey of its schools to "evaluate the present school program and to get help with many serious problems." The black population of the peninsula was increasing due to employment opportunities at Charleston's military installations while many white families with school-age children moved out of the city into the suburban areas. This change in population resulted in overcrowding in black schools as many classrooms in white schools went unused. The city district hired a survey team from the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, the same organization that provided South

³² William D. Smyth, "Segregation in Charleston in the 1950s: A Decade of Transition," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 92 (April 1991): 100.

³³ 1950 *United States Census of Population, General Characteristics, South Carolina* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, United States Government Printing Office, 1952); "County School Districts May Be Revamped," *News and Courier*, 20 January 1950, 1; Bryan Collier, "City School System Making Big Strides Toward Racial Parity," *News and Courier*, 24 September 1950, 7-A.

Carolina with a statewide survey of its public schools. The report recommended closing deteriorated schools, constructing new elementary schools for black students, and acquiring outdoor space for playgrounds and exercise for children attending the schools.³⁴ Charleston's city school officials realized the need for changes in the public schools and began plans to upgrade and construct new schools before the creation of the State Educational Finance Commission in 1951.

Since Charleston's school officials commissioned the survey in 1948, the district had little time to implement the survey's recommendations before funds became available to the district through the 1951 equalization measure. In 1950, George C. Rogers, the superintendent of the Charleston City District, recommended to the board of school commissioners a bond issue to construct new schools to ease overcrowding in the district. The new state education legislation passed before the city could vote on a school building bond, and the city decided to wait for funds to become available to the district before constructing any new schools.³⁵

As part of the required consolidation and school survey to receive state equalization funds, the county superintendent of education, G. Creighton Frampton, submitted the Peabody College's survey of the Charleston city schools to the Educational Finance Commission. The survey would be used to determine the equalization priorities for the city of Charleston under the new legislation. Dr. Floyd Jordan of Emory University surveyed the county districts' schools and recommended consolidating the

³⁴ "Peabody Survey of City Schools Voted by Board," *News and Courier*, 15 September 1948, 1; "Reports Recommends Sweeping Changes in City School Set-Up," *News and Courier*, 31 May 1949, 1; *Public Schools of Charleston, South Carolina: A Survey Report* (Nashville, TN: Division of Surveys and Field Services, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1949).

³⁵ City Board of School Commissioners, Board Minutes, School District 20, 8 May 1951; Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC.

county's twenty-three school districts into nine districts. Jordan's survey also called for consolidation of many rural black schools. The county's consolidated nine school districts still exist today (Figure 2).³⁶

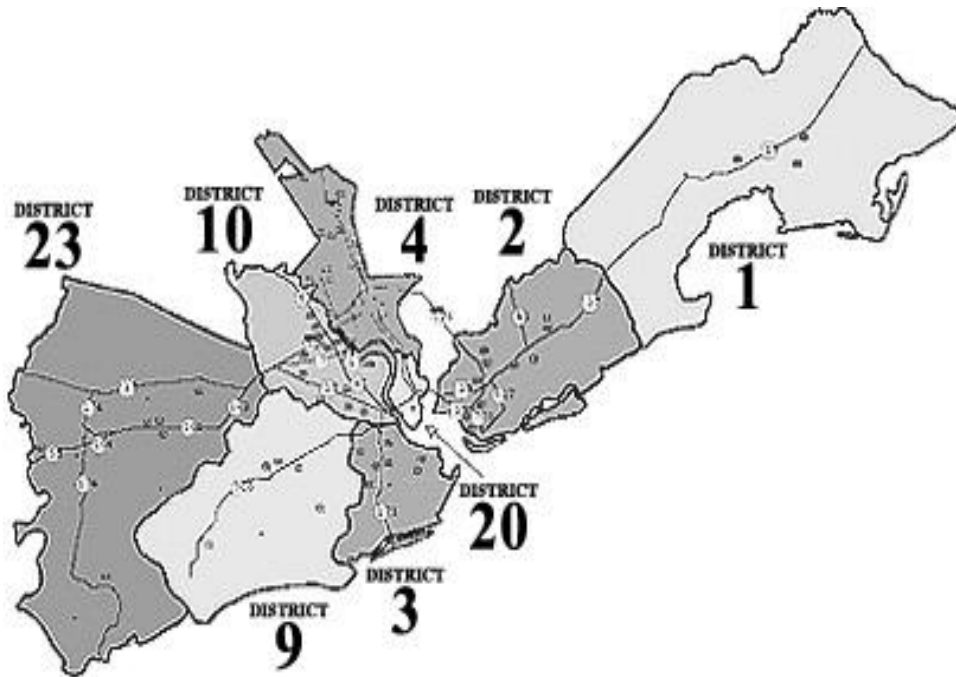


Figure 2. Layout of Charleston County Districts. District 20 encompasses the city of Charleston.³⁷

The Educational Finance Commission approved the county's school survey and reorganization plans in February 1952. The approval meant that the commission would accept architectural drawings, site plans, and requests for funding for the top three construction priorities for equalization within each district. School districts quickly

³⁶ City Board of School Commissioners, Board Minutes, School District 20, 7 November 1951; Bryan Collier, "Charleston County's New School Plans are Simple, Inexpensive, and Effective," *News and Courier*, 21 October 1951.

³⁷ Map taken from www.ccsdschools.com. The school districts include St. James-Santee District 1, which encompasses the area around McClellanville; Moultrie District 2, which includes Mt. Pleasant; James Island District 3, encompassing James Island; Cooper River District 4, which includes the city of North Charleston; St. John's District 9, including John's Island and Rockville; St. Andrews District 10, encompassing schools west of the Ashley River; Charleston District 20, including the peninsula of Charleston; and St. Paul's District 23, which covers Hollywood, Edisto Island, and Rantowles.

submitted architectural plans for needed schools, and Charleston County's school equalization and consolidation project began.³⁸

Charleston's school construction program incorporated postwar trends in educational thinking and school design. Educators began to reassess the values and needs of schools due to circumstances created by World War II. The war limited building opportunities as military efforts commanded the majority of the United States' supply of lumber, steel, and construction workers. Schools constructed during the war were mostly temporary because few school districts had the ability to permanently improve their school plants during the war.³⁹ In addition to the lack of construction, the return of American soldiers from World War II resulted in an increase in the United States' birth rate. Educators assessed the number of classrooms needed to educate these children and urged school districts to build new school plants to accommodate the increase in students. Because these children would first enter elementary school, school administrators, architects, and educational consultants focused their ideas and efforts on the design and construction of elementary schools at the beginning of the 1950s.⁴⁰

Educators and architects realized that the schools constructed in the past were not suitable for educational needs of the present. In schools designed in the first half of the twentieth century, equipment such as desks and chairs were nailed to the floor limiting

³⁸ "Full State Approval Is Given School Plans," *News and Courier*, 13 February 1952, 6-A.

³⁹ Reginald E. Marsh, "Trends in Materials and Design," *Review of Educational Research*, 15 (February 1945): 54.

⁴⁰ John W. McLeod, "New Ideas in School Construction," in *AIA School Plant Studies, A Selection: 1952-1962*, ed. Eric Pawley, AIA (New York: American Institute of Architects, 1962), 63. See also N.L. Engelhardt, N.L. Engelhardt, Jr., and Stanton Leggett, *School Planning and Building Handbook* (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1956), N.L. Engelhardt, N.L. Engelhardt, Jr. and Stanton Leggett, *Planning Elementary School Buildings* (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1953); C. William Brubaker, *Planning and Designing Schools*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 15.

the mobility of children and teachers in the classroom. Lighting and ventilation in older schools were not conducive to education, as some areas of the classroom received more light than others and the overall air flow was poor. School administrators realized the need to change these aspects of the classroom and a prolific amount of literature emerged to help school boards, architects, and lay people understand the need for these changes and suggest ways to implement change in new school design.⁴¹

Charleston County's school architects followed many of the national planning and design trends. Easy expansion led to the most significant architectural change in school buildings constructed after World War II. One-story, flat-roofed buildings easily accommodated additions (Figure 3). Haut Gap High and Elementary, a black school on Johns Island constructed in 1951, "was designed with...additions in mind."⁴² One-story schools also eliminated the need for staircases and fire escapes from upper floors, contributing to the safety of the new schools. Classrooms located on one floor provided

⁴¹ For contemporary discussions of educational trends, planning, and architecture, see Brubaker, *Planning and Designing Schools*, Edward A. Campbell, "New Spaces and Places for Learning," *The School Review* 68 (Autumn 1960): 346-352; William W. Caudill, *Toward Better School Design*, (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1954), William W. Cutler, III, "Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice Since 1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 29 (Spring 1989): 1-40; Engelhardt et al., *School Planning*; Engelhardt et al., *Planning Elementary School Buildings*; N.L. Engelhardt, N.L. Engelhardt, Jr., and Stanton Leggett, *Planning Secondary School Buildings* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1949); N.L. Engelhardt, Jr., "Trends in School Architecture and Design," *Review of Educational Research* 12 (April 1942): 171-177; 1958 NSCS Guide; Charles S. Johnson, "Next Steps in Education in the South," *Phylon (1940-1956)* 15 (First Quarter 1954): 7-20; Reginald E. Marsh, "Trend in Materials and Design," *Review of Educational Research* 15 (February 1945): 54-60; W.D. McClurkin, *School Building Planning* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1964); Walter McQuade, ed., *Schoolhouse* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958); National Council of Chief State School Officers, *Planning Rural Community School Buildings* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949); Pawley, *AIA School Plant Studies*; William C. Reavis, "Functional Planning of School-Building Programs," *The Elementary School Journal* 46 (October 1945): 72-80; Kenneth Reid, ed., *School Planning: The Architectural Record of a Decade* (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1951); and Wallace H. Strevall and Arvid J. Burke, *Administration of the School Building Program* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959).

⁴² "Bids on Construction of Additions to Two Charleston County Negro Schools Opened," *News and Courier*, 18 April 1952, 9-B.

easy access to the outside for the students. Better light and ventilation solutions could be found for one-story schools. The smaller-scaled schools had psychological benefits as well. As one architect discovered, “We want buildings which are friendly to children. We believe that the low-lying, sprawled-out type of building, close to the ground, one story high, straight in its lines, honestly functional, is less awe-inspiring and more friendly in the eyes of the child, though it may not look as grand to adults as some of our multi-stories Roman efforts.” Especially for elementary school children, one-story schools were less intimidating to the students.⁴³



Figure 3. Haut Gap High and Elementary, Johns Island, constructed c. 1952, showing a one-story school.⁴⁴

One-story schools also provided better lighting and ventilation for the classrooms.

Rows of windows across the façade of the schools allowed an abundance of light to enter

⁴³ Reid, *School Planning*, 263; National Council of Chief State School Officers, *Rural Community*, 38; 1958 NCSC Guide, 50; Engelhardt et al, *School Planning*, 252; McQuade, *Schoolhouse*, 85-86.

⁴⁴ Photograph Collection, Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC.

the classroom. Lighting was an important study point in designing new school plants, and planning books and architectural discussions devoted many articles and pages to issues of lighting. Architects employed design materials, such as glass blocks, that doubled as a technique to control lighting in schools (Figure 4). Rows of windows contributed to the design aspect of the schools, providing clean lines and breaking the mass of the building dictated by the architectural belief in single story schools.⁴⁵



Figure 4. Murray-LaSaine Elementary, Johns Island, constructed in 1955, showing glass block windows.⁴⁶

The development of “campus plan” high schools emerged nationally in response to changing demands in secondary school education. As high school curricula became more specialized after World War II, school districts began offering agricultural classes, vocational training, and home economics in addition to maintaining traditional classes in language, science, and mathematics. These courses required specialized classrooms with

⁴⁵ Engelhardt et al, *School Planning*, 252; Marsh, “Trends in Materials and Design,” 55.

⁴⁶ Photograph by author, 5 March 2005.

particular equipment, and the campus plan emerged to accommodate the new curriculum. Schools built on the campus plan consisted of several different buildings dedicated to different courses and specializations.⁴⁷

Burke Vocational High School, a black school in Charleston, redesigned its school plant around the campus plan (Figure 5). Burke's four campus buildings included a building for administrative offices and general classrooms; a building with a library and rooms for cosmetology, mechanical drawing, and art; a science building with specialized rooms for chemistry, biology, and physics; and a fourth building with a home economics lab, tailoring, and an all-purpose room.⁴⁸ As the curriculum changed in high schools, architectural designs for schools changed to accommodate the new classes.

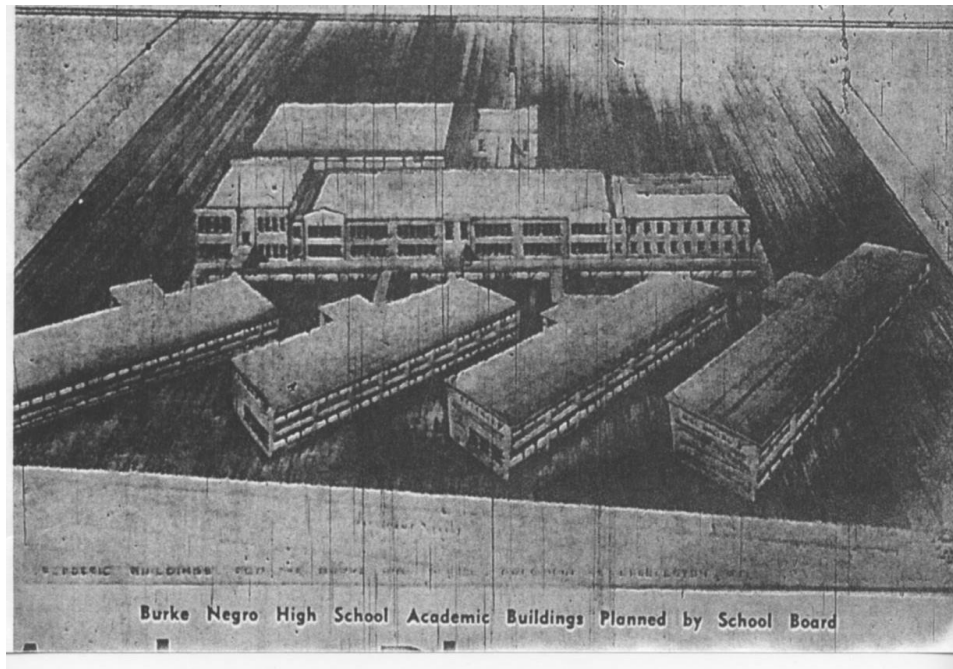


Figure 5. Architect's Model of New Burke High School showing campus plan.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ NCSC Guide, 92; Engelhardt et al, *Planning Secondary School Buildings*, 40-41.

⁴⁸ Board Minutes, City Board of School Commissioners, School District 20, 4 March 1953, Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC.

⁴⁹ "Burke Negro High School Academic Buildings Planned by School Board," *News and Courier*, 28 September 1952, 10-A.

Architects implemented new design in both black and white schools in Charleston County. The new schools constructed in the county reflected the intent of the school equalization program. New black and white schools had similar materials and design. Memminger Elementary (Figure 6), a white school in the city of Charleston, held thirty-three classrooms, a library, kitchen, cafeteria, and auditorium. The city school board's architectural firm, Simons & Lapham, designed Memminger with an open corridor plan, allowing for cross ventilation and natural lighting to enter the classrooms. The school also had a separate building for first grade classrooms with a separate play area, thus separating the younger children from the older children, an experimental concept in elementary education.⁵⁰ The new black elementary school planned for the northeastern section of Charleston also took advantage of the open corridor plan (Figure 7).

⁵⁰ Betty Pugh, "City Schools Get Costly Additions," *News and Courier*, 15 August 1954, 14-D; Board Minutes, City Board of School Commissioners, School District 20. 6 February 1952, Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC. For a discussion of the benefits of open corridors and separate primary classrooms, see 1958 NCSC Guide, 50; McClurkin, *School Building Planning*, 6.



Figure 6. Memminger Elementary school, constructed 1953, showing open corridor plan.⁵¹



Figure 7. East Bay Elementary school, constructed c. 1955, now Sanders-Clyde Elementary school.⁵²

⁵¹ Photograph Collection, Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC.

⁵² Photograph by author, 5 March 2005.

Charleston City District 20 school officials ensured that its schools incorporated educational design trends by retaining the services of the New York educational consulting firm Engelhardt, Engelhardt, and Leggett to oversee and implement their equalization program. The firm served as consultants on several city projects, including the rehabilitation of Burke Vocational High into the campus plan, an addition to black Buist Elementary school, the construction of white Memminger Elementary, and the construction of East Bay Negro Elementary.⁵³ The firm, which published several guides to educational planning for elementary and secondary schools, assisted the district with site selection, materials, and incorporating national educational policy into the architectural plans for the new schools.⁵⁴ Engelhardt, Engelhardt, and Leggett ensured that the new schools constructed in the city had several common characteristics that reflected the improvements in education. The schools had concrete frames, a solid and cheap building material, with brick veneer to soften the structural materials and to improve the buildings' aesthetic quality. Classrooms were generally thirty feet by thirty feet with nine-foot ceilings and "window-walls" which provided better lighting and ventilation in the classrooms.⁵⁵

Charleston County's construction program also ensured equality in design between rural and urban schools. Construction materials and architectural design remained consistent from city to rural schools and black and white schools, with concrete

⁵³ Board Minutes, City Board of School Commissioners, School District 20, 26 June 1952, Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC.

⁵⁴ See Engelhardt et al, *School Planning and Building Handbook*; Engelhardt et al, *Planning Elementary School Buildings*, Engelhardt et al, *Planning Secondary School Buildings*, and Engelhardt, Jr., "Trends in School Architecture and Design" for examples of guides published by the consulting firm.

⁵⁵ Jack Leland, "Modern Plants are Planned for City Schools," *News and Courier*, 28 September 1952, 10-A.

frames and brick veneer comprising the majority of new schools constructed. School architects across the county designed schools with walls of windows to provide lighting and fresh air for students.⁵⁶

Although Charleston County's school equalization program resulted in the construction of materially equal black and white schools, local school officials reluctantly implemented the program. Opposition to constructing black schools emerged in the planning stages for the state's equalization funds. Charleston City District 20 proposed an equal distribution of funds between white and black schools in the city. The 1949 Peabody survey of Charleston's schools identified problems and buildings needs for both black and white schools, and Charleston's white school officials wanted to provide new white schools for the community as well. The city district's proposal in 1952 to distribute funds equally between white and black schools outraged black parents, who historically supplemented black schools with their own money. They wanted to finally receive state funding for black education that would compensate for decades of inequitable distribution of public funds.

The statewide equalization program provided the first opportunity for Charleston's black community to receive new schools and improve the poor state of education in the city. As late as 1939, Charleston only had two state-accredited black high schools: Avery Normal Institute and Immaculate Conception. Both these schools were private and required black students to pay tuition to attend and receive a recognized high school diploma. The publicly-funded Burke Vocational was not accredited by the

⁵⁶ "Bids on Construction of Additions to Two Charleston County Negro Schools Opened," *News and Courier*, 18 April 1952, 9-B; Phyllis Eubanks, "Mt. Pleasant Negro School Bids Opened; Reorganization is Told," *News and Courier*, 8 January 1953, 13-A; "Lincoln School Then and Now," *News and Courier*, 13-15 August 1953, back-to-school supplement.

state. Elementary schools in the city continued to be overcrowded. In 1942, Buist Elementary accommodated 1,073 black students although its classrooms were intended to hold only 420 students. Charleston's school board did not maintain its black schools and many of the buildings were deteriorating.⁵⁷ The magnitude of problems in Charleston's black schools developed over decades of neglect and the district's proposed equal distribution of state building funds did not address the existing inequalities between black and white schools.

Representatives from the city's leading black organizations, including the Council of City Parent Teacher Associations and the Charleston NAACP, presented a petition to the city's school board demanding that Charleston's officials improve black schools. The four-page petition detailed the existing inequalities among black and white schools in Charleston. The value of the school plants for white students in 1952 was \$1,993,560 while black school values totaled \$1,349,100. While the total value of school plants was relatively equal, the petition demonstrated that 4,574 white students attended Charleston's schools and 6,537 black students attended, bringing the property valuation of the schools to \$435 for every white student and only \$206 for every black student. The petition also discussed the inequalities in curriculum offered in the city, especially between the white vocational school at Murray and the black vocational school at Burke. Black parents argued that equalizing funding would not equalize the schools as promised by the state legislation.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Brown, "Civil Rights Activism," 30-32.

⁵⁸ "To the School Boards of School District #20—City of Charleston and Charleston County," 1952, box 7, folder 7, J. Arthur Brown Papers, Avery Research Center, Charleston, SC; R. Scott Baker, "Ambiguous Legacies: The NAACP's Legal Campaign Against Segregation in Charleston, South Carolina, 1935-1975" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1993), 152.

The city school district quietly abandoned its funding plan, although it did use funds to construct two new white elementary schools in addition to new black school construction. The county school district also struggled with improving black schools over white demands for improvements and the inequalities between white and black schools remained. Black parents in Charleston continued to pressure the city school board for an additional black high school to accommodate students. Burke Vocational was the only public black school in the city. Parents also demanded gymnasiums and auditoriums for the new schools. School officials remained reluctant to provide amenities to black schools. The Moultrie District 2 board deemed a football field for the new black Laing High in Mount Pleasant “not practical.”⁵⁹

As the school equalization program continued in Charleston County, the *Charleston News and Courier* proudly reported on the progress made throughout the county although many black parents and students remained unsatisfied with the equalization efforts. By 1953, a survey of the school building program by the newspaper reported 25 building projects in the county, exclusive of city schools. Fourteen of the new school buildings or additions were for black students, while 11 of the schools housed white students. Charleston County received over \$6 million for school equalization by 1953 and the county spent over \$4 million on black school construction and renovation in an effort to erase some of the inequalities.⁶⁰ While black students attended new schools throughout Charleston, their schools lacked many of the amenities given to white schools,

⁵⁹ “Minutes of the South Carolina School Committee,” 15 July 1954, State Agencies file, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH; District 2 Board Minute Books, 8 September 1953, Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC.

⁶⁰ Betty Pugh, “County’s \$4 Million School Expansion Program Numbers 25 Building Projects,” *News and Courier*, 26 May 1953, 10-A.

such as libraries, auditoriums, and athletic fields. White resistance to the building program ensured that true equalization never occurred.

By 1955, Charleston County school districts spent the majority of their appropriations from the equalization funds on black school construction. St. James-Santee District 1 and St. Paul's District 23, the two least-populated districts in the county, did not spend any money on white school construction during the initial equalization period. St. Andrews District 10, which encompassed the area of West Ashley, gained many white families moving to the suburbs from the city of Charleston and was the only district that spent more money constructing white schools than black schools.⁶¹ By 1955, forty-six schools throughout the county received money for new construction, additions, equipment and renovations.⁶²

Despite the millions of dollars spent in Charleston County and throughout South Carolina on school equalization, the state's effort to forestall an adverse court decision failed. On 17 May 1954 the United States Supreme Court ruled segregation in the public schools unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which had incorporated South Carolina's *Briggs v. Elliott* desegregation suit. For South Carolina's black citizens, this decision served as encouragement for the civil rights movement and the fight for equal rights and treatment, especially within the educational system in the state.⁶³ In 1955,

⁶¹ E.R. Crow to James F. Byrnes, 21 May 1954, State Agencies, Educational Finance Commission, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

⁶² See appendix for listing of schools receiving money from the state.

⁶³ The positive account of Richard Kluger's *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004) remains the definitive history of the five cases that comprised *Brown*. See also Constance Baker Motley's "The Legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education*," *Teacher's College Record* 96 (Summer 1995): 637-642; Robert L. Carter's "A Reassessment of *Brown v. Board*" in *Shades of Brown: New Perspectives on School Desegregation*, ed. Derrick Bell (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1980): 21-28; and Mark Tushnet's

fifty-seven black parents in Charleston attempted to enroll their children in white Charleston City District 20 schools. Black parents in Cooper River District 4 also signed a petition to transfer their children to white schools. Even though the Charleston County school districts spent millions of dollars to equalize black school facilities, their efforts did not satisfy the black community. School officials continued to ignore and evade the petitions and requests for transfer until 1963, when a federal circuit court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in *Millicent F. Brown et al. v. School Board District No. 20*, desegregating Charleston's public school system. Charleston was the first city in South Carolina to integrate its schools as required by a court order.⁶⁴

* * *

Although South Carolina's school equalization program failed to prevent a Supreme Court ruling for desegregation, the program continued to provide South Carolina's white leaders with political justification for resisting the Supreme Court's order to desegregate as part of a broader effort to avoid integration. Many leaders, including Governor James Byrnes, believed equal schools would satisfy all black South Carolinians. George Bell Timmerman, Jr., Byrnes' successor in the governor's office, continued to support the school building program: "I strongly recommend that we continue our equalization program in good faith. In no better way can we preserve good

The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925-1950 (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987). James T. Patterson's *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) details the historiographical debates over the positive and negative effects of *Brown*.

⁶⁴ Brown, "Civil Rights Activism," 76-77, 88-89.

schools with peace and friendly relations.”⁶⁵ By the time Timmerman assumed office in 1955, the Educational Finance Commission had approved approximately 775 school building projects reflecting a total investment in South Carolina’s educational system of almost \$125 million.⁶⁶

By the end of 1955, the Educational Finance Commission and many educators believed that black schools were substantially equal to white schools. Every school district in the state had a black high school completed or under construction. The Educational Finance Commission pushed for all approved black high schools to open for the 1955-1956 school year. Because of the *Briggs* case and possible outcomes, the first years of the program ensured black elementary and high school projects had precedence over other needed construction. As districts finished construction and improvement of black schools, the commission funded more white school construction projects. By 1963, the year black Charlestonians won their legal fight to desegregate their public school system, the funds distributed for building projects had relatively equalized between the races. The Educational Finance Commission had approved over \$214 million in building projects since the inception of the program, with 53.9 percent of the total funds appropriated for white schools and 46.1 percent of the funds appropriated for black schools. The state Department of Education assumed the roles and responsibilities of the Educational Finance Commission in 1966.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ A Speech Prepared for Delivery by the Honorable George Bell Timmerman, Jr., Governor of South Carolina Before a Joint Meeting of the Association of School Boards and Association of School Administrators at Dreher High School, Columbia, South Carolina, November 3, 1955, 8:30 p.m., Public Addresses and Prepared Statements, Governor George Bell Timmerman, Jr. Papers, SCDAH.

⁶⁶ “Text of Timmerman’s Address to General Assembly,” *The State*, 27 January 1955.

⁶⁷ E.R. Crow to County Superintendents of Education, 6 April 1954, Speeches and Press Releases,; Press-radio release, 31 August 1954, Speeches and Press Releases, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH; “Text of Timmerman’s Address to General Assembly,” *The State*, 27 January 1955;

While the school equalization legislation fulfilled Governor Byrnes' promise to reform education in the state through the reorganization of school districts and the consolidation of small, ineffective schools, overcrowding and lack of equipment and facilities remained as issues not completely addressed by the program. The program constructed new black schools but many of these schools lacked libraries, gymnasiums, and athletic fields commonly provided to white schools. Furthermore, the school equalization program concentrated on equalizing buildings and provided no state control over the amount of local appropriations spent on schools, no oversight over the equalization of curricula between black and white schools, and little control over the routes of bus transportation. The equalization program addressed the structural inequalities in South Carolina's schools yet did not remedy decades of underfunding and lack of state support of black education.

While the equalization program attempted to remedy some of the glaring inequalities in the educational system, black students received the attention and benefits of school equalization for only four years. The main purpose of Byrnes' school equalization program was to prove to the courts that South Carolina intended to remove the physical inequality between black and white schools in response to the *Briggs v. Elliott* case. The ramifications of locally reorganized districts, improvements in the transportation system, and over \$200 million spent on new school construction and equipment provided superficial equality of education. The program brought national trends in educational school planning to the state, resulting in the construction of modern schools in South Carolina. As one contemporary observer noted, "architects have dotted

"Building Projects, January 10, 1963," Topical Files, Governor Ernest F. Hollings Papers, SCDAH; Kirk, *South Carolina Education*, 58.

the countryside with clean-cut functional buildings, making little or no distinction in design between white and colored schools.”⁶⁸ The program’s partial success lay in temporarily improving the school facilities for both black and white students of South Carolina although the program never provided true equalization of the quality of education received by black children in the state. The “educational revolution” also failed in its attempt to convince the Supreme Court to uphold “separate but equal” and failed to prevent black parents from continuing to fight for school desegregation and full equalization.

⁶⁸ Thomas D. Clark, “The Modern South in a Changing America,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107, no. 2 (15 April 1963): 129.

APPENDIX
Charleston County Schools Receiving Equalization Funding⁶⁹

Project Name/Number	Date	Race	School District	Project Information
Albemarle Elementary	1953	white	St. Andrews 10	new construction
Baptist Hill Elementary	1954	black	St. Paul 23	new construction; thirteen classrooms
Baptist Hill High	1953	black	St. Paul 23	new construction
Bethune Elementary	1952	black	Cooper River 4	new construction
Bonds-Wilson High	1953	black	Cooper River 4	new construction
Buist Elementary	1952	black	Charleston 20	additions and renovations
Burke Vocational High	1953	black	Charleston 20	new construction
Central Elementary	1954	black	St. Paul 23	new construction
Chicora Elementary	1955	white	Cooper River 4	office, library, kitchen, cafeteria
Columbus Street Elementary	1955	black	Charleston 20	new construction
Courtenay Elementary	1955	white	Charleston 20	new construction; eighteen classrooms
Cut Bridge Elementary	1952	black	James Island District 3	new construction
Dorchester Terrace	1955	white	Cooper River 4	additions and renovations
East Bay Street Elementary	1955	black	Charleston 20	new construction

⁶⁹ Information compiled from Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH; articles in Charleston's *News and Courier*; and statistics from the Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC.

Gresham Meggett High and Elementary	1953	black	James Island District 3	new construction
Haut Gap High	1953	black	St. Johns 9	additional equipment
James Island Elementary	1955	white	James Island District 3	new construction; fourteen classrooms
James Island High	1953	white	James Island District 3	new construction
Jennie Moore Elementary	1955	black	Moultrie 2	new construction
Ladson Elementary	1953	black	Cooper River 4	renovations
Laing High	1953	black	Moultrie 2	new construction
Liberty Hill Elementary	1953	black	Cooper River 4	new construction
Lincoln High and Elementary	1953	black	St. James-Santee 1	new construction
Lincolnvile Elementary	1953	black	Cooper River 4	renovations
Memminger Elementary	1955	white	Charleston 20	new construction
Midland Park	1953	white	Cooper River 4	addition of two classrooms
Miley Hill Elementary	1955	black	St. Paul 23	new construction
Morningside Elementary	1955	white	Cooper River 4	new construction
Moultrie High	1953	white	Moultrie 2	new construction
Mt. Pleasant Academy	1954	white	Moultrie 2	equipment
Mt. Zion Elementary	1955	black	St. Johns 9	new construction; ten classrooms
Murray High	1953	white	Charleston 20	new gymnasium
North Charleston Graded	1953	white	Cooper River 4	additions and renovations
Riverland Terrace Elementary	1954	white	James Island District 3	additions and renovations
Rivers High	1953	white	Charleston 20	additions and renovations
Rockville Elementary	1953	black	St. Johns 9	new construction
Six Mile Elementary	1955	black	Cooper River 4	new construction
St. Andrews Elementary	1953	white	St. Andrews District 10	new construction

St. Andrews Parish High	1953	white	St. Andrews District 10	10 classrooms, music rooms; arts room
St. James Elementary	1955	black	St. James-Santee 1	new construction; seven classrooms
St. John's Elementary	1952	white	St. Johns 9	addition of four classrooms
Stono Park Elementary	1953	white	St. Andrews District 10	new construction
Sullivan's Island Elementary	1954	white	Moultrie 2	new construction
Wallace Elementary and High	1953	black	St. Andrews District 10	new construction

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

Avery Research Center, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC
J. Arthur Brown Papers.

Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC
Board Minutes, City Board of School Commissioners, School District 20.
District 2 Board Minute Books.
Photograph Collection.

South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC
Governor James F. Byrnes Papers.
Governor George Bell Timmerman, Jr. Papers.
Governor Ernest F. Hollings Papers.

South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC
Records of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina.
William D. Workman Collection.

Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, SC
James Byrnes Collection.

Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC
Microfilmed Papers of the NAACP.

Newspapers

Lee County Messenger, 5 November 1953.

Lighthouse and Informer (Columbia, SC), 7 July 1951.

New York Times, 18 February 1951.

News and Courier (Charleston, SC), 1948-1955.

The State (Columbia, SC), 27 January 1955.

Government Documents

1950 United States Census of Population, General Characteristics, South Carolina.
Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, United States Government Printing Office, 1952.

Annual Reports of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, *Reports and Resolutions of South Carolina to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina.* Columbia: State Budget and Control Board, 1945-1959.

Report of Committee Appointed to Study Ways and Means to Provide for Public School Education Needs, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the First Session of the 89th General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, being the Regular Session Beginning Tuesday, January 9, 1951.* Columbia: State Budget and Control Board, 1951.

“South Carolina’s Educational Revolution: A Report of Progress in South Carolina.”
Columbia: The State Educational Finance Commission, c. 1954.

Educational Planning Publications

Brubaker, C. William. *Planning and Designing Schools.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

Campbell, Edward A. “New Spaces and Places for Learning.” *The School Review* 68, no. 3 (Autumn 1960): 346-352.

Caudill, William W. *Toward Better School Design.* New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1954.

Cutler, William W. “Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice Since 1820.” *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 1-40.

Engelhardt, N.L., N.L. Engelhardt, Jr., and Stanton Leggett. *Planning Elementary School Buildings.* New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1953.

----- *Planning Secondary School Buildings.* New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1949.

- . *School Planning and Building Handbook*. New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1956.
- Engelhardt, Jr., N.L. "Trends in School Architecture and Design." *Review of Educational Research* 12, no. 2, School Plant and Equipment (April 1942): 171-177.
- Guide for Planning School Plants, 1958 Edition*. Washington, DC: National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, 1958.
- Johnson, Charles S. "Next Steps in Education in the South." *Phylon (1940-1956)* 15, no. 1 (First Quarter 1954): 7-20.
- Marsh, Reginald E. "Trends in Materials and Design." *Review of Educational Research* 15, no. 1, School Plant and Equipment (February 1945): 54-60.
- McClurkin, W.D. *School Building Planning*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1964.
- McQuade, Walter, ed. *Schoolhouse*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958.
- National Council of Chief State School Officers. *Planning Rural Community School Buildings*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949.
- Pawley, Eric, ed. *AIA School Plant Studies, A Selection: 1952-1962*. New York: American Institute of Architects, 1962.
- Public Schools of Charleston, South Carolina: A Survey Report*. Nashville, TN: Division of Surveys and Field Services, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1949.
- Public Schools of South Carolina: A Report of the South Carolina Education Survey Committee*. Nashville, TN: Division of Surveys and Field Services, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1948.
- Reavis, William C. "Functional Planning of School-Building Programs." *The Elementary School Journal* 46, no. 2 (October 1945): 72-80.
- Reid, Kenneth, ed. *School Planning: The Architectural Record of a Decade*. New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1951.
- Strevall, Wallace H. and Arvid J. Burke. *Administration of the School Building Program*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959.

Books, Articles, and Theses

- Baker, R. Scott. "Ambiguous Legacies: The NAACP's Legal Campaign Against Segregation in Charleston, South Carolina, 1935-1975." Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1993.
- Bartley, Numan. *The New South, 1945-1980. A History of the South*, ed. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, no. 11. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.
- . *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950's*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997.
- Bell, Derrick, ed. *Shades of Brown: New Perspectives on School Desegregation*. New York: Teacher's College Press, 1980.
- . *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Black, Earl. *Southern Governors and Civil Rights: Racial Segregation as a Campaign Issue in the Second Reconstruction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Bolton, Charles C. "Mississippi's School Equalization Program, 1945-1954: 'A Last Gasp to Try to Maintain a Segregated Educational System.'" *The Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 4 (November 2000): 781-814.
- Brown, Millicent. "Civil Rights Activism in Charleston, South Carolina, 1940-1970." Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1997.
- Byrnes, James F. *All in One Lifetime*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958.
- Carter, Judge Robert L. "Reflections on *Brown v. Board*." Speech presented at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, 24 October 2004.
- Clark, Thomas D. "The Modern South in a Changing America." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107, no. 2 (15 April 1963): 121-131.
- Hornsby, Benjamin F. *Stepping Stone to the Supreme Court: Clarendon County, South Carolina*. Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1992.
- Kirk, Francis Marion. *South Carolina Education, 1710-1965*. Columbia: South Carolina Department of Education, 1966.
- Klarman, Michael. "How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis." *Journal of American History* 81, no. 1 (June 1994): 81-118.

- . "It Could Have Gone the Other Way." *The Nation*. 3 May 2004.
- Kluger, Richard. *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004.
- Motley, Constance Baker. "The Legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education*." *Teacher's College Record* 96 (Summer 1995): 637-642.
- O'Brien, Thomas Victor. "Georgia's Response to *Brown v. Board of Education*: The Rise and Fall of Massive Resistance, 1949-1961." Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1992.
- Patterson, James T. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Quint, Howard. *Profile in Black and White: A Frank Portrait of South Carolina*. Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1958.
- Robertson, David. *Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994.
- Smyth, William D. "Segregation in Charleston in the 1950s: A Decade of Transition." *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 92, no. 2 (April 1991): 99-123.
- Southern, David W. "Beyond Jim Crow Liberalism: Judge Waring's Fight Against Segregation in South Carolina, 1942-52." *The Journal of Negro History* 66, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 209-227.
- Sullivan, Patricia. *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Tushnet, Mark. *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925-1950*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
- Wilhoit, Francis M. *The Politics of Massive Resistance*. New York: George Braziller, 1973.