Richmond Public Schools: Post-Court Mandated School Desegregation (1986-2006)

Joshua Cole
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd
Part of the Education Commons

© The Author
Richmond Public Schools: Post-Court Mandated School Desegregation (1986-2006)

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

By

Joshua Paul Cole, Ph.D.
B.S., Central Michigan University, 2000
M.S., Wayne State University, 2003

Director: Maike Philipsen, Ph.D.
Professor, School of Education

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
December 1, 2009
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge everyone associated with Richmond Public Schools who contributed to the content of this historical case study. Without your living history, this dissertation would not exist.

I would also like to thank all of my colleagues, friends and family who supported me through this journey. I greatly appreciate all of your interest, advice and encouragement over the years. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Robert Smith, Sara Miller and Kathryn Starke for your insight and editing eyes.

Finally, I would like to thank Virginia Commonwealth University and the School of Education for the opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of education.

Most importantly, I would like to thank Dr. Maike Philipsen, Dr. Samuel Craver, Dr. Erik Laursen and Dr. Michela Zonta for all of your guidance during my research and writing.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Emmanuel Wright.

Your support is the foundation of this study.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Appendices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: The Transition from Cross-Town Busing to Unitary Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Internal School Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Working to Establish Consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Accountability during Adversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1: Median Family Income as Percentage of Metropolitan Median Family Income.17
Table 2: Racial Composition of Richmond Public Schools...............................................18
Table 3: Fair Share of Poverty Index.................................................................................20
Table 4: Average Neighborhood Changes: 1960-1980 .....................................................34
Table 5: Residential Segregation Spatial Proximity Index of African-Americans by Population of Selected Metropolitan Areas.................................................................35
Table 6: Class Composition at Bellevue...........................................................................111
Table 7: “Clustering” Split City: Separation in School Sparked Political Storm...........135
Table 8: Percentage of Students Passing 2005-06 SOL Assessments (AYP Subgroups) (English Performance).................................................................182
Table 9: Percentage of Students Passing 2005-06 SOL Assessments (AYP Subgroups) (Mathematics Performance).................................................................183
Table 10: Membership Totals of Richmond Public School (2005-06).........................185
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Public and Private Schools with White and Black Student Enrollment</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Percentage of Black Population in Richmond, VA</td>
<td>158-159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Poverty Status of White Persons in Richmond, VA</td>
<td>161-162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Poverty Status of Black Persons in Richmond, VA</td>
<td>164-165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Median Household Income of Black Population</td>
<td>167-168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Initial Introduction Letter</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Research Subject Information and Consent Form</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Richmond Public Schools: Post-Court Mandated School Desegregation (1986-2006)

By Joshua P. Cole, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2009

Director: Maike Philipsen
Professor, School of Education

In 1970, cross-town busing was court mandated to enforce school desegregation in Richmond, Virginia. Unitary status was declared in Richmond when cross-town busing ended in 1986. Richmond Public Schools (RPS) no longer operated as a dual school system for blacks and whites after 1986. Class and racial segregation continued to exist in the City of Richmond. RPS remained predominately black and poor. Socio-economic conditions of the city continued to impact the school district. Controversies, mismanagement and low academic achievement stigmatized RPS until state and federal performance measures forced the district to improve. By 2006, RPS was still segregated; however, as a result of better leadership, academic success was demonstrated on Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

Since 1954, the United States Supreme Court’s landmark school desegregation court decision in Brown v. Board of Education has impacted education. The desegregation of schools is a process that requires greater analysis. The introduction of this study provides a historical review of Richmond, Virginia’s dually operated school system for blacks and whites beginning with Brown v. Board (1954) through Bradley v. Board (1986), which ended cross-town busing in Richmond. This provides a background for the present study of post-court mandated school desegregation in Richmond Public Schools (RPS) from 1986 through 2006. Furthermore, the account of Richmond’s school desegregation process outlined in this study’s introduction serves as a backdrop for the historical analysis of RPS operating as a unitary school system for blacks and whites between 1986 and 2006.

Massive Resistance: 1954-1959

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court handed down its historic school desegregation decision, Brown v. Board of Education, (Brown I), (1954). It stated that the segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race deprives the children of minority groups of equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, even though the physical facilities and other tangible factors may be equal (Brown v. Board, 1954). This decision ended the Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) “separate but equal” era, which provided legal cover for
segregated schools 58 years earlier (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). The *Brown* decision was met with “massive resistance” by most of Virginia’s politicians. Massive resistance was the process by which the political body of Virginia resisted the integration of public schools. Politicians believed school desegregation was an unwarranted intrusion upon states rights (Pratt, 1992).

However, officials of the Virginia branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hailed the decision as “a landmark comparable to the Declaration of Independence” (Pratt, 1992, p. 3). Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP’s prominent black attorney for civil rights, was very pleased with the decision, calling it “the greatest victory we ever had” (Pratt, 1992, p. 3). Although the decision was a milestone step in the direction of equal access to education for all, many supporters were anticipating immediate resistance from the anti-integrationists within the political system.

As Virginia’s political leaders contemplated their next moves, the United States Supreme Court sent down a second ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education*, called *Brown II* on May 31, 1955. It placed the burden of implementation on the district courts and offered only the vague command that racial segregation in public schools be eliminated “with all deliberate speed” (*Brown v. Board*, 1955). This ruling on the lower courts to implement appropriate plans, which was supposed to provide transitions to racially non-discriminatory school systems, was met with opposition (Arkin, 1991). However, as stated by Pratt, “the ambiguity of that phrase left room for deliberation to take place, rather than speed, as the defiant Virginian politicians prepared for a direct confrontation with the federal courts” (Pratt, 1992, p. 5).
The Gray Plan was the first form of political opposition, including modifications of compulsory attendance laws, legislative tuition grants and local options. One aspect of this plan consisted of the General Assembly’s custom-made Pupil Placement Board. The state’s Pupil Placement Board was a committee specifically designed for local districts to decide what school a student attended based on the student’s race. In addition, a system of tuition grants from public funds was used to keep schools from integrating by using the money solely for white students to enroll in private schools. This system only provided public money to preserve segregated private schools, not an integrated public system (Pratt, 1992). Ultimately, the Pupil Placement Board was part of the machinery that Virginia leaders created to perpetuate segregation.

In 1956, opposition strengthened against school desegregation. Virginia’s United States Senator Harry F. Byrd declared that by organizing the southern states for “massive resistance” to Brown II that the rest of the country would eventually realize that racial integration would not be accepted in the South (Pratt, 1992). Virginia’s General Assembly then passed a series of thirteen bills, called the “Stanley Plan,” (after the Governor of Virginia at that time, Thomas B. Stanley). Among the devices established by the Stanley Plan were the authority of the governor to close any school threatened with integration, cutting off state funds to school districts that attempted to reorganize on an integrated basis and the provision of private-school tuition grants from public funds to parents in any district where the public schools were closed to prevent integration (Pratt, 1992). Further, by way of the Pupil Placement Board, the enrollment of a single black student in a white public school would automatically bring about the closing of that school under Virginia’s massive resistance laws (Arkin, 1991). All of these measures
promised to have a severe impact on the quality of education throughout the state. The General Assembly met in August of 1956 to determine the State’s policy on dealing with segregation in the public schools. The “Pupil Placement Act” established the Virginia Pupil Placement Board as the assignment authority.

In September 1958, three black students filed suit in U.S. District Court, requesting assignment to the then-majority white RPS; two years later, the State Pupil Placement Board assigned two black students to Chandler Junior High School (Callihan, 1992). Token accounts of school desegregation like this continued throughout the state. After numerous schools throughout Virginia were closed and tens of thousands of students were displaced by way of Virginia’s new governor James Lindsay Almond, the courts finally intervened in 1959 (Pratt, 1992).

On January 19, 1959, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals declared in Harrison v. Day, (1959), that school closings violated section 129 of Virginia’s State Constitution, which required the state to “maintain an efficient system of public free schools throughout the state” (Harrison v. Day, 1959, p. 11). This meant that the state must support public free schools for managing an efficient system, including those in which pupils of both races were enrolled. On the same day, a three-judge Federal District Court in Norfolk decided that Virginia’s statutes calling for shutting down the public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment, and denied to citizens “the equal protection of the laws” (James v. Almond, 1959, p. 11). Shortly thereafter, a statement was made by Governor Almond to hold onto the massive resistance movement, but eventually he backed off from his defiant stance and offered no further resistance to integration. Thus, on February 2, 1959, Virginia’s era of massive resistance ended abruptly when twenty-
one black students entered previously all-white schools in Norfolk and Arlington without incident (Pratt, 1992).


As Virginia’s “massive resistance” ended, “passive resistance” began and Richmond was the perfect illustration of what “separate but equal” was in reality by way of their plan to prolong school integration for yet another generation. Individuals within the state of Virginia who made decisions and took action to integrate the public schools in a non-deliberate manner conducted the process of “passive resistance.” Confronted by two educational minefields, *Brown* on one side and Virginia’s massive resistance on the other, RPS cautiously negotiated their way through them. Each minefield had elements that were attractive to RPS, but each side also had distasteful characteristics (Arkin, 1991). RPS’s plan was to convince the courts that they were acting in good faith by admitting a few black students to formerly all-white schools. In 1959, Richmond’s School Board Chairman Lewis F. Powell, Jr. promised: “public education would be continued in our city—although every proper effort will be made to minimize the extent of integration when it comes” (Pratt, 1992, p. 13).

In September 1961, *Bradley v. Richmond School Board*, (1962) was filed to seek a “racially nondiscriminatory school system” in Richmond. The following year, eleven black students were transferred to John Marshall and Chandler by order of U.S. District Court Judge John D. Butzner, Jr. (Callihan, 1992). The parents of these eleven black students began the process of dismantling the dually operated school system with this class-action suit against the Richmond School Board. Through this case, the board was

In the fall of 1963, a new plan was implemented entitled “freedom of choice”, which forced a modest undermining of Richmond’s segregation system by allowing children to transfer to any school of their choice, if they met certain criteria. The plaintiffs’ attorneys in *Bradley* appealed on the grounds that the district court’s order to eliminate its system of dual attendance zones did not extend to the entire black population, nor did it dismantle the Pupil Placement Board. Plaintiffs in the original *Bradley* case re-filed with the District Court, claiming that the “freedom of choice” plan did not address faculty integration either, it was in essence not a true “freedom of choice” plan (Pratt, 1992, p. 38). The Court determined in April 1965 that the plan was acceptable; the plaintiffs then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1966, the Supreme Court returned the case to the Federal District Court where an agreement was finally reached stating that a new freedom of choice plan would be developed, which would work towards faculty desegregation and recruitment of black administrators (Arkin, 1991). According to Callihan (1992), the school board revised its freedom of choice plan to “conform to federal guidelines;” all parents were required to exercise a free choice of school in each grade.

During this period, other developments helped to accelerate the desegregation in the South, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, throughout the previous ten years, residential segregation had become firmly established in Richmond through the efforts of white business owners, real estate brokers, bankers and the Federal Housing Administration. The process of de facto segregation lasted until Congress passed the Fair
Housing Act in 1968. Consequently during this period, whites began moving out of city neighborhoods and into their own suburban enclaves. “White flight” was occurring at a rapid pace from the city of Richmond, thus leaving many of its formerly all white neighborhoods to become overwhelmingly black, as black residents moved in. This process was impacting the racial demographics of Richmond’s schools; for instance, J.E.B. Stuart Elementary School, which was all white in 1962, had 761 black students and only 12 white students by 1966 (Pratt, 1992).

Richmond’s new freedom of choice plan continued in the city, but it contributed very little to change the racial composition of the schools. Finally, in 1968, the case of Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, (1968) ruled that the freedom of choice concept was unconstitutional so long as a basically dual school system resulted (Green v. Board, 1968). According to Callihan (1992), in the last year Richmond used the freedom of choice method (1969-70), there were 15 totally segregated elementary schools with black students comprising 100% of their enrollment. The remaining elementary schools were virtually segregated in that they contained 90-99% of either white or black students.

After four years under the consent decree of the Supreme Court’s ruling in Green, the attorneys for the plaintiffs in Bradley filed for further relief in March of 1970. The motion asked the court to:

…require the defendant school board forthwith to put into effect a method of assigning children to public schools and to take other appropriate steps which will promptly and realistically convert the public schools of the City of Richmond into a unitary non-racial system from which all vestiges of racial segregation will have been removed (Bradley v. Board, 1970, p. 4).
On June 26, 1970, Judge Robert R. Merhige, Jr., of the 4th Circuit Court, advised the school board that Richmond’s history of residential segregation had effected the opportunity for the proposed pairing plan to be acceptable in the attempt for school integration:

...no real hope for the dismantling of dual school systems appears to be in the offering unless and until there is a dismantling of the all-black residential areas (Bradley, 1970, p. 4).

The school board responded to the court that Richmond was not operating a unitary school system free of racial discrimination; the court nullified the 1966 revised freedom of choice plan by ordering Richmond to replace the “existing dual system.” On July 23, 1970 the school board submitted a plan proposed by the U.S. Department of Health, Education & Welfare (HEW); geographical zoning, grade pairing and clustering of schools (Callihan, 1992).

The new HEW desegregation plan was created to reduce busing and keep students together through their entire public education. After finishing elementary school, children would attend a nearby middle school; after middle school children would go to one central high school. Judge Merhige rejected this plan. After Merhige granted an injunction halting construction of any new schools, he gave the school board one month to prepare an acceptable desegregation plan; by all “reasonable means,” the possibility of cross-town busing was to be considered (Callihan, 1992). At this time, Merhige also suggested “the feasibility of the voluntary consolidation” of Richmond, Henrico, and Chesterfield school districts. This suggestion was because resegregation had occurred in the residential areas of Richmond. The reality of segregation in Richmond meant that past plans for solving the issue of de facto segregation within RPS were no longer viable.
Adding to the issue of residential segregation in 1970, the city’s annexation of a predominantly white portion of Chesterfield occurred, which changed Richmond’s black population from a 52 percent majority to a 42 percent minority (Pratt, 1992, p. 48).


In the summer of 1970, Richmond came up with an interim desegregation plan, which provided for some transportation, mainly of the impoverished (Pratt, 1992). The school board’s 1970 plan called for busing 13,000 pupils (compared to the approximately 10,000 who would have used Virginia Transit and school buses before the new desegregation effort). In August, two weeks before school opened, Judge Merhige ordered implementation of the school board’s desegregation plan on an interim basis; he gave the school board 90 days to come up with a “valid plan” to provide a unitary school system. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to rule on the subsequent city/state request for a stay of the interim order. Due to the extreme racial polarization that was taking place throughout the residential areas of Richmond and many decisions of whites to not attend the schools they were assigned, this interim plan was failing to integrate the schools (Callihan, 1992, p. 386). According to Pratt (1992):

This plan had imposed a great economic strain on the city due to the additional buses that had to be purchased in order to meet the court’s desegregation requirements and because Judge Merhige had already determined that this plan would not dismantle Richmond’s segregated system, it was a foregone conclusion that a more extensive busing plan was imminent (p. 53).

While the Richmond School Board attempted to come up with a new plan, Merhige began searching for viable alternatives to desegregating Richmond’s schools and with great interest studied the busing decision handed down in Charlotte, North Carolina:
Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education (1971). This case approved the use of extensive busing to promote school desegregation (Swann v. Board, 1971, p. 1). On April 5, 1971, Merhige ordered into effect a new desegregation plan for the city of Richmond in Bradley v. School Board, (1971). This was later affirmed by the Supreme Court to provide pupil and faculty reassignments and free city wide transportation for school desegregation (Bradley v. Board, 1971). Plan III, as it was named, called for busing approximately 21,000 pupils and desegregation of schools at all levels to remove all vestiges of racial identity (Callihan, 1992). This plan utilized extensive cross-town busing within the city limits to increase school desegregation. There was also a creation of satellite attendance zones (students from one zone would be matched to a school in another zone) to create more of a racial mix within the city schools (Arkin, 1991). However, the city of Richmond and its surrounding counties became extremely racially polarized because many whites left the city for the counties, thus making it difficult to create a racial mix within the city based on the existing population demographics.

Richmond’s enrollment figures reflected this scenario; out of 15,439 black elementary pupils, 10,312 were in schools that were 90 percent or more black; and of 9,051 white elementary pupils, 4,138 were in schools that were 90 percent or more white (Pratt, 1992, p. 53).

On January 10, 1972, Judge Merhige ordered the merger of the city of Richmond and the counties of Chesterfield and Henrico to create a single school division:

All defendants, including the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the school boards of the two counties and the city, the boards of supervisors of the two counties and the City Council of the city, were enjoined to create a single school division composed of the city and the two counties. In great detail, set out on some seven pages, methods and procedures for effecting consolidation were
specified to be completed within time limitations. It is from this injunction that the state and county defendants prosecute this appeal \textit{(Bradley v. Board, 1972, p. 195)}.

On appeal, the Bradley case was heard before the Fourth Circuit Court on April 13, 1972, in which it was argued that Merhige’s consolidation order was without legal precedent and represented “an assertion of naked power by a federal trial court judge” rather than a valid interpretation of Supreme Court desegregation guidelines” \textit{(Pratt, 1992, p. 70)}. Thus, it would come to be that the consolidation plan would be denied approval.

In 1971, Article VIII, Section V of the \textit{Constitution of Virginia}, entitled the “Powers and Duties of the Board of Education” was revised to state that “the power to operate, maintain and supervise public schools in Virginia is, and has always been, within the exclusive jurisdiction of the local school boards and not within the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education” \textit{(Va. Const., Article VIII, Section V)}. Furthermore, the Constitution was changed to state that the consolidation of city and county school systems could not happen, either under the old Constitution and statutes in effect prior to July 1, 1971, or under the new Constitution and statutes in effect after that date. Thus, the State Board of Education, acting alone, could not have effected the consolidation of the school systems of Richmond, Henrico and Chesterfield into a single system under the control of a single school board as ordered in the \textit{Bradley v. Board} case of 1972.

The merger plan itself was designed specifically to create a racial mix within the schools of the metropolitan Richmond area. The overall racial composition of the three political subdivisions of Richmond, Chesterfield and Henrico in June 1971 was 66.3% white and 33.7% black. At this time, the student population of Richmond city itself consisted of 60% black students and 40% white students. The new plan would divide
Richmond, Chesterfield and Henrico into six subdivided sections that would be racially mixed. The racial composition of five of the six subdivisions would range from 62.6% to 70% white, while the sixth subdivision would consist of 81.6% white students. Each subdivision would have a subdivision board to exercise closer supervision over instruction and progress of instruction and to maintain closer contacts with parents of students. Under the plan, the great majority of students would attend a school located within the particular subdivision in which they reside. The plan called for busing approximately 10,000 more pupils; however, 36 less buses would be needed to meet the transportation requirements under this metropolitan plan than the number of buses being used under Richmond’s busing plan already in use. Travel time and distance in each of the three present independent school districts would have not been appreciably changed by way of the consolidation plan (*Bradley v. Board*, 1972).

Despite the testimony of the plaintiffs, on June 5, 1972, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the school boundaries in question had not been established to promote segregation, that each of the three systems in the metropolitan area were unitary, and that no two of the systems had conspired between themselves for the purpose of keeping one unit relatively white by confining blacks to another (Pratt, 1992). The Fourth Circuit Court had this to say about Judge Merhige’s decision:

> [W]e think the adoption of the Richmond Metropolitan Plan in total by the district court, viewed in the light of the stated reasons for its adoption, is the equivalent, despite disclaimer, of the imposition of a fixed racial quota. The Constitution imposes no such requirement (*Bradley v. Board*, 1972, p. 5).

The Circuit Court went on to say that the root causes of the concentration of blacks in the inner cities of America were simply not known and the district court could
not realistically place responsibility on the counties for the effect that inner city decay
had on the public schools of Richmond. In order to approve the consolidation of these
three school districts would mean ignoring the tradition and history of the
Commonwealth of Virginia with respect to its establishment and operation of schools
\textit{(Bradley v. Board, 1972)}.

Once again, according to Virginia’s Constitution in 1971, the power to operate,
maintain and supervise public schools in Virginia is, and has always been, within the
exclusive jurisdiction of the local school boards and not within the jurisdiction of the
State Board of Education (Va. Const., Article VIII, Section V). As noted in \textit{Bradley},
section 133 of the 1902 \textit{Constitution of Virginia} provides that the “supervision of the
schools in each county or city shall be vested in a school board.” But school boards,
including court-ordered consolidated school boards, were not authorized by law to raise
funds for the schools. Instead, under Virginia laws, a school board is fiscally dependent
upon the local governing body, e.g., county supervisors or city council and has no
authority whatever to levy taxes or appropriate funds for school purposes (\textit{Bradley v.
Board}, 1972). In its extra session in 1971, the General Assembly enacted into law
Virginia Code 22-30: “No school division shall be composed of more than one county or
city” (Virginia Code, 1971, § 22.1-25). This revision, which came into effect on July 21,
1971, was the ultimate blow to Merhige’s plan of what might have been the first
successful attempt at desegregating the public schools in the city of Richmond.

Finally the Fourth Circuit Court had the following to say about the Bradley case:

We think it is fair to say that the only ‘educational’ reason offered by the
numerous school experts in support of consolidation was the equalitarian
concept that it is good for children of diverse economic, racial and social
background to associate together (\textit{Bradley v. Board}, 1972, p. 9).
The case was then appealed to the United States Supreme Court, where one year later, on May 21, 1973 the Supreme Court, by default, upheld the Circuit Court’s decision in the *Bradley v. School Board*, (1973), (Pratt, 1992). It is important to note that the decision was split 4-4, as Justice Lewis Powell, Jr., the former chairman of Richmond’s School Board and president of the Virginia State Board of Education, recused himself from the case (Pratt, 1992).

During the court deliberations over busing and school consolidation of the early 1970’s, RPS witnessed its student demographics change with the outmigration of many whites and some middle-class blacks to the surrounding counties. According to Callihan (1992), as changes occurred in student membership or in program needs that required modifications to Plan III, major changes took place with at least 17 of the original schools to adjust to changing conditions. In August 1975, a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) submitted recommendations that evolved from its study of pupil assignment; the administration did not favor adoption of the report because of “a number of educational and administrative weaknesses.” However, the PAC views on the desirability of a K-5 elementary grade organization were later incorporated into the “K-5 experimental project” (a modification to Plan III). In 1979, a court-approved K-12 feeder plan/high school consolidation (“Plan G”) was implemented; all elementary schools had grades K-5 while 3 high school complexes were formed from the 7 high school buildings. Seven years later, subsequent to recommendations of a Citizens’ Advisory Commission, “Plan G” was dismantled with the implementation of a pupil reassignment plan that also assigned most students, to the extent possible, to their nearest neighborhood school. The *Bradley* case was revived in March of 1984, as the vehicle for the school board’s
unsuccessful claim that the Commonwealth of Virginia was constitutionally required to provide additional funding to eliminate the vestiges of the past state-mandated segregation.

Post-Court Mandated School Desegregation: 1986-2006

In April of 1986, sixteen years after he ordered busing for Richmond, Merhige approved a neighborhood plan, *Bradley v. School Board*, (1986), that ended the cross-town busing of students to schools within the city for desegregation purposes (Bradley, 1986). Furthermore, on July 10, 1986, Judge Merhige denied the 1984 claim by the school board that the Commonwealth of Virginia was constitutionally required to provide additional funding to eradicate the remaining segregated areas previously mandated by the state by bringing the Bradley case to a conclusion with the following order: “The Court also finds that the Richmond Public School District has now achieved unitary status. The Court therefore relinquishes its jurisdiction over the School District, and this case stands DISMISSED” (Callihan, 1992, p. 244). According to Orfield, Monfort, and Aaron (1989), the Supreme Court did not decide on any major school desegregation cases or set any new rules of law during the time period of 1974-1988. Orfield et al., goes on to state that the broad legal principles were substantially unchanged from 1954 through 1974.

With the black population in Richmond schools in 1986 representing 87% of the population, the Richmond school system was declared unitary. Meaning it was no longer operating as a dual school system for blacks and whites. This declaration was because there were so few white children attending RPS that forced cross-town busing served no
useful purpose and had to come to an end (Pratt, 1992). According to Pratt, (1992), “while the resegregation of the city’s schools was certainly racially motivated to a large degree, discernible class divisions were becoming readily apparent by reflecting a clear socio-economic division throughout the entire Richmond Metropolitan Area (p. 90).” The attempted process of school desegregation in Richmond had actually helped spawn a resegregation of the city and the development of a black underclass.

Overview of the Study

Demographic Trends: 1950-2000

To help provide understanding and clarity to the years of unitary status (1986 through 2006) in RPS, an illustration of the demographic changes and trends of the Richmond Metropolitan Area since 1950 is presented. For instance, despite many achievements of city development since the end of cross-town busing, metropolitan Richmond continued to pay a heavy price for sprawling development, slow progress on racial integration and rising economic segregation. Signs of progress were very visible, such as a new convention center, expansion of Virginia Commonwealth University, several thousand units of new or renovated housing downtown and a lively restaurant and entertainment zone emerging in the Shockoe Slip district. However, lagging regional progress and even a decline in other key areas related to the issue of equal access to educational opportunity for all of Richmond’s residents became a rising concern for many of Virginia’s educational and political leaders (Rusk, 2002).
The suburban sprawl that took place after World War II is reflected by the housing boom and urbanization of the city’s metropolitan area during that time. For example, in 1950 greater Richmond’s urbanized population, meaning people living in areas where commercial development had occurred, was 258,000 occupying 48 square miles of urbanized land. Ninety percent of the urbanized population and 75% of the urbanized land fell within the city limits. By 1990, greater Richmond’s urbanized population had grown to 590,000 (only one-third within the city limits) occupying 303 square miles of contiguous, urbanized land (only one-fifth within the city). During four decades, about a half-acre was consumed for each added resident. Primarily the movement of middle-class families and the stores and jobs that followed them drove this outward growth. The Virginia General Assembly ended Richmond’s annexation powers in 1970, which had a devastating effect on the socio-economic profile of the city (Rusk, 2002). Table 1 illustrates this point by looking at the changes of a typical family income for residents of Richmond, Henrico and Chesterfield over a 50 year span.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrico</td>
<td>113%</td>
<td>113%</td>
<td>112%</td>
<td>110%</td>
<td>105%</td>
<td>105%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>104%</td>
<td>111%</td>
<td>119%</td>
<td>120%</td>
<td>116%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from U.S Census Bureau data, 2000)

As noted in Table 1, in 1950, before the Brown decision, the typical income in the city of Richmond was almost equal to the median family income of the three-county
metropolitan area (97%). However, by 2000, the city’s median family income fell to only 68% of the three jurisdiction metropolitan area (Rusk, 2002).

As of the 2000 United States Census, there were 197,790 people living in the City of Richmond. The racial makeup of the city was 38% white, 57% African American and 5% composed of Hispanic, Asian, Native American and other races (Census, 2000). However, according to the Virginia Department of Education, (2005), the racial makeup of RPS was 7% White, 90% African American and 3% representing Hispanic, Asian, Native American and other races. Table 2 provides the evidence of this social trend with statistics from Pratt, (1992), (Callihan, 1992) and the Virginia Department of Education (2005).

Table 2

| Racial Composition (White and Black Students) of Richmond Public Schools |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| White                       | 18,037  | 18,078  | 17,203* | 4,929   | 2,792   | 1,754   |
| Percent                     | 58.8%   | 44.5%   | 35.8%   | 15.6%   | 10.2%   | 7.0%    |
| Black                       | 12,642  | 22,599  | 30,785  | 26,602  | 24,220  | 22,549  |
| Percent                     | 41.2%   | 55.5%   | 64.2%   | 84.4%   | 88.5%   | 90.0%   |
| Total                       | 30,679  | 40,686  | 47,988  | 31,531  | 27,368  | 25,054  |

*Reflects an increase of 5,000 white students due to Richmond’s annexation of twenty-three square miles of Chesterfield County. (Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau data, 2000)

By looking at the figures in Table 2, RPS went through a radical change during the years after the Brown decision, as did the overall residential composition of the city. Residential segregation of blacks typically hit its highest level nationwide around 1970,
after three decades in which federal mortgage policy reserved new suburbs almost exclusively for white homebuyers. On a segregation index scale of 0 to 100 (with 100 indicating total apartheid), metro Richmond’s segregation index was 77 in 1970. Thereafter, the index improved to 59 in 1990 (about the average rate of improvement for southern metro areas in general). However, during the 1990’s the black segregation index improved almost imperceptibly to 57 (Rusk, 2002).

Residential segregation based on race, coupled with the issue of suburban sprawl and the decline of the median family income within the City of Richmond resulted in concentrated poverty for many of the city’s black residents. For example, in 1990 roughly three out of four of metro Richmond’s poor whites (73%) lived in working-class and middle-class neighborhoods. Poor whites were usually part of mainstream neighborhoods and mainstream schools. By contrast, in 1990, almost three out of four of metro Richmond’s poor blacks lived in poverty-impacted low-income public housing projects. Poor blacks were isolated in high-poverty neighborhoods and high-poverty schools. To illustrate this point, the use of the “fair share of poverty” index table below compares a jurisdiction’s poverty rate against the regional poverty rate. If, for example, the regional poverty rate were 10% and the jurisdiction’s poverty rate were 10%, then its “fair share of poverty index” would be 100; it would have its proportionate share of the region’s poor. The index of 200 would indicate that the jurisdiction would have twice its fair share of poor people; an index of 50 indicates only half its fair share (Rusk, 2002). Table 3 tracks trends in the fair share of poverty index for 1970-2000:
Table 3

Fair Share of Poverty Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrico</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 100 = fair share.
(Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau data, 2000)

As seen in Table 3, the economic segregation of poor people in Richmond rose steadily from 149 to 230, which is more than twice its fair share. Richmond’s school segregation by income also rose during the 1990’s from an index of 56 to 58, which was the ninth highest among 82 large metro areas and the highest among southern metro areas. Thus, while barriers based strictly on race were slowly coming down, barriers based on income were going up. According to this data, Richmond became segregated by income by the end of the twenty-first century. The schools within these neighborhoods reflected these economic trends, with a clear division between wealthy and poor schools throughout Richmond and the metropolitan area. According to Rusk, “Jim Crow by income was being infused with Jim Crow by race” (Rusk, 2002, p. 5).

Theoretical Background of the Study

Theories regarding the consequences of school desegregation policies for metropolitan public schools vary in the literature. These theories embedded in the literature include social, economic and critical race theory. In addition, several classic theorists (e.g., Marx, Simmel and Weber) have provided insight into defining the socio-
economic phenomenon that is evident in many major metropolitan areas. Examples of metropolitan transformation during the years after cross-town busing ended are examined in this study’s literature review with a focus on research pertaining to Richmond between 1986 and 2006.

The social transformation of the inner city resulted in a disproportionate concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population. As Wilson (1987) notes, this social milieu is significantly different from the inner city environments that existed within these communities before the drastic white flight of the 1960’s, 1970’s and into the 1980’s (Wilson, 1987). The resegregation of schools through this period was a byproduct of this social transformation. Various implications on metropolitan socio-economics are examples of the political, economic, cultural and institutional systems associated with the social transformation of the city.

Wilson’s main thesis concerning socio-economic trends in large urban areas states that when factories and other businesses leave the inner city, working and middle-class blacks soon follow, resulting in a population ill-equipped to compete in a global economy that rewards those with college educations and punishes the poorly educated (Wilson, 1980). As more and more people leave the cities, socio-economic stability also leaves, sending many aspects of the inner city into decay, including the school systems. Referring to the conditions of the black underclass, parents are unable to work with their children as frequently or pay for their children to attend preschool, which unfortunately deprives them of a sufficient education, which in turn leads them down the long road of poverty (Powell, 2004).
The concentration of poverty in America’s cities and the social isolation of African-Americans within them are argued by Massey and Denton (1993) to be the result of an interaction between the poverty level and the historical and contemporary patterns of residential segregation that African-Americans have endured. In turn, racial segregation is the result of a complex web of forces that can be examined within the Richmond metropolitan area by way of the creation of public housing projects in low-income areas and other such phenomenon. The underlying thesis of their analysis is that an underclass is a systemic and natural outcome of racial discrimination perpetuated by American social, economic and political institutions (Massey and Denton, 1993).

**Rationale for the Study**

Historians conducted research on school desegregation pertaining to Richmond prior to 1986, but a void is identifiable in the literature between the years of 1986 and 2006; thus there is a need for a study of RPS as a unitary school system. Substantial scholarly analysis of post-court mandated school desegregation (after 1986) in RPS is lacking and there is a gap in the literature specific to RPS operating as a unitary school system for blacks and whites between 1986 and 2006. Since the *Bradley v. School Board* case was dismissed in 1986, little research has been conducted to help provide understanding or to clarify meaning of what has happened within RPS. The present study provides a history of what transpired within RPS during the twenty years after Judge Merhige’s court decree. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Orfield, (1989), Pratt (1989), Arkin (1991), and Callihan (1992) ended their particular studies near the time this study begins. Building on their studies, the need to continue the story of RPS is
necessary to better understand the historical repercussions of school desegregation in Richmond since 1986.

*Purpose for the Study/Statement of the Problem*

The purpose of this study is to tell the story of how the Richmond community (i.e., its educators, policy makers, residents, parents, former students and others) responded to the end of the desegregation process between 1986 and 2006. There is a dearth of analysis regarding perspectives and accounts of what happened within RPS after the court declared it a unitary school system for blacks and whites. Perspectives of the twenty years after cross-town busing ended in Richmond were critically analyzed along with the decisions and actions taken within RPS. This study also addressed the difficult questions of racial and social class matters and analyzed them through a research study specific to this period in Richmond. The unfulfilled promises of *Brown* left RPS with the situation described above.

*Research Questions*

1. What role has de jure and de facto school desegregation in Virginia played in the development of RPS since 1986?
2. What is the relationship of race and class in the perception of people working in RPS from 1986 through 2006?
3. How have people associated with RPS dealt with the results of school desegregation after the end of cross-town busing in 1986?
Design and Methods

A historical case study was developed to help provide understanding and to clarify meaning of events in RPS during unitary status. The research design involves facets of Johnson, McGarth and Williams' 1989 study of RPS, which addressed the citizens’ perspective of the district. Johnson et al., provided a basis for developing a historical case study pertaining to the unitary status of RPS from 1986 through 2006. A historical analysis research method was used in the present study, including informant interviews, an in-depth examination of historical documents and archival information.

Interviews of people associated with RPS between 1986 and 2006 were also an important source of data. These interviews along with other material such as historical documents and other pieces of archival information were used as data sources. These sources were critically analyzed to help provide a historical perspective for clarifying the untold story of RPS during unitary status.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

School Desegregation’s Impact on Metropolitan Areas

Background Information

Since the Brown decisions of 1954 and 1955, a considerable amount of literature was published relevant to school desegregation. Details of school desegregation in Richmond, Virginia were outlined in the introduction of this study as a framework for researching Richmond Public Schools (RPS) as a unitary school system from 1986 through 2006. To illustrate how RPS grappled with the repercussions of school desegregation decisions that occurred between 1954 and 1986, a literature review is necessary. To begin, theories related to the impact of school desegregation associated with social and economic theory are explored. A review of socio-economic consequences of school desegregation on metropolitan areas is then conducted with respect to the previously mentioned social and economic theories. Next, a review of recent literature on RPS is examined relevant to the years after cross-town busing ended, 1986 through 2006. Finally, a literature review specific to historical research methods and their best practices is provided.

According to Nancy John (1975) the phenomenon of desegregation must be dissected into components and be eclectic in the search for clarifying concepts. Symbolic interaction theory, as developed by Cooley (1902), Thomas (1931), and Mead (1934), sheds light on several dimensions of school desegregation. Its basic idea is that people live in a symbolic environment in which meanings and values shared with others guide their behavior. It is the actor’s interpretation of the situation, rather than its structure or
form, which is important. According to John, the most important aspect of school desegregation is the symbolic message it conveys. It was this aspect that the Supreme Court stressed in its 1954 decision. What has since been created during resegregation is a racial composition of predominantly black schools that tend to have a reputation for low standards, poor equipment and inexperienced staff—a reputation that outruns the facts and acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The stigma of attending such schools might depress pupil self-esteem, while the aura of a mostly white school might raise it (John, 1975). John’s work is significant to this study in that it speaks to the resegregation that occurred within RPS. Her work also parallels the perception of the predominantly black RPS compared to the majority white Chesterfield and Henrico County school systems that border Richmond. Lacking in John’s study are personal accounts of this dynamic and a more current conclusion as it relates to today’s schools.

_Social and economic theory._

Critical race theory scholars argue that, despite the recorded history of the fight for school desegregation, the process itself has been promoted in ways that advantage whites, rather than serving as a solution to social inequality. For instance, Buffalo’s “model desegregation” program reveals that African-American students continued to be poorly served by the school system. African-American student achievement failed to improve, and suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates continued to rise. Thus, the benefits of whites that derived from the program were that they took advantage of the special magnet school programs and free extended childcare while they seemed supportive of school desegregation. Critical race theory emerged from the notion that
racism is normal; in the sense of norm, not aberrant, in American society, especially as it relates to educational inequalities (Parker, Deyhle and Villenas, 1999).

John and Parker et al., have established correlations between socio-economic levels of black and white students and their academic success in the past; however, there has been very little done through policy and educational reform to correct the achievement gap among today’s students. This achievement gap has created problems that educators have to deal with on a daily basis, with both individual schools and entire school systems being held accountable by state and federal standards, such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001). Due to social divisions in society, it has become challenging for teachers to address all students’ needs. Theories, such as classical insights derived from Max Weber and George Simmel are used to better explain the dynamics that are associated with these educational issues and their relevance to society’s current position of social change.

The specific social status of a child is often unknown by the child, but the reality of knowing what one possesses in comparison with another, in terms of material and self, can be apparent to even young children. With the ability to access information about different aspects of current society though medias such as television, the internet and other forms of news reporting, individuals, including children, begin to develop a concept of self based on their material comparisons with others. As self concept develops, there is a perception created within the individual about other groups of people possessing contrasting material lifestyles. This in turn creates a perception of the other based on their association with the social status of the class itself, versus seeing the person from within. A number of theorists have explained the conditions of society as they relate to
individuals and their interaction with others in society (Hurst, 1999).

One theorist who examined social change as it relates to class and group status was Max Weber. Weber’s “iron cage theory” of how the rational structure of modern life has increased within the lives of all human beings explains how a hardened shell of rationalization and calculation has developed around people in society, leaving no room for escape. Weber’s view is actually one of negativity, a sense of disenchantment, as a result of science shedding more and more light on daily life. He believed society would become more disconnected from the values of nonrational life and would develop a purposively rational behavior based on a more calculated way of thinking. Weber also believed that large bureaucracies and an alienated class structure would create an impersonal society. Such a rational development of public life would leave individuals with no option but to accept modern institutional processes of methodical calculation apart from their sense of self. Such an impersonal approach to others would be based in the capitalism and bureaucracy that was being created. This left society with classes, which then fostered the development of status groups. Weber did, however, see economic class differences as more meaningful in today’s society than old social status groups (Hurst, 1999).

From Weber’s perspective, the rational thinking of individuals is based on the class system and the social control of capitalistic and bureaucratic institutions. The theoretical and conceptual tools of Weber’s theory of the social change are applicable to today’s issues as well. Weber noticed differences in cultural attitudes and patterns of behavior when he distinguished “class” from “status.” He wanted to convey that classifications into classes are representing one thing and human social organizations and
socialization represent something else (Bogenhold, 2001). Weber also had some insight into the positions of social status and their effects on the esteems of individuals. He has commented that, in general, there is a “social esteem” in terms of a label that accompanies positions in society, resulting from education, which heightens, what he calls the “status element” (Devoe, 2000). Bogenhold (2001) quotes Weber as stating, “Classes can be divided according to their relationships to production, how they acquire goods, ‘status’ according to the principle in which goods in the form of specific types of life styles are consumed” (p. 7).

Pertinent to the present study, children in schools are often left without any choice as to the label that is placed upon them when they enter a school due to the uncontrollable conditions of their lives. This categorizing of individuals based on the status that they represent, stemming from the class that they have no control over, allows for a system where it is difficult for educators to see individual students, but rather the status group that they represent in society. This structured system of rules and levels of power that exists in society, as described by Weber, is important to the bureaucratic organization of systems, such as schools in today’s society (Devoe, 2000).

George Simmel is another theorist concerned with group formation and the type of stratification associated with it. Simmel saw people in the world as individuals seeking domination while domination itself oppresses and separates people. Simmel believed that dominant people created culture, while at the same time culture was a separate thing that turned and dominated them. His ideas apply to today’s society in that there is a social distance created in the spatial areas, such as public parks and establishments of urban centers and the surrounding communities. For example, there are
numerous concentrations of individuals from specific ethnic or status groups in today’s cities that face a preconceived view of self by others, as well as self-fulfilling prophecies of what those preconceptions represent, based on societal expectations that have been created for them. Conflict is then created between groups, which in turn projects a type of self-esteem on individuals based on their perception of self and others (Hurst, 1999).

Simmel defined the dynamics of social life in terms of social forms. Simmel’s theory of social interaction concerns vast differences between those representing different status groups in society. To continue with Simmel’s point of view, he has stated that society promotes a leveling of its members. It creates an average and makes it extremely difficult for its members to excel beyond this average. For Simmel, the individual is doubly oppressed by the standards of society: he may not transcend them either in a more general or in a more individualized direction (Simmel, 2004).

To conclude the review of the classical theories of Weber and Simmel, some key elements have been highlighted for usage in the present study. In Weberian terms, control by social institutions, such as today’s educational system, limits the degree to which social equality is possible for children. Weber and Simmel’s classical theories help illuminate the social processes that shape the minds of all individuals in society. This content relates to the present study of RPS, which have had to deal with this social process, as academic successes and failures have placed the district in a social status constraint. This means that societal perceptions impact the educational equity of schools due to the historical significance of segregation.

In terms of theory relating to the economic aspects of our society, convergence of various patterns of urbanization is brought about by increased economic interdependence
and the development of compatible organizational and institutional arrangements. Some of the post-1980 migration and metropolitan growth patterns are similar to those of the 1960s (a more rapid growth of the metropolitan areas and of metropolitan areas in proximity to their metropolitan core). Theories of metropolitanization and ecological expansion help explain these developments. However, subsequent events of the 1980s (the decline in parts of metropolitan areas showing general patterns of rapid growth or population decline as a result of the decline in functional economic and sustenance base) contradicted the trends established by these theories during the 1970s. It was concluded by the neo-conservatives that economic activities in major American cities resulting in economic dominance would be beneficial however inadequate for the diversification of the economic base in these cities. In fact, this resulted in the consequence of inequities in job access, housing, schools, and social services. In addition, these inequities draw attention to the increasing pressures of immigration, multiculturalism, and the sharpening of racial and ethnic cleavages, which create additional social stresses. Furthermore, there is also a rapidly aging population that puts stress on health, housing, education, welfare funding and the prospects of generational conflicts over increased scarcity of resources as the economic base of cities decreased during this period (Peck, 1996).

In light of the impact, an examination of social class and status should take place in order to apply the implications of both factors on the educational system of academic achievement in relationship to the predefined self-esteem of today’s students. With class being as prevalent as it is today, class-consciousness was examined as it relates to the social issues encountered in Richmond between 1986 and 2006. It has been stated through the works of Goldthorpe and Marshall that class analysis of one’s status reflects
the processes through which individuals and families are distributed and redistributed among these status positions over time. The consequences thereof for their life-chances and for the social identities that they adopt persist. Also, the social values and interests that they pursue remain with them as a condition of society (Bogenhold, 2001).

However, the socio-economic consequences of school desegregation are still vague. For a better understanding of the social status/academic success relationship, the following sections examine the socio-economic consequences of school desegregation and the post-court mandated school desegregation era in Richmond.

*Socio-economic consequences.*

The trends in the literature pertaining to the socio-economic consequences of school desegregation and the failed desegregation process serve as resources for this study. For instance, as a result of the school desegregation process, the concentration of poverty in large urban areas between 1950 and 2000 can be explained, at least in part, by the decentralization of inner-city manufacturing jobs and the rise of low-wage service sector employment that significantly reduced the number of low-skilled jobs that paid a living wage for its employees. The resulting high rates of joblessness in inner city America were exacerbated by the middle-class and white flight to the suburbs (Alex-Assensoh, 1998). These trends of income inequality that occurred during and after the school desegregation process, as well as racial and class segregation in housing and educational facilities are discussed later. For now, they provide a historical perspective on the dramatic increase of poverty in large urban areas.
An increased number of middle and upper class white residents exited the inner city in the last half of the twentieth century and a highly concentrated number of African-Americans have resided in large urban areas since. The social transformation of the inner city resulted in a disproportionate concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population. This social milieu is significantly different from the inner city environments that existed within these communities before the drastic white flight of the 1960’s, 1970’s and into the 1980’s. According to Wilson, “Moreover, changes in societal organization have created situations that enhance racial antagonisms between those groups that are trapped in central cities and are victimized by deteriorating services and institutions that serve the city” (Wilson, 1987, p. 136). Wilson’s main thesis behind the decline of urban infrastructure results in city populations that are ill-equipped to compete in a global economy due to the departure of working and middle-class blacks to the suburbs (Wilson, 1980). As more and more people left the cities, more and more economic stability left, sending many aspects of the inner city into decay, including the school systems. The resegregation of schools, including that of Richmond, through this period was a byproduct of this social transformation.

Table 4 illustrates the trends in neighborhood changes from 1960 to 1980 of seven neighborhoods in Chicago, which demonstrates that nearly all of the middle to upper class white population moved out during this time period, as did a small proportion of the African-American middle to upper class population (Lynn, 1990). The figures shown in Table 4 are that of residents representing middle to upper class status of seven neighborhoods within the city of Chicago.
Table 4

Average Neighborhood Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>63,700</td>
<td>48,300</td>
<td>32,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>15,500</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>27,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Races</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Numbers represent middle-upper class residents. (Adapted from Curtis, 2004)

The trend of these two decades, in terms of the outmigration of many middle-to-upper-class individuals from the city is shown in Table 4. Thus, beginning the trend of the increasingly concentrated and isolated urban poor. According to Curtis, poverty is now extremely concentrated, with three-fourths of the poor living in metropolitan areas, compared to about half in 1968; forty-two percent of today’s poor live in the very central cities (Curtis, 2004). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the year 2000, 86.5% of African-Americans lived in metropolitan areas while only making up 12.9% of the United States population. The largest metropolitan areas (1 million or more population) had higher residential segregation than the middle-sized ones (500,000 to 999,999 population), which, in turn, had higher residential segregation than the smallest metropolitan areas (Census, 2003). This data is useful for analyzing post-court mandated school desegregation in Richmond because it illustrates the magnitude of this issue in large urban areas.
Table 5 illustrates the spatial proximity index of African-Americans, which is defined by the Housing Patterns Office of United States Census Bureau, as being the ratio of which blacks are likely to live near other blacks. The index is the decimal figure that represents the likelihood of one African-American living near another African-American.

Table 5
Residential Segregation Spatial Proximity Index of African-Americans by Population of Selected Metropolitan Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Size</th>
<th>Number of Metropolitan Areas</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 500,000</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.218</td>
<td>1.206</td>
<td>1.205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500,000-999,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.307</td>
<td>1.273</td>
<td>1.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 million +</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.543</td>
<td>1.502</td>
<td>1.469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau data, 2003)

The data in Table 5 was taken from a total of 220 metropolitan areas in 2000 that represented the population sizes of the year 2000. The data outlined in Table 5 shows an extreme concentration of African-Americans living in large urban areas of the country demonstrating that blacks are more likely to live near other blacks rather than another racial group (Census, 2003). For example, the figure 1.469 in the 1 million or more metropolitan area population size for the year 2000 is representative of the ratio of an African-American living in proximity to another African-American at this time and place. Due to the disproportionately over represented number of African-Americans, the simple function of numbers must also be considered here, meaning that the lack of desegregation of the cities factors into the extreme statistics. Meaning, blacks and whites are far less
likely to interact in this large of a city compared to a city of less than one million residents. However, this trend has created a significant social underclass that exists within cities represented by these demographics. Furthermore, this documentation sets the stage for the contemporary examination of RPS between 1986 and 2006. These trends support the demographic changes of Richmond and were useful in developing a critical analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the city and its school system.

The number of poor people living in concentrated urban poverty in the United States grew by an enormous rate of 29.5% between 1970 and 1980. In 1980, the U.S. Census indicated that there were over 1,800,000 poor persons living in concentrated urban poverty in America’s 100 largest central cities. In 1980, the concentrated urban poor living in large urban areas was made up of 67% African-American, 20% Hispanic and only 12% Caucasian (Hajnal, 2004). Despite drops in concentrated poverty in the United States by 2000, the percentage of African-Americans and Hispanics living within concentrated areas of poverty increased to 68% for African-Americans and to 24% for Hispanics. Caucasians decreased slightly to 8.5% of its population living in areas of concentrated poverty (Census, 2000). According to the bureau (Census, 2000), by 1999 U.S Census data continued to show a large gap between median incomes among racial groups. Non-Hispanic white households earned a median income of $44,366 while African-American households reported a median income of just $27,910. Hispanic households showed a median income of $30,735. With these figures staying consistent since 1999, the total percentage of people living in poverty in 2005 was 12.6%. The percentage of people living in poverty within different racial groups was as follows: 10.6% Caucasian, 11.1% Asian, 21.8% Hispanic, and 24.7% African-American, (Census,
2005). These statistics in turn create a perpetuation of the perception acquired by those observing the negative occurrences within large urban areas as representative of a race rather than of a sociological trend. In truth, there are societal factors that can explain the conditions of these highly concentrated poverty areas as they relate to racial groups. These ideas were used to assist in the critical analysis of the RPS from 1986 through 2006.

The previously stated data illustrates the rate of middle-to-upper-class residents exiting the inner cities since 1950, and the high concentration of an African-American underclass existing today. Various factors underlying these changes are provided in the next section. Also, the generation of policy to rejuvenate large urban areas and the schools that reside within them is examined further in the following subsections. To provide an understanding for this basis, the relationships between the economic issues, political factors, institutional factors and the cultural contexts shaping this issue is discussed.

*Factors Impacting Poverty*

To begin looking at the literature pertaining to the concentration of poverty in large urban areas and its implications for education in Richmond, an overview of how the United States defines poverty is conducted. The United States defines the poverty line for a family of four as being less than $19,971, per year, or $4,993 per person (Census, 2005). People fall below this line for a countless number of reasons. Some have control over this situation and others do not. Urban residents have been left behind with a declining tax base, shrinking employment opportunities, a shortage of decent, affordable...
housing and a failing educational system. An economic incentive has been developed for middle class suburban residents to keep out those with high needs and few resources, thus relegating low income individuals to the core of the inner city. These points, coupled with racial discrimination and the aversion of blacks by whites, all play a serious role in sustaining the black underclass (Powell, 2004).

With the decline of manufacturing corporations in large urban areas, dilapidation of neighborhoods began to occur. As previously stated, a declining tax base was created, which left minimal opportunities for school funding to be increased. This fact left inner city schools with limited funding, as compared to affluent schools within the suburbs (Burns, 2003). For example, in 2004, the average poor student received about $1,000 per year in resources at a New York public school whereas the school with the least amount of poor children received around $3,000 per student in public schools. According to Powell, this is the case in at least 37 of the country’s 50 states. Inadequate access to a quality education for impoverished children only lessens their chances of making it out of poverty (Powell, 2004). This point was helpful in the study of RPS in relation to population changes in Richmond after cross-town busing ended.

The political environment had a tremendous impact on urban areas in the last half of the twentieth century. As Powell sees it, poverty in America is frequently racialized and systemic; some of it is the product of well-documented, formal and informal, racially discriminatory federal, state and municipal policies (Powell, 2004). This literature supplemented the study of RPS and policies created within the city between 1986 and 2006.
These policies include housing and transportation, which have encouraged middle-class whites to flee the cities for the suburbs, such as the case in Richmond. The cause of poverty can be contributed to factors such as education itself, inadequate education or lack of an education. Without a college education and a job in the work force, people in poverty may never stop suffering from it (Powell, 2004).

Education for a child begins with the institutional group of the family. Children who do not learn basic thinking skills at home before attending the more formal institution of school, automatically fall behind. In most cases children in poverty do not achieve these skills from the home to the extent that middle-class children do. It has been documented that when poor children enter school, they are generally a year and a half behind the language abilities of their middle-class peers. Referring to the conditions of the black underclass, parents are unable to work with their children as frequently or pay for their children to attend preschool, which unfortunately deprives them of a sufficient education, which in turn leads them down the long road of poverty (Powell, 2004). Scenarios such as these were helpful in the study of RPS as it pertained to conditions of the district during unitary status.

The black underclass suffered from the withdrawal of economic support resulting from the abandonment of businesses in the inner cities. Massey and Denton (1993) see the economic restructuring of the mid-1970’s and 1980’s as the major transformer of American cities. Middle-class and white flight to the suburbs exacerbated the resulting high rate of joblessness in inner city America. This exodus happened along with a decline in public services and private investment. These trends of income inequality led to the road of class and racial segregation in housing and educational facilities.
This concentration of poverty in America’s cities and social isolation of African-Americans is argued by Massey and Denton (1993) to be the result of an interaction between the poverty level and the historical-cum-contemporary patterns of residential segregation that African-Americans have endured. In turn, racial segregation is the result of a complex web of forces including restrictive covenants, redlined by banks and insurance companies, zoning, corrupt practices by some real estate agents and the creation of public housing projects in low-income areas. The underlying thesis of this analysis is that the underclass is a systemic and natural outcome of racial discrimination that is perpetuated by American social, economic and political institutions (Massey and Denton, 1993). These points are supportive of the socio-economic conditions of Richmond and its public schools since 1986. Massey and Denton’s theory was helpful in critically analyzing the history of RPS since it was declared a unitary school system for blacks and whites.

Many individuals in contemporary urban ghettos are poor, chronically unemployed, welfare dependent, ill-housed and poorly educated; however, they are invisible in the eyes of policy makers, political candidates and employers (Alex-Assensoh, 1998). In reviewing Alex-Assensoh’s work it is found that during the Ronald Regan administration in the 1980’s, inner city communities were seen as necessary casualties of the economic and technological revitalization of America. This perspective had a direct impact on the lifestyles of individuals residing in urban areas during this era. Attention to social policy was neglected, thus leaving cities vulnerable to the frequently devastating social consequences of economic changes and processes (Alex-Assensoh, 1998).
As the percentage of students living in poverty rose in urban schools, the conditions for academic success, including finances, teacher quality, educator stability, small school sizes and facilities all declined. As such a condition is prevalent in today’s inner city schools, federal and state authorities have called for accountability rises through policies, without the resources to facilitate school improvement. In addition, the implementation of annual high stakes standardized testing, the move to privatize public schools, the retreat from Affirmative Action, the shifting of state budgets from public schools to vouchers, the refusal to pay urban teachers and finance urban schools equitably all plot to reduce the possibility that education will never change the opportunity structure (Burns, 2003). Richmond is not immune to these intense implementations of many social policies. This content is applicable to all facets of today’s diverse socio-economic society, including that of Richmond. This documentation was helpful in addressing the socio-economic and school conditions for Richmond’s youth as it pertained to this study.

A look at Nicholas Lemann’s work on the urban underclass helps provide a culture of poverty explanation. He states, “Many aspects of the underclass culture in the ghetto are directly traceable to roots in the South, not the South of slavery, but the South of a generation ago” (Lemann, 1986, p. 258). Lemann defines this as the nascent underclass of the sharecropper south. Further commentary on this point by Alex-Assensoh (1998) reveals that in his estimation, the behavioral characteristics of the urban underclass like out-of-wedlock births, dependency, poverty, crime and lack of education were brought to the north by southern sharecroppers. In terms of a historical perspective, since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s, Richmond has seen this theory play out
in its general population. Moreover, since the end of cross-town busing in 1986 the next generation became a byproduct of this history. As more and more African-Americans moved north, they moved to urban areas, thus becoming a part of the underclass resulting from the trends described previously within cities. For the purposes of the present study, this content contributed to the development of historical background for the contemporary situation of RPS.

The implementation of high stakes testing and the call for highly qualified teachers through current legislation represented an institutional component that can be analyzed systematically. This analysis provides a broader understanding of RPS and its implications on education since the end of cross-town busing in 1986. According to Chirot, the state is our primary political institution, but there are many other institutional levels below the state that are also involved with politics (Chirot, 1994).

* A Contemporary Examination of School Desegregation in Richmond

In this section of the literature review, a closer look is taken at what happened within RPS since the school desegregation era ended in 1986. When looking at the question of how school desegregation decisions historically impacted RPS since 1986, the literature that currently exists must be identified and reviewed to demonstrate how it will help the present study. Various pieces of past research and historical case studies related to Richmond during this transitional period in history were examined. A review of the literature explaining various historical studies through primary and secondary sourced material created a basis for the need of this study. Based on this section of the
literature review, a full understanding of the need to conduct further research of RPS as a unitary school system is accomplished.

*An Examination of Richmond*

Isaac states that a reconstruction of the past both systematically and objectively must be done by collecting, evaluating, verifying, and synthesizing evidence regarding historical research representative of a city and its school system (Isaac, 1997). The selected sources of Johnson, McGrath and Williams (1989), Callihan (1992), Craver (1993) and Philipsen (1999) are reviewed in an effort to utilize the content of their work as it relates to the need to further study RPS under unitary status from 1986 through 2006.

Literature specific to what has occurred in Richmond and within its public school system since 1986 is limited. However, Johnson et al., (1989) conducted a study entitled *Richmond Public Schools: A Citizens’ Perspective* through Virginia Commonwealth University’s Survey Research Laboratory and Department of Sociology. The study itself provides information about citizen knowledge, perceptions, issues and concerns about RPS as of 1989. Even though the Johnson study was not extensive and only focused on the perspective of the citizens, it provided an outline for the historical research methods of the present study. Also, when fused with the data collected for the present study it helps create a template for critical analysis. Public opinion about RPS in the late 1980’s was provided in the Johnson et al., (1989) study, but no questions were asked about the aftermath of school desegregation per se. The Johnson study provided a very general overview of the citizens’ perspectives as of 1989, but did not get to the core of the issues
raised. However, the basics of the study were useful to the present study’s design regarding the analysis of data from the narrative sections of the surveys. This source was especially useful when combined with various historical research methods examined in this chapter.

*A Mini-History of the Richmond Public Schools 1869-1992* by Shirley Callihan was published in 1992 to present an interesting and useful history of RPS. Callihan (1992) used many primary sources such as interviews, individual school histories and principals’ annual reports, school directories, maps and newspaper files along with superintendents’ annual reports and school board minutes. Her chronological review of RPS readily discerns between pre and post-segregation in Richmond, but much is left to be desired about the unitary status years of 1986 through 2006. The years of 1986 through 1992 that pertain to the present study provide a comprehensive glimpse of what was occurring within RPS during that time. Her documentation was conducted more as a report versus an analysis (Callihan, 1992). Her work appropriately provided a basic outline of the first six years of the present study; however, it does lack the critical analysis essential to provide greater understanding of RPS as unitary school system for blacks and whites.

Sam Craver supervised research (1993) on the *Black Richmonders’ Experience with School Segregation and Desegregation: An Oral History Project at Virginia Commonwealth University* that deserves review. This unpublished work is based on interviews conducted as a field project by a selected group of students in the School of Education in 1992. It provides several eye witness accounts of segregated schools in Richmond prior to 1954, as well as several accounts of events during post-1954
desegregation up to 1993. In review, some neighborhoods changed rapidly as blacks moved in and whites moved out. This research relates to the present study in that it speaks to the binding ties of the traditional black community and the loss of an important cultural anchor. Interviewees in this study felt that some gains were had for blacks during desegregation, while still something was lost during this process (Craver, 1993). The present study continues with that thought and further explores questions to critically analyze the history of RPS after court desegregation efforts ended. For instance, perspectives gathered from people who experienced unitary status in Richmond provide a continuation of this series of personal accounts compiled by Craver (1993).

Maike Philipsen’s (1999) book *Values-Spoken and Values-Lived: Race and the Cultural Consequences of a School Closing* is based on a study revealing the contradictions of the educational and social conditions within a community. Philipsen’s study examined the perspectives of several females representing a community that transitioned through school desegregation. The cultural consequences unveiled in her research parallel those within Richmond during the same period. According to her study, an understanding that many of the oppositional attitudes of females that have had experiences in this type of social environment are a result of tensions—or contradictions—within the cultural actor (Philipsen, 1999).

The present study used this understanding to help frame the context for which data results were analyzed. In addition, the triangulation approach used by Philipsen to validate her findings is replicated in the present study to provide further validity to the research. To build on the interview approach used by Philipsen, a range of perspectives
from both genders and people who were associated with RPS in various capacities was acquired.

To illustrate where past literature fell short of critically analyzing RPS as a unitary district, specific documentation about Richmond and the forces that shaped resegregation in the region were reviewed. The book *A Virginia Profile 1960-2000: Assessing Current Trends and Problems* by John Moeser (1981) looks at existing conditions in Virginia in 1981 and forward to possibilities in 1982-2000, with analysis of specific factors affecting urban education particularly in Richmond. This work is meaningful to the present study for defining the political, economic and social environment toward the end of the school desegregation era in Richmond. Moeser (1981) was valuable in helping provide historical documentation of the state of education in Richmond prior to the time period of the present study. The conclusions that Moeser (1981) draws from his work along with his predictions for the future opened the door for further historical analysis to be done on RPS from 1986 through 2006.

John Moeser continued his research with Rutledge Dennis in their (1982) book *The Politics of Annexation: Oligarchic Power in a Southern City*. This book is about Post World War II Richmond and the expansion of the city related to race and politics. The struggle for power during the era of school desegregation is highlighted through their analysis of the effects of the annexation limitations that occurred for Richmond after the 1970 annexation of Chesterfield County. This work is relevant to the years after 1986 for creating a context of the political, social and economic developments of the city and the surrounding counties. This is illustrated by the litigation in the courts that predates the present study. This content was critical to developing a historical background of the
demographics of Richmond at the conception of the present study. Furthermore, Moeser and Dennis (1982) only examined the aftermath of annexation through a political, social and economic lens. However, the present study, delved deeper into the ramifications of the effects had specifically on RPS during the twenty years after 1986.

In 1989, Gary Orfield, Franklin Monfort, and Melissa Aaron published a report of the council of Urban Boards of Education and the National School Desegregation Research Project at the University of Chicago on the *Status of School Desegregation 1968-1986: Segregation, Integration, and Public Policy: National, State and Metropolitan Trends in Public Schools*. They found trends that demonstrated the resegregation of blacks throughout the south without particular mention of Richmond, Virginia. Their research was useful to the present study to show the specific parallels that Richmond underwent related to the residential patterns of the city. In addition, Orfield, Monfort and Aaron (1989) neglected to examine the effects desegregation had on schools systems specifically. Orfield et al., (1989) state, “Federal research on effective school desegregation techniques should be resumed” (Orfield et al., 1989, p. 30). This documented request for further research is extremely supportive of the need to examine RPS since it was declared unitary in 1986.

Daniel Arkin (1991) wrote his dissertation on *Regime Politics Surrounding Desegregation Decision-Making During Massive Resistance in Richmond, Virginia*, which outlines state and local politics surrounding the school desegregation process of 1954 through 1986. In his conclusions and reflections, Arkin (1991) talks about how “the political regime still exists and believes that the methods and beliefs behind the regime continue to play a critical role in Richmond’s regime of 1991” (p. 160). His point has
bearing for the present study as it relates to the politics in Richmond during unitary status. Arkin does not go into the possible effects the political regime had on RPS, which is significant to the research of the present study. This assertion of his adds reasoning to this component of the present study.

Another source that was very important in providing background for the present study is the work of Robert Pratt (1992) in *The Color of Their Skin: Education and Race in Richmond, Virginia 1954-1989*. In reviewing Pratt’s research from 1954 through 1989, inevitable social and legal forces moved Richmond toward segregation in the 1950’s and racial divisions seemed to tense. As pointed out by Pratt (1992), the policies of racial separation hardened as a result of *Brown* and the forces it unleashed. The struggle to desegregate the schools in the 1960’s, 1970’s and into the 1980’s left Richmond with a resegregated city. The concept of busing students within the city fell short in 1986 when the school system saw its black population representing 87% of the student enrollment (Pratt, 1992).

Pratt’s analysis of material from 1986 through 1989 is relevant to the basis of the present study. The concepts utilized to revitalize the city and its school system was subject to further analysis through 2006 in the present study. For instance, Pratt defines the experimentation of magnet schools as potential luring mechanisms for whites to come back into the city. In 1989, Community High saw 19 of its 41 seniors receive National Merit or national achievement commendations and had a 99% college acceptance rate. The school’s racial breakdown was 70% black, 25% white, 4% Asian and 1% Hispanic. The superintendent of Richmond at the time, Albert Jones, wanted to expand magnet schools in 1990 and beyond while not using this concept as a “carrot for desegregation”
(Pratt, 1992, p. 95). Pratt also points out in his research that people had concerns about the magnet school concept in that it would eventually lead to socio-economic segregation within RPS (Pratt, 1992). Pratt’s work leads into the twenty-year historical analysis of the present study to help continue the story of RPS as a unitary school system.

According to Christopher Silver and John Moeser’s (1995) book *The Separate City: Black Communities in the Urban South 1940-1968*, when examining Richmond’s contemporary situation, neighborhood settlement patterns of African-Americans are a distinctive feature of this southern city. These settlement patterns constitute a relatively self-contained, racially-identifiable community separate from the white city. In the case of Richmond, this was no different. As the 1954 *Brown* decision unfolded and the effect of the battle over public schools ensued in Richmond and throughout Virginia, the political mobilization within the separate cities of Richmond occurred (Silver and Moeser, 1995). However, their research only addressed the outcomes of the separate city that was created in Richmond through the mid 1980’s with some brief connections made to the school system.

For example, Silver and Moeser’s (1995) description of Richmond’s changing black community after 1940 as sort of an unavoidable flow in one direction provides meaning to the residential changes in Richmond prior to 1986. Furthermore, the historical residential facts pertaining to Richmond help address the neighborhood school situations that were controversial during unitary status. Significant racial change in neighborhoods occurred after 1970, and by the 1980’s, the increase of black neighborhoods overwhelmingly composed of low-income families and individuals confirmed the precarious state of the black separate city. This point is a direct reflection
of the neighborhood schools in Richmond during this period. The separate city, which was previously an exclusively central city phenomenon, was transformed by the 1980s and 1990s into a metropolitan condition (Silver and Moeser, 1995). The lack of analyzed effect this phenomenon had on RPS is where the present study attempted to fill the gap in the literature.

An article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, “Schools’ Disparities Studies: Group urges study of integrating city, suburban schools by income” by Robin Farmer (2006) is a recent newspaper clipping that addresses metropolitan Richmond’s school disparity issue. The article asks the question: “Whether or not now is the time to talk about integrating classrooms in the city and suburbs by income as a way to achieve ‘world-class public schools’” (Farmer, 2006, p. 1)? She notes that there is a need for action to address the current issues of inequality in schools, twenty years after cross-town busing ended in RPS (Farmer, 2006). Farmer’s points present the status of RPS as a unitary district; however, further analysis about the significance of the school desegregation process on the district is needed.

Further literature regarding RPS as a unitary school system is lacking and has seemingly been stymied beyond the sources highlighted in this review. Interestingly, Callihan (1992) stated at the end of her report: “There is no good time to break off the review of the Richmond Public Schools history. It is left to the next historian to complete the record of Richmond Public School’s ongoing history” (p. 262). Thus, the need to research the answers to various questions related to the history of the desegregation process associated with RPS is essential to adding to the body of knowledge that currently exists about the district’s operations as a unitary school system. The purpose of
this present study is to help fill the existing gap pertaining to RPS as a unitary school system for blacks and whites between 1986 and 2006.

*Historical Research Methodology Literature Review*

Several books on historical research methodologies were reviewed in this section starting with Professor William Brickman, who laid the groundwork for historical research methodology with his book *Research in Educational History* (1973). In this book, Brickman covers the entire conceptual plane of research in educational history. Being that some of the methods for preliminary searches for information are dated; for the use of the present study, there was still a great deal of pertinent information in using methodological searches for source materials. The ample listing of sourced material for primary and secondary sources was extremely helpful as the researcher categorized the data sources for analysis purposes. Brickman (1973) outlines over 10 primary sources that are relevant to this study, including, laws, court decisions, institutional records, professional records, published records, newspaper and magazine sources, public documents, remains, pictorial sources, reproductions and translations. His principles of appropriate evidence derived from authenticated primary sources or, from genuine secondary sources were essential for drawing realistic inferences (Brickman, 1973).

The section of Brickman’s book that was especially helpful to this study was his chapter: “Aids in Writing of History.” In this chapter, he thoroughly discussed the methodology of educational historiographies. His analysis of the available literature on this topic consists mainly of general historiographies in which he advises researchers to
keep focus on the educational aspects of their research (Brickman, 1973). By focusing on RPS during post-court mandated school desegregation, Brickman’s point guided the critical analysis of this study’s findings.

James Hoopes’ (1979) *Oral History: An Introduction for Students* continues with Brickman’s (1973) points of documented literature on historical educational forms of research. Hoopes (1979) provides an outline for the researcher to approach history and oral history from its appropriate perspective. He suggests intelligent criticism and an alert audience on the part of the researcher in order to achieve the best possible form of historical documentation for its greatest usefulness (p. 18). His book, which contains content drawn from published oral histories, provides a basis for researchers to understand the culture and society in which they will be researching. His in-depth dissection of the interview process was particularly helpful as the set up and execution of data sources were established for the present study. Specifically, Hoopes’ documentation of how to arrange, prepare and conduct an interview was relevant to the research design development of this study. Furthermore, Hoopes’ words regarding the actual writing of historical research as it pertains to the legal and ethical aspects of oral documentation was critical to the analysis of the collections and sources in the present study (Hoopes, 1979).

Another book that speaks to the art of conducting historical research is *Oral Historiography* by David Henige (1982). Henige provides a more contemporary practice for conducting oral history. He brings together some of the strands of Brickman (1972) and Hoopes (1979) as they apply to the art of interviewing. His main thesis is for the researcher to provide answers without raising questions of doubt. Henige (1982) makes it clear that the methodical emphasis in his book “is squarely on accumulating data
effectively, testing them thoroughly, and meshing them with other evidence so that they can be widely regarded as reliable” (p. 6). This directive was used as a guide in creating a methodology for the present study that took into account more than just the oral history that was uncovered through the research. Other attainable sources were utilized to render a complete historical research study on RPS between 1986 and 2006.

To bring the review of literature of historical research methods to a close, Prager, Longshore and Seeman’s (1986) *School Desegregation Research: New Directions in Situational Analysis* was examined. This book covers a variety of approaches to historical research including both quantitative and qualitative content. For the purposes of this review, the content pertaining solely to the present study was reviewed. Four types of historical research approaches were found to be applicable for the purposes of the present study. These types of approaches are as follows:

1. Sources and effects of levels of self-esteem on minority groups
2. Desegregation and academic achievement
3. Desegregation and interracial and interethnic content
4. Community effects of school desegregation

The most relevant type of approach for this study on RPS was the effect on the community after school desegregation. The community represents the individuals involved over the twenty year span of the present study. This approach was most applicable to intertwine into the research design of the present study.

Prager et al., (1986) also note that there are several levels of analysis that can be used to advance one’s understanding of the complicated process of school desegregation. They note the parameters of society as a whole, in addition to relationships among and
within school districts, schools, classrooms and those with individuals as the levels of analysis (Prager et al., 1986, p. 250). For the benefit of the present study, the level of the relationships within the Richmond school district is used. Variables that were considered, as documented by Prager et al., (1986) include demography, major technical and economic changes, housing polices, laws bearing desegregation, court decisions, media attention, school board policies, ratios of different groups and the sorting process within the district’s schools (p. 250). These variables were utilized in the study of RPS (1986 through 2006) to help provide understanding and to clarify meaning, by way of a critical analysis, of district operations as a unitary school system.

**Conclusion**

The outmigration of stable families, both black and white, resulted in the increasing isolation of an underclass in the inner cities of America. The works of Simmel, Weber and Marx provided insight into how society shaped a structured system of status groups through various theories of their own. Their insights provided the foundation for investigating the trends in the outmigration patterns of middle-and-upper-class residents, both white and black, when considering the implications on education. Further literature was reviewed on the social and economic theories that relate to the issue of desegregation.

From this, much was discovered about the role of socio-economic disparities in large metropolitan cities during school desegregation. As the data illustrated, a black underclass was developed through racial and class segregation. As stated in this literature review, poverty was more concentrated in 2004 than in 1954, with 75% of poverty
stricken families living in large urban areas (Curtis, 2004). Subsequently, according to
Curtis (2004) the schools within these large urban areas were suffering tremendously
from lack of funding and highly qualified educators. The segregation of metropolitan
areas remained at high levels while the concentration of poverty became even greater in
these areas of the United States.

Primary and secondary sourced literature pertaining to Richmond and its public
schools was reviewed to explain the impact that school desegregation had on RPS, the
city and its surrounding metropolitan area. However, there was a noticeable gap in the
literature relevant to critically analyzed documentation of the years after school
desegregation. Thus, further research on RPS as a unitary school system between 1986
and 2006 is needed.

From reviewing what the literature says about historical research methods
documented by Brickman (1973), Hoopes (1979), Heinge (1982) and Prager, Longshore
and Seeman (1986) an appropriate research design was developed for this study. In
addition, aspects of Johnson, McGrath and William’s (1989) survey study of RPS were
utilized to tailor this study’s design.
CHAPTER 3
Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

Conceptual Framework

An important history of Richmond’s 1954 through 1986 school desegregation process exists, but there is little analysis of the history since 1986, and this set the context for the present study. Theories related to the social and economic conditions of urban areas effected by the process of school desegregation were explored. Conditions of post-court mandated school desegregation pertaining to metropolitan areas including Richmond, Virginia were also closely examined; however, there is a dearth of critical analysis pertaining to Richmond Public Schools (RPS) after it was declared a unitary school system for blacks and whites in 1986. A historical case study of varying perspectives and personal accounts of what happened within RPS between 1986 and 2006 should be informative to educators, policy makers and citizens alike.

Historical background.

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court handed down its historic school desegregation decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, (1954). This decision, often referred to as (*Brown I*), stated that the racial segregation of children in public schools deprives children of the equal protection of the laws (*Brown*, 1954). Many Virginia politicians met the landmark decision of *Brown I* with “massive resistance”. They believed that it was an unwarranted intrusion upon state’s rights and would result in the decline rather than the improvement of education (Pratt, 1992). As noted throughout
the previous two chapters, numerous reasons have precluded the desired implementation of desegregated schools to occur.

The research design of the present study utilizes similar studies from the past as well as a historical case study methodology as a template. In addition, aspects of Johnson, McGarth, and Williams’ (1989) survey study of RPS were incorporated into this study’s research design. Thus, this study explores RPS since it was declared a unitary school system in 1986 through 2006.

Research design.

Johnson et al., (1989), which used a case study approach, served as a guide in creating the present historical case study of RPS from 1986 through 2006. The present study is in the form of a qualitative research design and focuses on twenty years of history after Judge Merhige declared the system unitary in 1986. The work by Johnson et al., (1989) helped influence this writer’s perspective in the present study. The research includes a critical analysis of archival information, historical documents and informant interviews associated with RPS during the period of 1986 through 2006. Interviewees were selected for their association with and experiences flowing from the decisions made after court ordered cross-town busing ended in Richmond. Interviews were critically analyzed in conjunction with school board minutes, newspaper articles, court decisions, government documents, school board policies and directives, census maps and other pertinent primary records. In addition, archival information such as student demographics, census reports and other related records and documents helped provide understanding of RPS as a unitary school system.
Research goals.

The perspectives from interviewees, information from historical documents and data from public archives were critically analyzed to clarify meaning of what occurred within RPS between 1986 and 2006. The school desegregation era (1954 to 1986) in Richmond actually spawned a resegregation of the city, which since developed a larger social underclass. This social underclass, including the remaining black and poorer white students whose families settled in the city due to the lack of financial resources, created many challenges for school leaders in Richmond. The goal of this research was to critically analyze the data derived from the personal accounts of interviewees, informative historical documents and public archival information. This data was used to help provide understanding and to clarify meaning of how RPS grappled with unitary status over a twenty year period.

Research questions.

1. What role did de jure and de facto school desegregation in Virginia play in the development of RPS since 1986?

2. What was the relationship of race and class in the perception of people working in RPS between 1986 and 2006?

3. How did people associated with RPS deal with the results of school desegregation after the end of cross-town busing in 1986?
Research sites.

Richmond, Virginia was the location used as a base for research development. Specific information was obtained within the city of Richmond regarding historical documents and archival information such as school board minutes, policies and directives, superintendent’s annual reports, as well as other city and state measures included in local and state government reports.

Educational documents were found within the record department of RPS. The Virginia Historical Society, Virginia State Library and Richmond City Library were specific locations used for retrieval of other important documents. The Internet also served as a technological location for the retrieval of archived data from websites that were accessible via the World Wide Web. These documents included, but were not limited to legal decisions, newspaper articles, census data, documented policy papers and other school archival items that were sufficiently related to RPS under unitary status.

Methods of Data Collection

The research design for this study is a qualitative historical case study. This study explains certain aspects of historical conditions in RPS between 1986 and 2006 based on the contextual framework outlined in the introduction and the review of literature (Maxwell, 2005). The work of Johnson, McGarth, and Williams (1989) also influenced the methodological development of the present study. As noted in the literature review, this reference source provided citizens’ perspectives of RPS as of 1989. Johnson et al., (1989) provided a contemporary research outline that was combined with the historical
research methods of the present study. Hence, a template was provided for the critical analysis of RPS as a unitary school system.

*Primary Data Sources*

To begin this study, interviewees were selected as primary sources from the personnel records of RPS as well as from newspaper articles and historic documents related to the specific events occurring within the district from 1986 through 2006. In order to reach the research goals, people were specifically identified who were involved with or directly impacted by the decision-making processes of school desegregation. These interviewees were all associated with RPS and represent various fields within local levels of Richmond, Virginia. Specifically, employees under the administrations of Superintendent’s William Harrison in 1986 through that of Deborah Jewell-Sherman in 2006 were targeted for questioning. Eighteen people representative of the before-mentioned criteria accepted a letter of request (see Appendix A for an example of this letter).

They were asked to participate by being contacted personally and they were given an explanation of this research. A synopsis of the study’s proposal was shared with them so they would have a clear understanding of the research. The participants were asked a series of questions (see Appendix B) derived from the research questions of this study. Additional questions were added dependent upon the course of the individual interview processes.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was secured before the interview process with interviewees began so that their rights were protected through their consent to participate in the present study (see Appendix C for an example of the consent form).
Data collection was derived from a digital recorder, used during the interviewing sessions with each interviewee. The transcripts of the interviews were created from the usage a digital recorder for accurate playback consistency. Recorded transcripts were used to keep track of the research process. An index card system detailing all major concepts revealed throughout the interviews was also used for data organization. In detail, these notes highlighted the day to day research activities, which helped guide the methodological decision making process. Materials related to the persons interviewed and the researcher’s experiences with each of them were also included. The exact instrumentation of this ongoing process included asking questions of the interviewees and analyzing their answers.

Other primary sources used for the present study included historical documents located in Richmond, Virginia. Historical documents such as mapping demographics, school board minutes, city and state policies and programs, newspaper clippings and news articles from 1986 through 2006 that pertained to the research goals of the present study were analyzed. Specific documents such as school board minutes including policies and directives, superintendent’s annual reports, as well as other city and state measures included in local and state government reports were examined. Many of these historical documents were also retrieved from the Richmond School Board office, Virginia Historical Society, Virginia State Library and the Richmond City Library. Archival information obtained from the Richmond’s School Board office and its website also served as data sources. These pieces of data were specific to the demographic changes of Richmond and its public school system during the time period of this study.
Other archival documents included pertinent records regarding the programs and policies developed since unitary status was declared in 1986.

**Secondary Data Sources**

Previously reviewed published works were utilized as secondary sourced material in the analysis of the present study. Details from these books as well as other relevant secondary sources of information from the field were examined and viewed appropriately. In order to help strengthen the information received from the primary sources, such as interviews, the previously reviewed secondary sources in the literature review were essential to the critical analysis. As interviewees referenced information that was consistent with other primary and secondary sourced data, greater credibility was gained for the present study.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

The first step in the data analysis process was to organize data from interviews, historical documents and archival information. The initial organization of data was done according to the data source. Information from interviewee transcripts, historical documents and archival information provided the basis for a coding system. The codes developed were used as categories to organize the data systematically. The data was summarized, relationships were identified and generalizations were suggested as part of the analysis process. Inferences were also made relevant to the patterns that emerged from the data. Emerging patterns and themes related were connected to existing literature.
for critical analysis. The integration of contemporary concepts with the findings of this historical study helped provide understanding of RPS as a unitary school system.

Coding Methods

Once interviewee transcripts were read and the information from the historical documents and public archives were organized by source, the coding of data began. Specific topics and patterns began to materialize from interviews and events mentioned in each source of data received a code. In addition to organizing data on a computer, an index card filing system was utilized to help manage the organizing of the data from each of the sources. A systematic organization of coded data then occurred, placing the data into categories for summarizing purposes. The summation process helped develop relationships from the information in each category and patterns that were identified. These categories materialized into time periods that highlighted specific events in history. Inferences were made based on the researcher’s inductive interpretation of the findings. After the synthesizing of the information took place, patterns began to emerge based on the interpreted data that was collected. From this, additional data was found that was consistent with the emerging themes and patterns through history.

An emerging pattern developed from the data representative of historical time segments that occurred between 1986 and 2006, which provided a natural outline for the subsequent chapters. This emerging pattern resembled a timeline of what transpired between 1986 and 2006 in terms of events within RPS during unitary status. The interpretations themselves were plentiful and helped provide understanding to the twenty years after cross-town busing ended in RPS.
This same process was utilized for other primary and secondary sourced data. For instance, documented evidence was integrated with historical documents and public archival information to demonstrate relationships within the retrieved data.

Reliability and Validity Issues

Using systematic methods and procedures for choosing data sources for this study helped ensure both internal and external reliability and validity. An in-depth search for interviewees, historical documents and public archival information was conducted in order to preserve the authenticity of past events. In addition, member checking with the participants of the interview process occurred. Triangulation also occurred between interviewee accounts, historical documents and archival information. For example, when patterns from archival information emerged and the same patterns were repeated in interviewee testimony and found in historical documents, the findings were viewed as credible. Peer debriefing was done with historians during and after the data collection period in order to conduct an on-going auditing process to protect the reliability and validity of the present study (Maxwell, 2005).
CHAPTER 4
The Transition from Cross-Town Busing to Unitary Status

Introduction

“So from 1970 to 1986 was a—what I would consider—a major transitional period for the Richmond Public Schools and Richmond City. There were problems. Don’t think that there weren’t problems, but you can get comfortable dealing with anything over a period of time. That becomes ingrained in you and you learn how to work with it or around it.”
---“Mr. Anderson” (43 year veteran Richmond Public School educator)

The unitary status of Richmond Public Schools (RPS) was officially established in Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr.’s decision in Bradley v. Board on April 16, 1986, to end cross-town busing by declaring the district be no longer dually operated for blacks and whites. The transitional period of managing a resegregated school system developed before Merhige’s 1986 decision and continued for several years thereafter. Actions taken by RPS prior to the 1986 court decree are analyzed first to provide background for the first five years the district was no longer operating as a dual system. Indeed, by 1986 RPS had become 87% black, and Merhige obviously believed that cross-town busing was no longer the answer to desegregating the district. To develop an understanding of how RPS grappled with the after effects of cross-town busing, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to analyzing the restructuring efforts of the district from 1986 through 1991.

Preparing for the End of Cross-Town Busing

Participants of the present study who experienced school desegregation help provide a personalized framework of the past. RPS educator and interviewee “Ms. Smith” said:
I thought it was challenging for them [black students who were being bused across town]. They would complain about having to drive so long. As I think about them now, I feel upset. I don’t know what gave me the feeling that the education they might have been receiving prior to being bused was somewhat inferior (Smith, 2008).

Former RPS student and interviewee “Mr. Grant,” who was a black student bused to a white school during desegregation said:

Well, for one thing, I didn’t want to be there. I wanted to be at a black school with my friends…but everyone in the black community was pretty much united behind the effort of desegregation, so everybody's general attitude was very similar. I mean, in those days, the black communities were pretty isolated, but it was also about cross-pollination across socio-economic levels, across educational levels. But there was unanimity of attitudes and efforts towards desegregation. So, I think, people's experiences were pretty much the same (Grant, 2008).

Former Richmond administrator and interviewee “Mr. Bean” provided a principal’s perspective of school desegregation and what it was like to manage the process of cross-town busing from within a school: “It just took a toll on you, really” (Bean, 2008).

**Modifications to Existing Desegregation Policies**

In 1983, three years prior to the end of cross-town busing, the controversy of whether or not to spend $12.7 million to build Boushall Middle School on the South Side of Richmond sparked a debate in the community about the value of busing students across town to achieve racial desegregation. Due to school enrollment and population projections at the time, the busing issue came to the forefront. At the time of the debate, Richmond parent Barbara Weaver was quoted in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* as saying: “Busing hasn’t achieved anything. I wish they’d do away with it.” Another parent Diane Riddick said, “There’s too many school buses using too much gas
transporting kids back and forth across the river. I’m for the school, but I’m against busing” (Squires, 1983, p. 1). RPS administrator and interviewee “Mr. Snyder” was an outsider at the time busing was coming to an end. He viewed the situation as follows:

I think there was a feeling for many, many years that the whole concept of busing is it’s a dismal failure and that it destroyed the school system, and that’s what a lot of people in the community felt. And it wasn’t really like it was a major topic. At the time it [end of cross-town busing] occurred, it certainly was (Snyder, 2008).

During the cross-town busing era, Judge Merhige approved several modifications to Plan III of Bradley v. Board (1970). Most significantly was the K-5 Plan of 1977-78, which returned Fox Elementary and Mary Munford Elementary back to neighborhood schools. In 1979, Plan G was adopted as a feeder plan system to consolidate 7 high schools into 3 complexes (Epes, 1986). According to the Richmond Times-Dispatch, during the decision making process to build Boushall Middle in 1983, Richmond Superintendent Richard C. Hunter noted on several occasions that most busing was being done primarily to transport students who lived more than a mile from their schools and to take pupils with special needs to schools offering appropriate programs. He stated that socio-economic factors were also taken into consideration for busing after the feeder plan was adopted in 1979. Hunter was quoted in 1983 saying,

Most busing done today is not to achieve racial balance, because the school population is 85 percent black. Even when busing began in 1970, the system was 70 percent black. Since that time, total enrollment has dropped from 47,239 to 30,349 and 15 schools have been closed (Squires, 1983, p. 4).

According to 1983 school census data published by Chuck Epes, Richmond was still a city of segregated neighborhoods. For example, 51 of the 69 census tract areas in
Richmond were either predominately black or white. This meant that nearly 75% of Richmond’s neighborhoods were segregated by race (Epes, 1986).

On November 8, 1985, just five months before Merhige’s decision to end cross-town busing, the results of a poll conducted by the Survey Research Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University were published in the Richmond Times-Dispatch. The survey showed that, of those interviewed, 70% of black people and 69% of white people, wanted an integrated school system, but 53% of the blacks and 78% of the whites were against cross-town busing. Overall, 63% of those interviewed did not favor cross-town busing as the method for achieving racial desegregation in RPS. All of the parents interviewed believed the sole purpose of cross-town busing was to integrate schools; however, only 19% favored it while 75% were opposed. In light of the final decision to build Boushall Middle School, and after the findings of this survey were provided to the Richmond Public School Board, a commission was formed to take a closer look at the Pupil Assignment Plan (Young, 1985).

In a chronological review entitled A Mini-History of the Richmond Public Schools 1869-1992, Shirley Callihan described the details of the Citizens’ Advisory Commission. The commission held hearings in late 1985 for public comment and compiled the community input into a final report that recommended the following:

- All elementary schools go back to neighborhood schools
- Limitations be put on the assignment of secondary students from public housing developments
- Feeder patterns be retained
- Plan G be evaluated (Callihan, 1992, p. 415)
In respect to Plan G’s attempt to consolidate high schools into complexes, for RPS administrator and interviewee “Mr. Wright,” who was a central office administrator during this transitional time, said:

We operated under Plan G for six years before reverting back to separate high schools, but not before spending an awful lot of money, [and] sending buses with two and three children all over town all times of the day (Wright, 2008).

Wright felt that higher academic programs were a good idea; however, the school division was struggling to find a way to increase the quality of education while resources and student enrollment were declining. Another community group called “The Standards of Quality Planning Council” presented its responses to the Advisory Commission’s report at the January 15, 1986 Richmond School Board meeting. The Standards of Quality Planning Council’s recommendations were:

- Assign children attending traditional elementary schools primarily to neighborhood schools
- Assign elementary school students so that no students would pass more than two elementary schools to attend school; a distance of no more than two miles from home is preferred
- Make an effort to create a feasible socio-economic mix of students, limiting the number of students from public housing projects not to exceed a range of 40-50% of the total enrollment of any one secondary school
- Transport secondary students no more than three miles except where a lack of space requires traveling greater distances
- Retain the feeder plan concept
- Evaluate Plan G to determine its feasibility (School Board Minutes, 1986, p. 5)

**Pupil Assignment Plan**

On January 22, 1986, Superintendent Hunter announced in his report to the school board:
An attempt has been made to preserve features of the Pupil Assignment Plan that enhance the quality of education; to reduce the volume of cross-town transportation and numerous satellite zones; and to more effectively utilize facilities. There would be a more functional distribution of the student population in all grades (School Board Minutes, 1986, p. 12).

On February 19, 1986, the school board announced the new Pupil Reassignment Plan, which assigned most students to their nearest neighborhood school while trying to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, the over-concentration of public housing development residents in a single school. The board also passed the elimination of most satellite zones. These satellite zones were designed in the early 1970’s to assist with the organization of busing students from one school’s zone to another. Also, a third open enrollment model school (Fisher) was announced. In addition, the creation of attendance zones for five open enrollment schools at Bellevue, Cary, Fisher, Henderson, and Thompson were presented. It was claimed by the school board that these zones would create a minimal percentage change in the racial breakdown of students in schools throughout the system because the application process for open enrollment would foster diversity (School Board Minutes, 1986, p. 20). Further statistics were announced regarding the new Pupil Reassignment Plan on February 21, 1986, stating the plan was designed to reduce transportation costs by eliminating satellite zones and to maximize the neighborhood school concept. It was reported there would be no significant change in the racial composition for the schools (School Board Minutes, 1986, p. 23).

The public had the opportunity to respond to these plans at the February 25, 1986 school board meeting. A black community member, Onslow Minnis, Sr. stated, “75 percent of our students really need help, and reassignment is not the answer; additional programs must be set up to meet the needs of blacks at the elementary level” (School
Board Minutes, p. 24). Marilyn Bloun, a black parent of a RPS student, said she was concerned about her children now having to walk the busy streets to Blackwell Elementary School versus having the security that her child would be safe riding a bus across town as they had before; she also sought information and assurance that the proposed plan was not just designed to separate blacks from whites (School Board Minutes, 1986, p. 26). On March 4, 1986, the school board approved the Pupil Reassignment Plan and rejected the Commission’s recommendations to convert John B. Cary and Bellevue Model Elementary Schools back to neighborhood schools. Instead, the board grandfathered Cary and Bellevue’s current students for the remainder of their elementary experience. Despite many parents’ concern about rezoning and the quality of education, the board presented its response to the Advisory Commission’s report by listing the following decisions:

- Provision of a student population for two additional schools (Boushall and Franklin)
- Return of the fifth grade to elementary schools and the eighth grade to middle schools
- Assignment of most students to their nearest regular school
- Creation of six high schools to be implemented over a two-year period
- Consolidation of compatible secondary programs in single buildings
- Avoidance, to the greatest extent possible, of the over-concentration of public housing development residents in a single school
- Elimination of most satellite zones
- Establishment of a third open enrollment model elementary school (Fisher) and an open enrollment component at Thompson Middle
- Creation of zones for the five open enrollment schools
- Creation of a minimum change of the racial percentages of students at each school (Callihan, 1992, pp. 414-15)

With the adoption of the new Pupil Assignment Plan, RPS was preparing for the changeover to unitary status, which meant the courts would no longer recognize them as a racially divided district. The final verdict from the Fourth U.S. District Court on the
status of cross-town busing would soon be announced. RPS seemed prepared for unitary status.

The Changeover to a Unitary School System

On April 16, 1986, U.S. District Court Judge Robert R. Merhige, Jr. ended cross-town busing in RPS with the federal court decision of Bradley v. Board (1986). This decision legally ended school desegregation in Richmond. The end of court ordered school desegregation was officially documented in the Richmond Public School Board minutes on May 6, 1986. The United States District Court order dated April 17, 1986 read:

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT FOURTH FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA RICHMOND DIVISION


Order

Upon motion of the School Board of the City of Richmond and without objections by the plaintiffs, it is ADJUDGED and ORDERED that the present Plan III assignment plan for the Richmond Public Schools be and the same is hereby modified to conform to the Pupil Reassignment Plan approved by the said School Board at its meeting of March 27, 1986. Let the Clerk send a copy of this order to all counsel of record.


On April 18, 1986, two days after Judge Merhige’s decision to end cross-town busing, the Richmond Times-Dispatch published the following synopsis of the new plan:

Merhige signed late yesterday an order that gave the federal court's approval to the board's plan. The court's approval was required because Richmond schools remain under a desegregation order dating from 1971. In his order, Merhige said the school board must report in writing to the
court when various facets of the plan are implemented and these reports should not be filed later than the expiration of a two-year school period dating from September 1986. The city hopes to implement the plan in September. The assignment plan will put an end to most cross-town busing and return Richmond to a neighborhood school concept at all grade levels. The new plan also will eliminate "satellite" zones created for racial mixing purposes and to ease over—and under—utilization of schools. The plan will not alter substantially the racial composition of any school. Richmond has a school enrollment of about 29,500 children, about 87 percent of them black. In addition, the plan will split the three high school complexes into six independent schools and establish a third model elementary school (Goode and Epes, 1986, p. 1).

Court Deliberations

After the court order to end cross-town busing, the school board still sought additional state financing to remove the vestiges of segregation in the city. A lawsuit was filed on March 21, 1984 by the board requesting money from the state to eliminate segregation in the city’s public schools. The board believed that with additional money, programs could be developed that would attract white and middle-class blacks back to RPS. The board wanted to use those funds to buy computers, hire additional teachers to reduce class sizes, and to create more remedial and individualized instructional programs. During the court hearings, school board lawyers and parents attempted to show how racial isolation during the desegregation process left black pupils with little hope. They said the consequences of racial isolation were low grades, high absenteeism, unacceptable dropout rates, discipline problems and low self-esteem. Expert witnesses on both sides debated how much good additional funding would do. State lawyers from the Attorney General's office said the city schools already received a higher level of financing than nearby localities. They stated that more money would not solve the problems of RPS (Goode and Epes, 1986). During the 1986-87 school year, RPS
received $1,709 per student, which was higher than the state average of $1,623 (McCalister, 1986).

Roy A. West, who simultaneously served as Richmond’s Mayor and Albert H. Middle School principal in 1986, disagreed with the notion that massive amounts of state money would bring RPS onto an academic par with neighboring localities. To support his argument, West referenced his school where major improvements were made on reading, math and science standardized tests. West said this was not accomplished through transfusions of money, but through working with available resources in the system. Opposed to West’s point was former Richmond Public School Board Chairman Melvin E. Law. Law supported the school board’s lawsuit that requested an estimated $48 million for new programs. He noted that even after desegregation, RPS was still 87% black and some schools were 100% black due to the shunning of the city’s schools by whites. His point was that this money would be valuable for developing programs to address the resegregation that had taken place in RPS. He believed programs could be developed to attract white and middle-class blacks back to the city’s public schools (Goode and Epes, 1986).

On July 10, 1986, Merhige dismissed the 1984 lawsuit. He ruled that the problems in the city’s school system were not related to the vestiges of a segregated system. He said the public schools were fully integrated under the federal desegregation order of *Bradley v. Board* (1971). Merhige ruled that RPS was a unitary rather than a dual system that provided unequal opportunities for black and white pupils (Goode and Epes, 1986). Merhige said, “The city system currently offers a high-quality education program for all its students, and the city already receives a disproportionately large
amount of funding from the state" (Bradley v. Board, 1986, p. 2). He elaborated in an interview saying, “Although increased state financing would be desirable and have a beneficial effect on the quality of public education, the court only has the authority to order such financing if it is necessary to remedy the effects of state-imposed segregation" (Goode and Epes, 1986, p. 1). The judge believed poverty was a prime reason for the previous low achievement levels of Richmond schoolchildren, but now the Richmond system was doing well financially and academically. He noted that scores on standardized tests had increased steadily during the past 10 years. Merhige said:

   Although the court feels that one of the reasons for the high poverty rate in Richmond is the inferior education that was provided to blacks under the former dual (school) system, it is not within the court's power to remedy either the poverty itself or the ancillary effects (Goode and Epes, 1986, p. 2).

Virginia’s Attorney General Mary Sue Terry said:

   This is a landmark case. It proves Virginia has fully met its constitutional responsibilities to eliminate segregation, not only in Richmond, but also in schools across the state. This decision shows the nation that our educational system is indeed colorblind (Goode and Epes, 1986, p. 2).

In another interview, she said: “I am proud of my staff and of the people of Virginia, for providing the atmosphere for a unitary school system that finally closes the pages on a tragic chapter in Virginia's history” (McCallister and Young, 1986, p. 1). The final order denying financial relief for RPS was submitted to the school board on July 16, 1986. It read:

   With regret, the US District Court has denied the Board’s request for relief in the matter of Bradley v. Commonwealth of Virginia. The following order is included for the record:

   In the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia
   Richmond Division
Carolyn Bradley, et al, Plaintiffs, vs. Gerald L. Baliles, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia et al., Defendants. Civil Action No 3353-R

Final Order

For the reasons stated in the accompanying memorandum entered this day, and deeming it just and proper so to do, it is ADJUDGED and ORDERED that plaintiffs’ claim that the Commonwealth of Virginia is constitutionally required to provide additional funding to the Richmond Public School District to eliminate the vestiges of the past State-mandated segregation be and the same is hereby DENIED.

The court also finds that the Richmond Public School District has now achieved unitary status. The Court therefore relinquishes its jurisdiction over the School District, and this case stands DISMISSED. Defendants are entitled to their taxable costs.

Let the Clerk send a copy of this order and the accompanying memorandum to all counsel of record. Robert R. Merhige, Jr. (School Board Minutes, 1986, p. 81).

Thereafter, a motion was made by the Richmond School Board to appeal *Bradley v. Baliles* (1986) (School Board Minutes, 1986, p. 91). The U.S Fourth Circuit Court panel consisting of Judge Donald Stuart Russell, Chief Judge Harrison L. Winter and Senior Judge Clement F. Haynsworth Jr. rejected the appeal. The panel said there was no evidence of lingering segregation in Richmond’s schools that could be blamed on the state. The panel refused to allocate any funds for remedial education to the district, and agreed with Merhige’s decree that Richmond was now a unitary system. The panel’s ruling was based on its judgment that state defendants adequately discharged their constitutional obligation to eliminate the vestiges of state-mandated segregation. In summary, the remarks of 4th Circuit panel represented the belief that efforts to eliminate the effects of segregation had been successful due to increases in recent standardized test scores (McAllister, 1987). The panel did note that the state already provided substantial money to Richmond for remedial education; even though the panel felt programs should
be implemented, they said there was not a legal basis for ordering the state to make them possible through increased funding. After the panel rejected the school board’s appeal, Merhige said in an interview: "What was done was the law” (Epes, 1986, p. 4).

**Impact on the Community**

For the purpose of the present study, reactions of people associated with RPS have been collected and analyzed to provide the community’s perspective on unitary status of the district in 1986. “Ms. Miller,” a white administrator and interviewee, had the following to say about the impact felt at her school after the changeover to a unitary system. Hers was one of few schools that saw a demographic change in the racial composition of staff and students after 1986:

> Well, it was quite dramatic at the time to be put in a culture where you didn’t have any cultural competence, as they call it now. I think you might have had one half day training on diversity issues, and so it was pretty dramatic (Miller, 2008).

As a result of the declining student enrolment after 1986, a teacher surplus was created at some schools. “Mr. Bean,” a black administrator, who experienced this situation, recalls one of the challenges he faced:

> I had teachers crawling out of the ceiling, and they [central office] came over and told me to identify teachers that could be transferred and one day they just came over and read the riot act to me, and said, ‘Before we leave today, you’re going to identify who you declare a surplus.’ And at that time I had two librarians, one white, one black and the white librarian was just tops. And the black librarian was a nice lady and that’s about all she was, was a nice lady. And so, I made a decision to keep the white librarian. And, oh my God, I had to stand my ground on that one. It was very devastating for some people. And you had to do a lot of—just humanity stuff…that was a very trying period (Bean, 2008).
Former RPS administrator and interviewee “Ms. Lee” saw the district’s changeover process of becoming unitary unfold first hand as an RPS administrator during the 1970’s and 1980’s. She said,

I think it was a long process and I think that the end result was that probably the students who remained in Richmond City who had no other choices once again felt disenfranchised, felt that they were abandoned, felt that they weren’t important. You know, if you look at the condition of a lot of the schools in Richmond right now, you’ll see that the conditions in many of those schools have remained the same…from ’70 to ’86, I watched a gradual progression with a few little surges. Okay, let’s build the school system back up into an integrated system and then it would kind of fall back. And now let’s try this effort, and then that would come under fire from other people. But generally speaking, I think you still ended up with a large population of students who probably have felt disenfranchised (Lee, 2008).

Richmond journalist and interviewee “Mr. Jackson” was asked how he thought the new plan to end cross-town busing affected the development of RPS thereafter. He said,

It had a profound effect not just on the public schools, but the Richmond region itself. I think I would describe it as the definitive event in the shaping of this region (Jackson, 2008).

Another point made by Lee specific to the end of cross-town busing was:

Eighty-six—I mean that was more like a whimper than a bang. I don’t think that was a big moment that anyone who saw it was going, ‘Oh wow, this is great or this is awful or this is anything.’ It was just more of the same. It was just things continued without a lot of serious effects, I think, from that decision…the middle-class of whites unless they are given choice in an inner city environment continued to move away to the counties (Lee, 2008).

As depicted by two different participants of the present study, the decision to end cross-town busing in 1986 had differing impacts on RPS. These contradicting points demonstrate that Jackson, a black man, felt the impact that the end of cross-town busing had on the socio-economic conditions of the Richmond metropolitan area was more significant than Lee, a white woman.
According to Richmond Newsleader writer Paul Bradley, “the aftermath of white middle-class flight from Richmond and the end of cross-town busing developed a new type of dual education—a private school system for the affluent and white, and a public school system for the poor and black” (Bradley, 1992, p. 1). Bradley believed that busing was a failure. He did not claim that it was ill-advised given the extent of residential segregation in Richmond; however, he implied that the decision to end the efforts of desegregation diminished the hope that racism might one day disappear from the racially divided Richmond and the nation (Bradley, 1992).

The ramifications of the events regarding the students leading up to 1986 varied according to participants in the present study. RPS educator and interviewee “Ms. Smith” said,

I don’t think the children were affected by it. I don’t remember anything that affected them that much…. It was like nothing had happened. I can’t say if they appeared relieved. It was just over. I don’t think it meant that much to them (Smith, 2008).

Smith’s view of the students’ feelings reflected a sense of unawareness on their part. Opposed to this view was Richmond legal authority and interviewee “Mr. Wilson.” He believed the students were conscious of the changes taking place. He said,

I think children are resilient. I think that parents are the most intolerant force and can become the most inflexible. But I think for the most part that students found common ground. They felt that what had happened was important (Wilson, 2008).

Not only did Wilson see the students as aware of what they were a part of, he also saw them as vested in making the most of the situation. Furthermore, Richmond religious leader and interviewee “Mr. Sanders,” said:
Emotionally there was a slight improvement. I’m talking about black kids. Remember white kids were not [impacted] the same. Emotionally for black kids, there was a slight improvement in that the absolute rhetoric and legal differentiation of this process [cross-town busing] was fundamentally debilitating (Sanders, 2008).

Sanders viewpoint delved deeper into the ramifications of cross-town busing on the lives of the students who were black. Wilson felt that the result of the desegregation process had a positive lasting affect on the students. He said,

I’ve talked to some of them [black and white students] and some of them have turned out very successful despite the racial tensions of the times (Wilson, 2008).

With race being central to the issue of ending cross-town busing in 1986, the RPS employee publication *The School Bell* featured an article on race relations from a political and community perspective. It claimed: “In the past decade the city of Richmond, Virginia has probably changed, with respect to race relations, more than any other southern city of comparable size and racial demography” (Stanley, 1986, p. 3). It was stated that, in 1986, people who were black remained at the lower rung of the financial ladder; however, the coalition of black and white political and financial powers had become more comfortable. Race relations were improving at the time because the belief that blacks and whites could not work well together was being refuted by this example. However, there was a sense that RPS still had a long way to go toward equal access, equal opportunity and equal resources (Stanley, 1986).

Confirmed by political writer David Rosenthal, the years of contentious and racially charged governance had come to an end by 1986. In fact, the tradition of divisiveness was dramatically altered in July 1982, when black city council member and middle school Principal Roy West was named Mayor of Richmond. West gained support
from the four white members of council to help him become voted in as mayor. The racial division and bitterness on the council under the former Mayor Henry Marsh III began to diminish after West’s appointment. By 1983, the bickering subsided in Richmond’s political realm, and the political coalition became helpful to the city, especially the school system (Rosenthal, n.d.). Prior to this improvement, the political decisions of the 1970’s prevented the city from annexing any additional land and left the public school system with no alternatives but to use cross-town busing as the vehicle for desegregation. When former RPS student and interviewee “Mr. Grant” was asked how the district was affected by the history of racial politics in the city, he said,

“Well, I think the shadows of all those racial politics are still all around. There's one other historical thing I think that was important at one time, annexation by the city was used as a way of diluting the black vote as we started to have more and more of a black majority in the city. But then again with white flight, the legislature also passed those laws preventing any further annexation which was originally now landlocked and having no way to improve the tax base. And I think that’s a direct—that was certainly a reflection of racial politics of the day and, I think. Richmond today is still suffering from the effects of that kind of action (Grant, 2008).

Leading up to 1986, the political decisions that reflected the racial division of the past formed a context for the social and economic developments of the city and the school system (Moeser and Dennis, 1982). Given the city politics of the past and the status of race relations in 1986, interviewees were asked how they thought RPS dealt with the changeover to a unitary system, and administrator “Mr. Anderson” responded by saying:

“I think Richmond has dealt with it probably as well and even better in many instances than many other urban areas that went through the same thing. And the reason for that is we made every effort to adhere to the letter of the law (Anderson, 2008).
Since the end of cross-town busing, RPS tried to adjust along with the changing dynamics in the city. In attempting to gain a foothold during a transitional period, the district’s new unitary status provided the opportunity to restructure for the future.

**Restructuring Efforts**

A closer look is taken at the restructuring efforts of Richmond’s educational leaders for improving the system during a transitional period. The decisions made from 1986 through 1991 demonstrate an attempt to restructure RPS in a manner that embraced its unitary status through district wide initiatives. Beginning in the 1986-87 school year, however, school leaders were facing restructuring challenges from in and outside of the system. In a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial on July 13, 1986:

Judge Merhige's landmark decision gives Richmonders a grand opportunity to unite by taking pride in their unity, improving the school system and resolving to make it even better through voluntary actions. Cross-town busing is ending. So should outdated victim theories (“Step,” 1986, p. 1).

One year later another editorial was written:

I hoped with the end of a long, bitter struggle at hand, Richmonders would turn their full energies to their racially unitary, improving school system and eschew outdated victim theories. Again we urge the School Board: Let this case be closed. It's time to open a new, more optimistic chapter for the city's schools (“Case,” 1987, p. 1).

The challenge of overcoming the effects of failed desegregation was summed up by former RPS student and interviewee “Mr. Grant.” He said,

Well, I think everybody was trying their best to adjust. In the cities we had an exacerbation of this problem because of resource issues for the most part. I think it’s something that’s beyond the capacity of a single city to fix, that’s the point. And if there had been a nationwide resolve to raise our education system, I think, it could have been done by now, but it’s not (Grant, 2008).
Public Opinion

In an effort to keep the public informed and to help strengthen the image of RPS, the school board released a publication on March 9, 1987, entitled: What You Need to Know about Richmond Public Schools. The premise of the document was to promote the development of the Pupil Re-assignment Plan, which permitted most students to attend schools in their own neighborhoods. It touted free transportation available to middle and high schoolers that lived more than 1.5 miles from their neighborhood schools. The document also highlighted the above average composite percentile rankings of the highest performing schools on the Science Research Associates (SRA) Tests (School Board, 1987). An improvement from the previous year’s data was reported in the Superintendent’s 1985-86 Annual Report. Highlighted were three of Richmond’s open enrollment schools: John B. Cary Model Elementary, Open High School and Community High School (Harrison-Jones, 1986). These three schools were products of the magnet and model school programs of the 1970’s and 1980’s to attract a diverse population. Cary, Open and Community were perceived as the premiere schools in the community.

Aside from the attempt to promote some of the schools and the positive features of the system, RPS was preoccupied with trying to contain the negative public opinions of the school system. For instance, parent Katherine Lawson expressed a fear that RPS would become a system for black children rather than one for all children who lived in the city (School Board Minutes, 1988, p. 345). On the surface, RPS appeared to be at a loss on how to respond to negative comments such as this. Instead, the school board and superintendent were seemingly searching for a restructuring plan to get the system back
on track. However, in light of controversy over the direction of RPS, board member Reginald L. Brown voiced his concern that many fine and positive things in the schools are often ignored and overshadowed by the negatives. He shared details of recent student achievements, awards, and citations as representative of the effective things taking place in Richmond schools (School Board Minutes, 1988, p. 290).

On August 2, 1988, two years into unitary status, school board member Melvin D. Law stated: “I must speak out when it comes to choosing between the best interests of children and continuing the political shenanigans and the chicanery that has characterized much of the operations of this board for the last two years” (School Board Minutes, 1988, p. 290). Richmond parent Deborah Pellman stated that the past busing failures and the uncertain future of Richmond schools are the main fears that keep many neighborhood parents from sending their children to public school (School Board Minutes, 1988, p. 393). Another citizen appealed to the school board to put aside their differences, personal vendettas, and political motives for the best interests of the students in Richmond (Callihan, 1992). Former RPS administrator and interviewee “Ms. Newman” stated:

Basically, the schools went back to being segregated, the whites moved out and in some ways the quality of education went down. Now some people still think, ‘No, it was very good.’ At that time, some school board members were very hard lined about the right of education in the school system. They did not want the whites to come back. They were angry (Newman, 2008).

The effort to change the perception of RPS was described in the district’s 1988 publication of *The School Bell*. Enhancing community confidence became one of the main objectives for the upcoming year. Richmond was engaged in a vigorous campaign in the late 1980’s to market the attractions and unique opportunities in the city. Efforts were made to encourage corporations to relocate or invest in Richmond. The district
realized that a visibly superior school system was a great bargaining tool. The system made efforts to address the needs of all students as major assets contributing significantly to Richmond’s future economic expansion (Castro, 1988).

*Development Plans*

As RPS developed an infrastructure plan for moving forward, Harrison-Jones announced that she would not be seeking reappointment as superintendent at the end of her four-year term. She was granted leave from her position effective September 16, 1988. Former Superintendent James W. Tyler was called upon by the Richmond School Board to fill the void for nine months until a new superintendent was hired (Callihan, 1992). On July 1, 1989, the school board appointed Albert L. Jones to be the next RPS Superintendent. Some of the first actions taken by Jones included an announcement of a major thrust to address the dropout problem through the Youth Experiencing Success (YES) and Educare programs (Callihan, 1992). The dropout rate in Richmond during the 1988-89 school year was 12.5% compared to the neighboring county figures of 3.45% in Henrico and 4.2% in Chesterfield. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported that Richmond’s lower-income student body was at a greater risk of failure than students in Henrico and Chesterfield. According to Richmond city school officials, this was because 60% (16,063 out of 26,900) of Richmond’s students were eligible for subsidized lunches (Farmer, 1990). Jones set a goal to cut the dropout rate in half over his first two years as superintendent. A dropout prevention and recovery team was formed at each high school enabling the system to better track the whereabouts of students (Jones, 1990).
Jones also proposed significant restructuring and revitalization of the high schools and middle schools. He believed this effort would have a long-range impact on student enrollment with potential for drawing students from local private and nearby county schools. To support these efforts, “The Rockefeller Center” collaborated with Virginia Commonwealth University, the Southern Education Foundation and the State Department of Education on a project designed to restructure urban schools to improve learning for at-risk students. The program focused on direct involvement by parents, teachers and principals to share in decisions. Another proposal slated for the fall of 1990 was the implementation of three magnet programs to be phased in over a four-year period (Callihan, 1992). When RPS administrator and interviewee “Mr. Snyder” was asked how he thought the efforts of RPS after cross-town busing ended were affecting the system as a whole, he said,

I think [Richmond] did what it could to try to allow families some choice within the system, but I don’t think any of it was proactively done. I think that when busing stopped, it just stopped. I don’t think there was any direct effort on the part of the school system to do anything, except there was a really strong interest in trying to rebuild interest from middle-class families in the school system through the magnet and model schools (Snyder, 2008).

Jones’ vision for implementing magnet programs in Richmond was different from nearly every other magnet school effort in the country. In many U.S. cities magnet programs had been used to help desegregate schools by drawing members of one ethnic group to schools where another group was the majority. However, racial balance was not the primary concern for Jones. He stated, “Magnet schools will have little impact on the racial makeup of Richmond's enrollment, which overall is nearly 90 percent black” (Bradley, 1989, p. 1). Instead, magnet schools were touted as a way to rebuild
Richmond’s public education system, which was suffering from a number of challenges, including lagging student achievement and a high dropout rate. Jones said, “The magnet school proposal is a way of packaging education differently” (Bradley, 1989, p. 2). Richmond’s magnet schools did not restrict students to specified geographic boundaries; however, the plan called for students living in a school's attendance area to have enrollment priority. Proponents of the plan stated that magnet programs were not about race or the attempt to draw white students in from the nearby counties; rather, it was an attempt to focus on the skills and abilities of the majority black student body living within the city of Richmond (Bradley, 1989).

During this changeover in RPS, *Times-Dispatch* staff writer Katherine Calos investigated the question: “What happened to desegregation?” She found that after several years of trying to lure whites back into the system by reducing busing and creating magnet schools, educators and legislators wanted to shift priorities back to education. These stakeholders poured tremendous amounts of money into RPS. Schools took on completely different appearances. She discovered that as tuition in private schools were increasing; white parents began looking at the city schools. She interviewed historian Robert Pratt who said,

> The desegregation that can occur, and I think ultimately will occur in Richmond, will come about not because of court orders, not because of policy or decisions of the elite, but because of ordinary men and women, black and white, coming together to find common ground. When white residents realize that they have as much at stake in the future of public education as do blacks, then I think changes will be made. But you improve the schools first (Calos, 1990, p. 4).

Superintendent Jones’ Annual Report of the 1989-90 school year highlighted the implementation of the magnet and model school programs. His primary vehicle for
restructuring Richmond’s schools involved a movement toward system-wide magnet and model schools rather than attempting to further desegregate the system. The goal was to have the curriculum revolve around a specific instructional theme at each school. A Magnet School Task Force was formed to devise a plan of implementation for this program. The task force consisted of parents, educators, business and community leaders. It was recommended that the first three magnet programs be held at Thomas Jefferson, John F. Kennedy and George Wythe high schools (Jones, 1990).

At the school board meeting on January 3, 1990, the Magnet School Task Force made the following general recommendations for the board:

1. Change title to Magnet Programs until they grow larger. A program within a school
2. Implement three programs in fall (Jefferson, Kennedy and Wythe)
3. House programs at identified schools with other programs
4. Phase program in over 4 years, 100 kids/year
5. Redirect and restructure funding of current resources
6. Expand past 400 pupils in future
7. Encourage growth
8. Develop innovative ways to involve students in the non-magnet program into the curriculum
9. Develop future programs at three remaining high schools (Marshall, Armstrong and Huguenot)
10. Emphasize impact on specialized service such as special education
11. Involve schools, parents and kids in future magnet themes bids
12. Review RTC, Open High Richmond Community and Richmond Career Education center programs
13. Convey expectations to students and parents prior to enrollment

(School Board Minutes, 1990, pp. 128-29)

The magnet programs began serving freshmen in the fall of 1990. Government and international studies became the theme at Jefferson while Kennedy focused on math/science and computer-based technology; Wythe concentrated on visual and performing arts. Former RPS administrator and interviewee “Mr. Bean” had the following to say about magnet and model schools:
All of those were gimmicks—I mean—I’m using the term ‘gimmick’ on a much higher scale here. But they were gimmicks to really entice students to stay. You had magnet schools, you would have baccalaureate programs, you have all kinds—all those programs really started at the time when the schools had resegregated (Bean, 2008).

Former school administrator and interviewee “Ms. Lee” felt Richmond’s efforts to restructure the system were:

Okay, what I think the administration has tried to do is keep the balance between whether it is more important to integrate their schools and whether it is more important to make certain that the children who come there willingly, without any enticements, are educated and educated well. I think that’s been their battle in trying to balance all of that (Lee, 2008).

Jones moved forward with his efforts to increase the number of model elementary schools in RPS. In his 1989-90 Annual Report, he cited the success of John B. Cary and Bellevue Model Elementary Schools. Jones formed committees at nine additional elementary schools to plan model school programs for the 1990-91 school year. The schools slated to add model school programs included Mary Munford, Ginter Park, Swansboro, Southampton, Blackwell, Whitcomb Court, Westover Hills, Fox and Woodville Elementary (Jones, 1990). Jones announced that contributions from private sources would help establish a “Richmond Public Schools Foundation” to secure funding for the magnet and model school programs (Callihan, 1992). Community responses to Jones’ initiatives were positive as noted in a Richmond Times-Dispatch editorial: “The good news is that as the city schools open for the 1990-91 year they are initiating a form of freedom of educational choice that offers some hope of rebuilding community-wide support and patronage of the schools over a period of years” (“Opening,” 1990, p. 1).

On March 9, 1991, Jones presented a proposal to the board for the reorganization of RPS. The plan was adopted on April 23, 1991 (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 405).
Efforts to promote RPS were increasing with the development of magnet and model school programs. Consistency within the system was being gained by way of Jones’ leadership; however, he was abruptly removed without cause from his superintendency effective June 30, 1991. This announcement was made amid controversy in June of 1991, regarding allegations that Jones was involved with consulting services in other school divisions (Callihan, 1992).

**Conclusion**

The search for a new superintendent began immediately while the future of RPS was yet to be determined. The efforts of the five years (1986 through 1991) after the end of cross-town busing demonstrated hope for a system that previously experienced many difficulties related to school desegregation between 1954 and 1986. The events leading up to Judge Merhige’s decision to end cross-town busing and the changeover to unitary status provided a historical context for the restructuring efforts of moving forward from the past.

This chapter analyzed RPS under unitary status beginning with preparations for the end of cross-town busing in 1986 and included court deliberations, impact on the community, public opinion and development plans through 1991. Measures were taken for managing a resegregated school system prior to Merhige’s court decree. The decisions made in preparation of unitary status were important for transitioning from cross-town busing. In anticipation of the changeover to unitary status, the district deliberated in the courts to remove remaining vestiges of segregation. By 1986, RPS was
no longer operating as a dual system as it was prior to cross-town busing; however, the community was impacted by the past school desegregation process. Negative public opinion of RPS motivated the district to redefine itself by attempting to develop improvement plans. Neighborhood schools and open enrollment for students to attend any school in the city were promoted from 1986 through 1991.

The changeover to a unitary school system included five years of restructuring efforts to reorganize the district after court mandated cross-town busing ended. The next fifteen years of RPS as a unitary school system are told in the remainder of this study through accounts of interviewees, historical documents and archival information. Specifically, a critical analysis of individual schools caught-up in the marketing conflict of the neighborhood concept and open enrollment is explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

Internal School Marketing

Introduction

“To survive in circumstances characterized by a lack of consensus regarding the best approach to desegregation, Richmond Public Schools had little choice but to initiate seemingly incompatible policies in order to placate various constituencies.”

---Daniel L. Duke (Author of *The School that Refused to Die*)

This chapter explains the marketing chronology of Richmond Public Schools (RPS) for retaining and attracting white and middle-class black students during and after cross-town busing. First, an examination is conducted of the neighborhood school concept that dates back to the K-5 Plan of 1978-79, which gave students from two attendance zones the opportunity to enroll on a first come first serve basis at their neighborhood school instead of being bused across town. Then, Richmond’s open enrollment policy is analyzed through the conception of magnet and model schools that began in 1969, which entailed an application for student enrollment based on a lottery system. Next, the attempt at balancing two contradictory enrollment policies in RPS is analyzed: neighborhood schools, which assigned most students to the school in their attendance zone after cross-town busing ended in 1986, and open enrollment schools, which allowed students the option of applying to schools outside of their attendance zone. Finally, the controversial 1992 clustering of students by race at Bellevue Model and Ginter Park Elementary Schools is presented.

The next segment of the post-court mandated school desegregation in RPS started in 1991 with the appointment of Lucille M. Brown as Richmond’s new superintendent. Her main initiative was to put students first by working in partnership with parents. During the 1991-92 school year, more than 10,000 parents of the 27,338 enrolled students
signed a parent-school agreement, pledging to cooperate as partners in their children’s education. Aside from the recent firing of Superintendent Jones, RPS was beginning to move in a positive direction. For example, a month before Brown was appointed superintendent, Richmond Public School’s Community Affairs Manager Peter Habenicht reported to the school board:

The public relations campaign shows the reality of RPS with two 30-second commercials and radio spots. Details include accomplishments and initiatives of the past two years of magnet and model schools, plans for a Governor’s School at Thomas Jefferson, partnerships with corporations and Universities, decreasing the dropout rate and attracting more than 1,500 volunteers for the public schools though the Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) program (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 307).

Other fundamental educational reforms were taking place during Brown’s first year as superintendent, including the communitywide initiatives of Metro Richmond 2000 and the Richmond Renaissance Education Committee, to improve education in Richmond over the next decade. The school board also approved Brown’s reorganization of the neighborhood school plan in 1992 (Callihan, 1992).

**Neighborhood Schools**

The neighborhood school concept went through many changes before being given a new definition in 1992. During segregation, neighborhood schools were assigned by race. Children went to the nearest neighborhood school for their race, which could be close or distant to where they lived. Plan III of *Bradley v. Board* (1971) transported many children out of their neighborhoods for desegregation purposes. In 1979, Plan G was implemented by the court to consolidate all elementary schools into grades K-5
while 3 high school complexes were formed from the 7 high school buildings. Plan G was dismantled in 1986 with the implementation of a pupil reassignment plan that assigned most students, to the greatest extent possible, to their nearest neighborhood school.

In 1977, Fox Elementary School was the first neighborhood school established during cross-town busing under the 1977-78 K-5 Plan. The enrollment process was based on a first-come-first-serve basis. The success of Fox Elementary as a newly defined neighborhood school was evident by the area residents’ determination to enroll their children there. A former school administrator and interviewee, “Mr. Snyder,” talked about Fox’s success at becoming a neighborhood school in the late 1970’s: “Fox was fortunate to be sort of in a liberal community, and they just started attracting families, but remember it’s a very small school (Snyder, 2008).” Another former school administrator and interviewee, “Mrs. Lee,” had the following to say about Fox’s enrollment process:

> People stood in line all night long literally. I mean, they would start standing in line at 5 o’clock in the afternoon and would stand all night long. And this was in January (Lee, 2008).

Former school administrator and interviewee, “Ms. Wright,” recalls the success of Fox:

> In the early 80’s, Jonathan Kozol (author and researcher of urban school systems) came to speak at the University of Richmond, and he was very interested in visiting Fox. And at the end of his visit, he said, ‘This is the most successful integrated urban school I have ever visited’ (Wright, 2008).

**Mary Munford Elementary School**

One of the 1977-78 K-5 Plan goals was to keep white families in the city, so in 1978 Mary Munford Elementary was added as a second neighborhood school. Different from Fox, Mary Munford struggled to attract white families. The white families in the
Munford neighborhood withdrew their students from RPS when cross-town busing began in 1970 and enrolled them in nearby private and parochial schools. After Munford was designated as a neighborhood school under the K-5 Plan in 1978, bringing those families back to their nearby public school was extremely difficult. Mary Munford became predominately black after 1970; however, with the new redistricting of the K-5 Plan in 1978, white students in the attendance zone could now attend Munford, their neighborhood school in Richmond’s West End. The previous practice of having to be bused to the black neighborhood of Highland Park Elementary School on the North Side of Richmond was no longer mandated for the students in the Munford zone. According to Shelley Rolfe’s *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial in 1979:

> Very few Richmond schools have had as much white flight as Mary Munford. Its percentage of black students reaches into the 90’s. Unlike the Fan, in which Fox Elementary School resides and saw an increase in white enrollment in the 70’s when designated a K-5 neighborhood school, many parts of Mary Munford’s neighborhood did not have strong public school ties in the pre-busing past. There was a [nearby] private school option and it was taken by middle-class whites (Rolfe, 1979, p. 1).

Efforts to bring white families back to Mary Munford began when the Chairman of Mary Munford’s Neighborhood Committee, Louise Edge, a parent of a white Munford student, hosted a meeting at her home on August 22, 1979. About 40 middle-class white parents attended the meeting to discuss the K-5 Plan, which increased white enrollment at Fox Elementary over the past two years, as an option for Munford. Discussion regarding the public school option of sending children to the neighborhood school of Mary Munford instead of the private and parochial schools in the West End continued in the Munford community. Louise Edge said,

> It’s no longer a question of whether my child should go to school with blacks, but a question of numbers. I want her to go to Mary Munford with
friends. I don’t mind her being number one, but I want her to go with number two and number three and number four, [enrolling] race probably has very little to do with this. People are touchy about their children (Rolfe, 1979, p. 2).

A few months later in January of 1980, a community open house was held at Mary Munford Elementary School. Over 100 white West End residents attended and listened to school officials and community leaders explain why they should send their children back to RPS. Some people at this meeting said that fears of violence, poor educational opportunities and prejudices were the reasons why the white enrollment at Mary Munford declined over the past decade. Others said Mary Munford had the opportunity to become a real neighborhood school, not based on racial segregation. School administrators backed the neighborhood plan at Mary Munford, where only 40 of its 608 students were from the surrounding white neighborhood. The other 568 students were being bused from the predominately black Highland Park neighborhood on Richmond’s North Side (Bacque, 1980). To help convince white parents to send their students to Munford, white parent Louise Edge said: “Whites who do attend the school are clustered in certain classrooms rather than being dispersed evenly throughout the classrooms” (McCreary, 1980, p. 1). Efforts to persuade neighborhood residents to enroll their students at Mary Munford also came from local realtors who took part in open house meetings. They explained that tax assessments on homes in the neighborhood surrounding Mary Munford Elementary School were rising and so was tuition at nearby private schools. These financial reports were attempts of swaying families into sending their students to the tuition free Richmond public school (McCreary, 1980).

After six more years of trying to bring neighborhood parents back to Mary Munford, cross-town busing came to an end with the court decision of Bradley v. Board
After RPS was declared unitary, the school board made the decision to assign most elementary students to their nearest neighborhood school. However, not all of Richmond’s public schools became true neighborhood schools in 1986. Some predominantly white neighborhoods of the city, including Munford’s West End, still bused black students to their schools because white families in those attendance zones shunned the city’s schools and left their neighborhood schools virtually empty.

Despite recruiting efforts, Munford’s enrollment dropped to 415 pupils by 1998, and only 68 were students from the surrounding white neighborhood. About 900 students were eligible to attend Mary Munford based on their residency; however, the disparity between actual and potential attendance was due largely to misinformation about the school and district policies. For instance, parents were still concerned about their students being bused out of the district, even though the court ended cross-town busing with *Bradley v. Board* (1986). According to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, white parents were also concerned about the educational offerings at Mary Munford, such as the arts and humanities, pupil-teacher ratios and the ability of children to realize their potential in a school with socially and economically disparate backgrounds (Bacque, 1988).

In 1989 Mary Munford was still one of the last vestiges of court-ordered cross-town busing. RPS educator and interviewee “Ms. Miller” had the following to say about the difficult task of recruiting families to Munford in the late 1980’s:

As the principal, I had to go find kids to go there. People were not beating the door down to go to Mary Munford. I had to go to nursery schools, preschools, try to market, you know. If a parent showed up that was interested in the school, I tried to develop a relationship with them and bring the community back into the school. And I would say that nobody in
the central office brought anybody to me…. The system did less than the individual principals did (Miller, 2008).

Efforts to bring white students back to Munford included activities to reinvigorate the parent-teacher association and to invite residents from the community into the school to see the quality education taking place. Mary Munford also developed an early childhood program that drew many parents away from nearby St. Christopher’s $5,000 per year pre-kindergarten program (Squires, 1990). “Friends of Mary Munford” was also founded. The goal of this group was to attract business support to help upgrade the school (Farmer, 1991). When asked about the challenges of marketing the school, Miller said:

We didn’t get any extra resources, but we still tried to provide an enriched curriculum, a project-based curriculum, a thematic curriculum; market the school, do things that you might typically see done in more of a middle, upper middle class school; you know, hang class pictures on the wall every year; make sure the school is beautified; make sure you have a lot of parent involvement; have parent-student-teacher community activities, those kinds of things (Miller, 2008).

Efforts were slow to catch on with some parents because of the deeply rooted mistrust that stemmed from the cross-town busing era (Bradley, 1989). Looking back on those struggles, former school administrator and interviewee “Mr. Snyder” felt that the former principals were truly the most important part of Mary Munford during the efforts to recruit parents (Snyder, 2008). During the difficult task to bring the West End white children back to their neighborhood schools, the director of community affairs for RPS Peter Habenict said:

I agree that neighborhood support is vital. But I think we often fall into the trap of thinking that if we increase the number of white students in a school, that it will improve the school per se. A school improves when it reflects the sensibilities and character of its neighborhood, of black or white, or whatever. That’s the definition of neighborhood schools (Squires, 1990, p. 11).
According to parents who were helping with recruiting efforts in Mary Munford’s predominantly affluent white neighborhoods like Windsor Farms, race was not often publicly discussed. However, some parents did express concerns about the school’s socio-economic mix. Their main worry was having their children attend Munford with disadvantaged students who were being bused from the North Side area of Highland Park. Fifty percent of the students coming from Highland Park were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. Many parents from the West End, who were reluctant to send their students to Mary Munford, feared their children would not be able to make friends with students of a lower socio-economic status. These parents also said that they opposed of their children not being able to socialize with their classroom friends from Highland Park after school because those students would be bused back to their side of town after the school day (Farmer, 1991).

Some parents did not subscribe to this position. For instance, Katherine Lawson, a West End parent, chose to enroll her white children at Mary Munford. She felt white children from Munford’s neighborhood were doing well academically and enjoying the mix of students (Squires, 1990). She said, “It’s been a good exercise for them in race relations…. I think for Richmond to be a successful city that we, as citizens, need to affiliate…one of the best places to do that is in the educational system” (Squires, 1990, p. 11). Miller agreed by saying that she had heard parents say, “that what their kids miss in the private schools is diversity…they like having the multi-ethnic and socio-economic mix in their school” (Squires, 1990, p. 11). Still, some West End neighborhood parents had concerns about enrolling their students at Munford. They also began complaining
about the presence of John B. Cary Model Elementary School in the West End robbing their neighborhood school of its brightest pupils.

By 1991, other parents in the city were electing to take advantage of the open enrollment policy at one of Richmond’s three model schools; John B. Cary, Bellevue, or J.B. Fisher. Depending on which of the three zones of the city one lived in, West End, North Side or South Side, parents could send their children to one of the model schools located in that zone. Still, almost all of the white students who resided in certain pockets of the city, and who were not attending an open enrollment model school, were attending private or parochial schools instead of their neighborhood public school. Snyder points out:

In the late 80’s white families were going to private schools or they were going to a school with an established white enrollment like the neighborhood school of Fox Elementary, John B. Cary Model School, or the Governor’s School at Thomas Jefferson High School (Snyder, 2008).

A closer look at the history of open enrollment in RPS provides greater understanding to the difficulty of balancing two separate internal marketing policies.

Open Enrollment Policy

The open enrollment policy in RPS, like its neighborhood school policy, went through changes over time. In 1969, before cross-town busing began in Richmond, John B. Cary became the city’s first open enrollment school. Cary desegregated and was framed as a model school to be an example of how schools could and should function in a desegregated system. The creation of the first model school, according to Snyder, occurred as follows:
In 1969, a whole group of parents got together and they saw that something big was coming [cross-town busing]. They wanted to have a school that would be a fully desegregated school, so [Cary] was a set up to be exactly 50-50 black-white. It was set up as an open enrollment school, so everybody had to apply. Anybody that knows how school choice works knows that as soon as you set up an application process, you can get higher performing kids and parents interested in the education of their kids. So, you had a school that ended up being exactly half and half a year before bussing had taken place. And after bussing, it ended up being the only school that really was desegregated because all the other ones became all black (Snyder, 2008).

According to Miller and Snyder, John B. Cary was considered to be the best school in the city during the 1970’s. Former Cary educator and interviewee “Ms. Richards” said,

My experiences had been so wonderfully positive…. I was participating in this model school program with the parents who were there by choice and with their full support—my parental involvement was just fantastic. In fact, parents actually signed a pledge that they would be full participants in the school program as a result of having a child in this school (Richards, 2008).

RPS designated Cary as a model school due to the fact that it was modeling the best educational practices in a desegregated environment. According to local religious leader and interviewee “Mr. Sanders” the following process was taken to create Cary Elementary School:

It was basically put into place by the black leadership for their children. The target model school was maintained by mutual support between white folks who wanted to stay in the city and black leadership who wanted to make sure they had a good middle-class school for their kids. Well, it won’t be written anywhere. But if you wanna look at that list of those children who went to John B. Cary [in 1969-1970] you’ll probably find Mayor Henry Marsh’s kids and the kids from most of the members of city council and other members of the black elite (Sanders, 2008).

Model schools

After the success of Cary, RPS was pushing to develop more open enrollment schools. In 1978, Bellevue Elementary School was designated as another open
enrollment model school on Richmond’s North Side. Unlike Cary, Bellevue’s student enrollment was not very diverse; only 2% of its pupils were white, but efforts to increase diversity at this model school eventually increased the white student enrollment to 17%. In 1985, there was discussion about whether to keep or scrap the model school concepts at Cary and Bellevue and pursue alternative instructional approaches in all elementary schools. The issue brought to the school board by the Citizen’s Advisory Commission stated that model schools were perceived in the city as elitist or “private” public schools and only popular among middle-class white and black parents. School Board Chairman Law stated, “There’s nothing elitist about the schools…it’s just old-fashioned school ideas.” Lois Harrison-Jones, Superintendent in 1985 said, “There’s nothing highfalutin about [Cary and Bellevue]” (Epes, 1985, p. 17). The board unanimously agreed to keep the designation of model school at Cary and Bellevue. In 1986, after assessing the popularity and demand for model schools, the board created another open enrollment zone on the South Side of Richmond that designated J.B. Fisher Elementary as the city’s third model school. According to Snyder, at the time when cross-town busing was ending, the problems of internal marketing started to emerge:

Bellevue and Fisher became the next two schools that had open enrollments. And that really was what differentiated Cary from those schools—is it [Cary] didn’t have a neighborhood zone. If you lived across the street from Cary [Prior to the new open enrollment policy] and you did not get in, you would get on a bus and head off somewhere else (Snyder, 2008).

The complexity of internal marketing increased in the late 1980’s with the system’s push for open enrollment model schools, and the principals’ efforts to attract students to their neighborhood schools. The effort to attract whites and middle-class blacks that abandoned Richmond for the counties during cross-town busing peaked with the creation
of these internal markets. Open and Community High Schools were initially successful in this endeavor by boasting selective admission policies and promoting challenging college preparatory curricula. The open enrollment model school concept expanded to the middle school level in 1988 when Binford Middle School became a model school as part of a high-priority statewide effort to revamp middle schools. Among the goals of the model school program at Bindford was an initiative to provide programs for at-risk pupils who were most likely to encounter problems in school and drop out (Epes, 1988).

Subsequently, the Governor’s School for Government and International Studies opened at Thomas Jefferson High School (Tee-Jay) in the fall of 1991. Eight neighboring school divisions participated in Tee-Jay’s magnet program. Three new magnet programs also began in 1991 at Marshall, Armstrong and Huguenot High Schools. Amid the restructuring effort of the late 1980’s and early 1990’s in RPS, Snyder felt the model elementary school concept turned into something different than originally intended. He said,

> The whole concept of the model schools came from Cary when it was supposed to be actually a model of something. I mean, that was the definition at that time, but it kinda gradually changed from ‘model’ to ‘special’ (Snyder, 2008).

Cary, Bellevue and Fisher Model Elementary Schools were featuring the open enrollment policy of allowing students living in their attendance zone the opportunity to attend their school. Some aspects of these model schools involved a high priority put on academic achievement with critical and creative thinking emphasized. A variety of instructional techniques were used based on students’ interests, talents and needs. The success of these model schools was the impetus of the district’s intention of moving to a system-wide model elementary school concept.
In 1991, Swansboro, Southampton, Blackwell, Whitcomb Court, Westover Hills, Fox, Woodville, Ginter Park and Mary Munford Elementary Schools implemented model school program. Open enrollment applications were available at each of these schools that centered their model instructional curriculum on a specific theme. The theme at Swansboro put an emphasis on writing in addition to the construction of a swimming pool to include aquatics in the curriculum. At Southampton, environmental science became the central theme where students learned about their impact on the world’s environment. A family and community education center was created at Blackwell where parents were encouraged to participate in classes through its extended model school concept. Whitcomb Court constructed a theme around building students’ self-esteem through a curriculum stressing technology, global studies and the arts. Communications and technology both served as the theme at Westover Hills, which offered a computer and communications center, functioning as a publishing station for the students. Fox and Woodville both focused on visual and performing arts by having students study the international spectrum of the arts. Ginter Park and Mary Munford both emphasized international studies as their primary theme through a multicultural curriculum, which helped students understand their own culture and its relationship to others (Jones, 1990).

Prior to the adoption of the model school program at Mary Munford, a great deal of effort was expended to make it a neighborhood school. Now with open enrollment allowing any student the opportunity to attend Mary Munford, the doors to a new approach of diversifying the school were opened while potentially closing the doors of creating a neighborhood school. Mary Munford’s popularity grew as more and more residents from across Richmond heard about the quality education there. Snyder had the
following to say about the role he played in marketing Mary Munford as both a
neighborhood school and one with a model school program in 1991:

The superintendent met with me and said, ‘The parents really want somebody who’s gonna be able to do this. They want somebody who’s gonna be a part of the community and really market and work with these families.’ And we would go to churches and community centers, and it became—I was probably as much a salesman first of all—I mean for a long time. I would spend—easily 50% of my time is what I would give to parents. Talk to the parents, doing on the ground recruiting, doing a lot of sort of marketing-related guidance (Snyder, 2008).

By 1991, the new marketing ploy of model school programs at nine elementary schools and the promotion of the three model elementary schools, along with one model middle school, seemed to be canceling out the neighborhood school concept.

Policy Balancing

The mission of RPS for attracting and retaining whites and middle-to-upper-class blacks was evident in their neighborhood and open enrollment policies for magnet and model schools. However, these two contradictory policies clashed in the early 1990’s, forcing the district to balance the two internal marketing strategies. For example, as Mary Munford’s popularity grew in the early 1990’s and John B. Cary’s diminished, parents began to take their children out of Cary and started sending them to Munford. According to Snyder:

I came to Munford right about the time that Cary was falling apart. And all of a sudden, all these people that have been at Cary started looking elsewhere. And so here’s a school [Munford] that’s really actively recruiting parents, and so we started getting people that had belonged to Cary that were in this neighborhood and in the Cary model school zone (Snyder, 2008).
This began the internal competition in RPS to promote neighborhood schools while marketing open enrollment model schools (Bradley, 1989). On February 4, 1992 to help the public understand this internal marketing paradox, Superintendent Lucille Brown presented her neighborhood plan, which proposed to reaffirm and support the open enrollment magnet and model school concept while embodying the neighborhood concept (Callihan, 1992). Brown stated, “Students can attend schools near their home, reduce transportation cost and travel time, and natural boundaries would be followed wherever possible” (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 13). Recommended minor adjustments to the elementary, middle, and high school zones were also presented.

According to Brown,

Building capacities have been exceeded in some schools, and there is a need to adjust student assignments…. Boundary adjustments to Thomas Jefferson High School will not upset the co-existence of the Governor’s School and the magnet school program (Callihan, 1992, p. 429).

Since the end of cross-town busing in 1986, the Richmond Public School Board had not formally addressed the community on its position of the neighborhood school concept until February 14, 1992. The “Neighborhood School Plan” would:

1. Establish attendance zones for all elementary schools.
2. Provide a zone school [model school] close to the Highland Park neighborhood for students who travel to Mary Munford.
3. Provide relief for overcrowding at Westover Hills.
4. Reduce travel time for some students who attend Southampton (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 17).

Over fifty people spoke at the February 25, 1992 school board meeting regarding the neighborhood school proposal. The following comments represent some of the different perspectives shared at the meeting:
Richmond parent Ms. Mary Gravett stated that she wants a school that provides racial and economic diversity; she asked the model schools be continued (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 24).

Mary Munford parent Ms. Deborah Pellman supported the proposed plan; she cited a 1985 Richmond Public Schools Citizens’ Advisory Commission report that recommended the neighborhood school concept (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 25).

Cary parent Ms. Cassandra Ray said what works at Cary could work for other neighborhoods and the plan should not significantly diminish the diversity at model schools. The myth needs to be dispelled that only the bright and well to do are admitted to model schools (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 26).

Cary parent Glenda Hicks-Haggins spoke in support of the neighborhood school plan. Neighborhoods are now becoming more diverse with the return of young middle class citizens to the city (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 27).

At this meeting, a parent asked the school board: “What has happened to the commitment of integrated schools? Returning to neighborhood schools will bring back segregation.”

In response, the School Board Chairman stated,

The board is not diminishing, deleting or curtailing the concepts of model schools, open enrollment, and choice. The proposed plan has been received and is begin considered; no one is being denied participation in this process (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 27).

Brown also responded by stating, “95% of [Richmond’s] patrons have already chosen schools close to their homes” (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 27).

On March 3, 1992, the Richmond School Board voted 4-3 to approve the neighborhood school plan as proposed by the superintendent. The chairman said the following:

The neighborhood school plan, as approved by a majority vote, maintains commitment to open enrollment and model schools while providing parents the opportunity to send their children to neighborhood schools. I acknowledged the concerns of parents and encouraged them to maintain
their involvement with schools (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 30).

Commentary on this decision in the media included Paul Bradley’s Richmond Times-Dispatch article entitled: “Busing Divided a City Against Itself.” He wrote,

The central issue should be the quality of the education that is offered in the public schools. There is no valid reason why a black majority public school system in Richmond cannot be successful. Whether whites return to public education or not, the issue is the improvement of public education. Even though there have been instrumental attempts to bring white students back into Richmond (Bradley, 1992, p. 1).

Given the Richmond Public School Board’s officially endorsement of the new neighborhood school plan, it appeared that the system was forced to balance its neighborhood school policy with its open enrollment policy designed for model schools (Duke, 1995). RPS Community Affairs Staff Writer Steven Bolton gave the following overview in light of the cross-purpose endorsement of both policies:

Objectives are to increase parental and community involvement in neighborhood schools and to build a positive perception of RPS within the community at large. Individual schools will be assisted in marketing themselves through a direct, hands-on approach while developing system wide strategies that promote the positive aspects of the entire school division (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 43).

The complexity of the system’s internal marketing approach between the neighborhood schools, and open enrollment policies grew during the 1991-92 school year. The question was being asked: “Why reintroduce a policy assigning students to schools on the basis of their neighborhood if another policy allowed them to attend the school of their choice” (Duke, 1995, p. 209)?

During the Richmond School Board meeting on March 3, 1992 at which the board adopted the new neighborhood school plan; a review of the application process for open
enrollment into the districts model schools was conducted. The following key points were made:

1. Available slots are filled by application in the order received; there is no lottery.
2. A sibling of a pupil currently in the school will receive priority based on space availability; otherwise on a waiting list.
3. All schools follow a centrally established time frame for open enrollment (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 30).

RPS managed the two concepts in an effort to maintain and recruit enrollment numbers for the system. Former central office director and interviewee “Mr. Conner” had the following to say about the process:

I think that we made tremendous strides. We tried to keep our programs up front. We had neighborhood schools, and then we had some model schools that were providing outstanding instruction programs. And I never saw, in my time in central administration, any inequity in terms of schools…. We made sure that schools were treated fairly in that process. And if there was a time that schools could apply for small grants, they had the opportunities to do so (Conner, 2008).

Efforts continued in the district to work with parents who wanted to send all of their children to a model school or one with a model school program. On April 21, 1992, Section 8.49 of the Bylaws and Policies: “Enrollment of Siblings in Model Schools” was passed stating:

Model schools shall enroll all applicants who are residents of the neighborhood attendance zone, students currently enrolled in that model school, or siblings of students currently enrolled in that model school. The remaining vacancies, if any, shall be filled by applicants who are selected by procedures approved by the Superintendent (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 55).

Brown and the school board continued to balance the policies of open enrollment and neighborhood schools to ensure RPS was keeping student first. They stood behind their position of reaffirming and supporting open enrollment and the model school concept
while embodying the neighborhood concept for the upcoming 1992-93 school year (Callihan, 1992). Local legal authority and interviewee “Mr. Wilson” commented on the marketing efforts of RPS by saying:

Let’s stop this believing in the [white] flight…. You [white people] don’t have to go to the counties. There are safe harbors, if you will. And I think that was sort of what led to some of these modalities of the clustering issue, which was very difficult for the city (Wilson, 2008).

The issue of clustering arose at Bellevue Model Elementary School in the fall of 1992, which greatly impacted the internal marketing of RPS.

**Clustering Controversy**

At the December 1, 1992 school board meeting, a parent of a black student at Bellevue Model Elementary School, Reverend Hylan Carter voiced his concern regarding the school’s classroom assignment of pupils. He told the board that his second grade son was placed in a predominately white class with a white teacher, while two other second grade classes were all black with black teachers. Rev. Carter told the school board that he and his wife were advised by Bellevue’s principal Sylvia Richardson, that section 8.20 of the Bylaws and Policies: “Pupil Assignments” permits “clustering” to attract and maintain white students in the division. He said, “If this is a policy, it is fundamentally wrong, both socially and morally, as it promotes separation/segregation of black and white students (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 273). Table 6 illustrates the classroom composition at Bellevue during the 1992-93 school year:
Table 6

Class Composition at Bellevue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Classroom 1</th>
<th>Classroom 2</th>
<th>Classroom 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>blacks/whites</td>
<td>blacks/whites</td>
<td>blacks/whites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>12/11</td>
<td>23/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>23/0</td>
<td>24/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>22/0</td>
<td>24/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>19/6</td>
<td>22/0</td>
<td>24/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>13/10</td>
<td>23/0</td>
<td>23/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Grade</td>
<td>17/8</td>
<td>23/0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 7, 1993)

School Board Chairman, Clarence L. Townes assured Rev. Carter that his concern would be examined and a communication would be forthcoming from the Board/Administration (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 233). For the record, Superintendent Brown made the following clarification statement regarding questions raised by Rev. Hylan Carter: “There is no policy in the Richmond Public Schools nor are there any administrative procedures that support segregation of students in any of our schools” (School Board Minutes, 1992, Revised per January 19, 1993 Minutes, p. 237).

*Misguided attempt to diversify.*

The allegation of grouping students by race was first reported to the Richmond community in the Richmond Times-Dispatch on December 3, 1992. The Richmond
Times-Dispatch obtained a letter written to the Carter family from Principal Richardson that said:

The procedure of clustering students at Bellevue and other Richmond public schools dates back many years. The most recent policy was adopted in 1978 and revised in 1984...pupil assignment has both an administrative and instructional connotation, taking into consideration the pupil’s social, intellectual, physical and emotional development. The number of white students at Bellevue represent 12 percent of the total population, thus they have been clustered for social and emotional reasons (Farmer, 1992, p. 2).

According to reports from the Richmond Education Association (REA), complaints about clustering based on race were received prior to the Carter’s objection. The executive director of the REA said, “Based on a teacher complaint several years ago, I advised then Superintendent Albert Jones about clustering and no action was taken and the teacher was later transferred” (Lazarus, 1992, p. 13). The policy that Principal Richardson was using to justify clustering was described as a way to help reverse the white flight of the late 1960’s and early 1970’s by allowing all of the white students who applied to the model school to be accepted, while black students were put on a waiting list and into a lottery to determine their ranking (Farmer, 1992). Some white parents believed clustering helped Bellevue’s white population grow. Sherry Finneran was one of the first white parents to send her child to Bellevue and she stated, “I think the only reason why whites went to Bellevue is they felt safe going there…. I think the clustering had something to do with that (Farmer, 1992, p. B6).

Three days after Carter informed the School Board of clustering at Bellevue; a special meeting was called to address the public about the matter. School Board Chairman Clarence Townes reported that the Superintendent Lucille Brown was asked to investigate the charges at Bellevue. He also stated that she was asked to determine
whether similar charges could be applied to any other school in the division and to report her findings back to him within twenty-four hours. Townes then read aloud Brown’s report:

Per your directive I have conducted an investigation of the clustering practice currently at Bellevue. I have also reviewed the pupil assignment procedures at all of our other elementary schools to determine if this practice is being used anywhere other than Bellevue. Bellevue is the only school where this practice is currently used. In addition, I have reviewed all of our board policies and administrative regulations on pupil assignments. I found none that support the practice. When the model schools were organized in the early 1970’s, it was decided by the administration at that time that vacancies would be filled by lottery in a manner that would maintain balance according to age, race and sex of pupils. I am of the opinion that clustering as currently used at Bellevue far exceeds that original intent of this idea. This administration is no way endorses Mrs. Richardson’s interpretation of this practice at Bellevue. I have directed her to cease this practice immediately and to prepare a reassignment plan to become effective beginning the second semester of this school year. I am very concerned that this practice has been continuing without my knowledge. My investigation is continuing to determine any other person who may have been involved in perpetuating this practice and will report my finding to you be the next regular board meeting (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 238).

The chairman expressed that the superintendent’s report was self-explanatory and that he was also satisfied that the clustering practice, which occurs only at Bellevue, reflects an error in judgment. He said, “Neither the Board nor the Administration in anyway endorses the clustering practice at Bellevue.” To the parents and public he said,

The goals of the school board are to ensure that students in RPS learn to relate to students of other races and backgrounds. We hope this view is shared by the parents of Bellevue, both black and white (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 239).

A few days later, the probe into the grouping of white pupils in RPS’s 30 elementary schools was extended after Townes observed the clustering of white students on a visit to Ginter Park Elementary. Several years earlier, former Richmond school
administrator and interviewee “Mr. Wright” visited Ginter Park and recalls the principal telling him that one thing they did there for white students was cluster them in a couple of classes so they wouldn’t feel like they were all by themselves (Wright, 2008). The school board’s 1992 discovery of clustering taking place at Ginter Park put the school in the middle of the current controversy surrounding Bellevue. Associate Superintendent Willis B. McLeod said the clustering of white pupils at Ginter Park was inadvertent and only due to parent requests for specific teachers, which were granted by Principal Frances McClenny. In response to the claim that several classes had a preponderance of whites in them, McClenny said, “Other classes lacked whites because I assigned them to a predominately black class and they didn’t show up” (Farmer, 1992, p. B6).

At the next school board meeting on December 14, 1992, several black parents of Bellevue students expressed concerns regarding the clustering issue. They asked that clarification be given on how to handle the situation would be handled. They requested that no reassignment of students take place until the end of the school year, that consideration be given to the principal’s response and that a task force be formed to study the issue. Responding to their concerns, Brown stated:

A meeting has been held with Bellevue parents and no professional response has been received from the principal. The Administration will assist the school in developing a plan to address the issue. There will be some modification to the pupil assignments at Bellevue, but all significant practice in developing a plan will involve the school, PTA, parents, and administration…. No surprises will be made; parental involvement will be sought before the implementation of any plan (School Board Minutes, 1992, p. 240).

The submitted options by Bellevue to the superintendent were the following: The reassignment of all pupils, the transfer of pupils in kindergarten through second grade and the transfer of pupils in the majority white second grade class (Farmer, 1992). As stated
in her response at the December 14th school board meeting, Brown did not think any of these proposals were viable options to proceed with. Controversial statements and public opinion were reported in the local news over the next several weeks. At the following school board meeting on January 5, 1993, Dean Simpson, a parent at Bellevue, stated his concern with misinformation reported by the media regarding the clustering issue at Bellevue. He referred to Cary and Fox schools being shown as positive examples of clustering. He stated that magnet and model schools were designed to promote desegregation, and cited the increased number of white students at Bellevue (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 255). Some other parents said they believed other city schools were clustering white students in classrooms with white teachers too (Farmer, 1992). Parents and some educators came forward and said that an unwritten policy to group whites, so they won’t be racially isolated, had existed for years to woo back whites that left the system during cross-town busing. Bellevue parent Skip Banks said, “Clustering is a policy practiced by a number of model schools. It’s helped some schools like Fox and Fisher be balanced” (Farmer, 1993, p. A3). Former administrator and interviewee “Mr. Snyder” said, “Fox was clustering all along. Bellevue just got caught” (Snyder, 2008). According to the Richmond Free Press, Fox Elementary School clustered students until a new principal changed the policy (“Superintendent,” 1992). Previously stated, and reported in a 1980 Richmond New Leader article, Louise Edge, a white parent in support of bringing other white neighborhood parents back to Mary Munford said, “Whites who do attend the school are clustered in certain classrooms rather than being dispersed evenly throughout the classrooms” (McCreary, 1980, p. 1). Critics of clustering said it was a form of segregation and advocates credited clustering with
helping to integrate (Farmer, 1992). White enrollment at Bellevue increased from 3% to 12% since cross-town busing ended. Bellevue Principal Sylvia Richardson said,

> Clustering students has thus helped us to move slowly towards developing a school population which is multicultural in composition and to simultaneously provide for the social and emotional needs that our students have (Farmer 1992, p. B6).

The community’s reaction on how RPS should precede with the clustering issue varied. One concern was its impact on the psyche of the students; meaning white pupils might perceive themselves as superior and black pupils as inferior, and that this situation may validate white pupils’ fears of blacks (Williams, 1992). Former Fox educator and interviewee “Mrs. Lee” said,

> I talked with my friends about [clustering]. I talked with the administrators about it. I talked with other teachers about it. And nobody really seemed to have a problem with it. I don’t think that anybody thought that it was a racist practice. I think that everyone thought it was in an effort to bring the middle-class back into the school system. And maybe the ends justified the means. That’s a speculation on my part (Lee, 2008).

A black parent Gilda Anderson was quoted in the *Richmond Free Press* saying, “Black, white, I’m tired of it. I just want my child to have a good education, and that is what is available at Bellevue. I don’t want this controversy to disrupt classes” (Lazarus, 1992, p. 13).

As the Richmond Public School Board was attempting to push through the decision made at their February 2nd meeting to cease clustering at the end of the first semester, a dozen black and white parents hired Attorney Gerald T. Zerkin and filed suit against the board. They claimed that class changes for 17% of Bellevue students were damaging to their children’s education and under state law are illegal and violated the pupil reassignment policy of the school board. The lawsuit cited state legal requirements
for an advertised public hearing when 15% or more students are to be reassigned at any school. The parents filing the suit said that they were not opposed to end clustering; rather, they just wanted a say in the reassignment process (Lazarus, 1993). The lawsuit was seeking an injunction against 74 homeroom reassignments designed to better distribute the schools white pupils. The lawsuit stated: “The Superintendent and members of the School Board have been aware for years that clustering was used at Bellevue” (Farmer, 1993a, p. B6). On February 6, 1993, Circuit Court Judge Theodore J. Markow ruled that the Richmond School Board must hold a public hearing before Bellevue Model Elementary School makes reassignments to end the clustering of white pupils. Markow said, “The public hearing requirement is the only issue for me to decide, everything else is administrative and beyond my scope” (Farmer, 1993b, p. B1).

Public scrutiny.

Prior to the public hearing ordered by the Court, some of Bellevue’s parents sought community support in their fight against reassigning students’ midyear. They claimed the current plan proposed by the superintendent was untimely, disruptive, unresponsive to parent and faculty input, unfair, racially based and hastily formulated (Farmer, 1993). The February 19th school board meeting served the purpose of the public hearing ordered by the court regarding the proposed “Pupil Reassignment Plans” for Bellevue and Ginter Park. Brown made the following remarks to review the premises on which she based her plans:

- There is no sound educational basis for clustering.
- Placement by race is illegal and inherently inequitable.
- All students can learn, and learn best when organized into classes, which are heterogeneous with respect to ability and socio-cultural variables.
• Clustering is potentially harmful to the social and emotional development of children.
• Continuing the practice of clustering would not only run the risk of further damage to the involved children, the entire school system would be placed at risk.
• Children are adaptable, and with few exceptions, could adjust to reassignments and regroupings with relative ease, given appropriate adult support.
• The student reassignment plan for Ginter Park Elementary School involves homeroom adjustments for 32 randomly selected black and white students from a population of 725.
• The plan for instructional delivery will utilize a Team Teaching Model involving classes at each of four grade levels.
• The integrity of the instructional program will not be compromised—rather, the program will be enhanced through increased student interaction by way of Team Teaching.
• The Ginter Park plan employs a combination of reassignment and instructional regrouping through team teaching. The Ginter Park faculty understands team teaching and collaborative learning and so we are able to utilize these strategies, which have also made a real difference in promoting a higher level of learning in other elementary schools (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 292).

Over 200 people attended the three-hour public hearing, and nearly 70 parents and community members voiced their opinions on the matter. Speaking out at this meeting was Oliver Hill Sr., a predominate citizen in the Richmond community and long time Civil Rights lawyer in the fight to end desegregation. He stated, “There is only one way to deal with the violation of the law and that is to end clustering now” (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 294). At the conclusion of the public hearing, the Chairman made the following closing remarks:

…I see white and black people struggling to live together, to work together, throughout this our beloved city. I see racially integrated school staffs that have been successfully educating children of one race or another without discrimination every day for more than a generation…. Make no mistake; we still have a long way to go (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 298).
On February 23, 1993, the clustering at Bellevue and Ginter Park Elementary School ended. Before the vote, School Board Chairman Townes expressed his disappointment over the media’s “concentration on controversial items” versus focusing on the positives aspects of RPS (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 301). The board voted unanimously to approve superintendent’s proposed reassignment plans for Bellevue and Ginter Park. Reassignment procedures were to:

- Develop a modified random selection process, which would increase the probability of producing individual class lists, which reflects the racial/cultural composition of the school while minimizing the total number of students to be reassigned.
- Review class lists to ensure that they reflect the racial and cultural composition of the school prior to implementation.
- Entertain any regrouping recommendations for instructional purposes; however, any individual student reassignment should not result in a gross imbalance in racial composition (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 302).

Ginter Park’s pupil reassignment plan stated:

The plan for instructional delivery will utilize a team-teaching model involving classes at each grade level. Each pupil will have a lead teacher and co-lead teacher. The lead teacher is responsible for the daily homeroom duties and organizing each student’s overall educational plan. The co-lead teacher provides enhanced instructional activities as collaboratively identified by both teachers. The integrity of the instructional program will no be compromised, rather the program will be enhanced through increased student interaction via team-teaching (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 302).

Two amendments were inserted into the School Board’s resolution:

Part 1:
Whenever possible, the current homeroom teacher for a particular class will be the lead teacher or the co-lead teacher for that class.

Part 2:
Recognizing the special stress placed on the youngest pupils in situation involving mid-year changes and disruptions of established routine, the Superintendent will not reassign a kindergarten pupil in either school from one class to another without the consent of that pupil’s parents.
notwithstanding any other provision of this resolution (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 303).

After the reassignment plan was passed, Brown said, “Before pupils are reassigned, the human factor will be considered…. The plans no longer use computerized random sampling” (Farmer, 1993, p. A1). Townes commented that the process of reassigning pupils would be carried out in the kindest way possible (Lazarus, 1993). However, Bellevue’s 76 pupil reassignments were delayed by transfers and absences that were 20% higher than normal during the weeks after the decision to end clustering was made by the board. One saddened parent of a first-grader who was reassigned said, “This was our chance to come up with a real creative solution to a difficult problem that everyone in the country was watching to see how we would handle it and we just put a band-aid on it” (Farmer, 1993, p. A8). Central office administrator and interviewee “Mr. Wright” felt the clustering controversy was perhaps Superintendent Brown’s most embarrassing moment (Wright, 2008). Legal authority and interviewee “Mr. Wilson” had the following to say about the leadership during the clustering controversy:

Dr. Brown did a great job in terms of, you know, dealing with the process of two clashing forces. There was no monster at any rate; there was no ogre…there was no winner. And so, it was difficult…they were trying times (Wilson, 2008).

The controversy surrounding RPS was felt locally, nationally and internationally. When former school administrator and interviewee “Mr. Bean” was asked how this situation impacted RPS he replied, “The Richmond Public Schools were really hit hard. I was really right in the middle of all of that mess, and I think that they did as well as they could” (Bean, 2008). To help with building support for the decision to end clustering, the Richmond City Council endorsed the efforts of the school board by passing a resolution
that described clustering as discriminatory and a racist practice that fosters resegregation in RPS. Interestingly, the resolution vote was broken along racial lines with five black council members voting for the resolution and three white members abstaining (Wasson, 1993).

Media coverage of the clustering controversy in RPS was widespread. The news was reported by the New York Times, the Washington Post, CNN, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Boston Globe, Atlanta’s Journal and Constitution, as well as Canadian television (Williams, 1993). In addition, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the United States Department of Education investigated RPS to determine if students were assigned to classes at the elementary level on the basis of race. The probe sought to find out if elementary schools in Richmond were complying with Section 6 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race in any program. OCR found RPS in violation of Section 6, but since they had corrected the problem, OCR found the issue to be resolved (Farmer, 1993). With the clustering of students by race at Ginter Park and Bellevue Model Elementary School resolved, the district prepared to move forward from the internal marketing setback.

Conclusion

RPS undertook marketing efforts to improve the district’s ability to retain and attract whites and middle-class blacks. The balancing of the neighborhood school concept, which assigned most students to the school in their attendance zone after cross-town busing ended in 1986, and the open enrollment model school concept, which
allowed students the option of applying to schools outside of their attendance zone, were contradicting each other by 1991.

The difficulty of creating neighborhood schools was illustrated by Mary Munford Elementary School’s marketing struggles to convince white residents to re-enroll in the school that they had abandoned during cross-town busing. The concept of open enrollment schools was analyzed to show the marketing developments of magnet and model school programs. Eventually, the marketing of Cary, Fisher and Bellevue Model Elementary Schools through open enrollment policies clashed with the efforts of creating neighborhood schools. By 1992, RPS reaffirmed their position in support of the open enrollment model school concept while embodying the neighborhood concept. Attempting to balance these two policies, the misguided effort of clustering students by race at Ginter Park and Bellevue Model Elementary School played out in the media during the 1992-93 school year. Public scrutiny of this situation created further controversy for RPS. Legal authority and interviewee “Mr. Wilson” felt that the outcome of the internal marketing debacle left a stigma on RPS. He said:

There's an old African proverb, ‘When elephants fight, ants get stomped.’ So there are the kids, you know, right there until they’re in the midst of they have no way of protecting themselves. And then, you have to avoid everybody else's perceptive of what's best for them (Wilson, 2008).

The clustering of students by race at Ginter Park and Bellevue Model Elementary Schools had a negative impact on RPS. Public debate on the handling of the situation damaged the marketing efforts of the district. Previous efforts to desegregate schools before and during unitary status diminished after this misguided decision. Redirection in RPS became difficult with socio-economic resegregation in Richmond increasing once again. RPS, under the leadership of Superintendent Brown, had to find a way to recover
from this incident that left a defining mark on the district. For the remainder of the 1990’s, redirection efforts to develop consistency were attempted with an increasingly high turnover rate in superintendents.
CHAPTER 6

Working to Establish Consistency

Introduction

With the adversity of the clustering controversy still lingering in Richmond, the school system set out to establish a sense of continuity to recover from the instability of the recent past. The findings in this chapter begin with a critical analysis of the high turnover rate of superintendents in Richmond Public Schools (RPS). Then, redirection efforts that followed its unsuccessful internal marketing approach are examined. Next, programs and initiatives implemented to help establish direction are analyzed. Ongoing district challenges are outlined with a focus on the rapid changes in leadership during the mid-1990’s. Specific obstacles facing RPS including the Standards of Learning (SOL) state assessments are dissected to further understand the complexities facing the district during an inconsistent period.

High Superintendent Turnover Rate

To further understand the impacting stigma on RPS, a closer look is taken at the high turnover rate of district superintendents. The frequently changing school administration in Richmond presented a strenuous setting for consistent educational practices to be adopted, especially after the clustering of students by race controversy in 1992. Former school administrator and interviewee “Mr. Wright” felt that with the turnover of superintendents in the 1980’s and 1990’s, Richmond became a very difficult work environment (Wright, 2008). Another school administrator and interviewee “Mr.
Snyder” said the following about post-court mandated school desegregation: “I think things floundered along for a while…things just kind of set in and nobody really did much. Eventually, we went through many superintendents, which brought struggles” (Snyder, 2008). Snyder alluded to the fact that unresolved disputes between the superintendents and school boards existed after cross-town busing ended in Richmond, which gave way to educational uncertainties. Listed below are the seven Richmond Public School Superintendents since the end of cross-town busing in 1986, including their dates of service and reasons for leaving.

- Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman: 2002-2006 (present)
- Dr. Albert Williams: 1997-2002 (retired early)
- Dr. Patricia Conn: 1995-1997 (dismissed)
- Dr. Lucille M. Brown: 1991-1995 (retired early)
- Dr. Albert Jones: 1989-1991 (dismissed)
- Dr. James W. Tyler: 1988-1989 (interim)
- Dr. Lois Harrison-Jones: 1985-1988 (resigned)

Lois Harrison-Jones replaced Richmond C. Hunter, Richmond’s first black superintendent, after 8 years of service in 1985. She was an employee of RPS for 30 years prior to her appointment as superintendent. Harrison-Jones said, “I hope my long tenure with Richmond Public Schools will help me eliminate the normal transitional lull that follows the arrival of a new chief executive officer into a school system” (Nance, n.d., p. 28). Her longevity with the district proved beneficial to RPS during its transition from cross-town busing to unitary status; however, with her resignation coming only two years into post-court mandated school desegregation, unstable leadership began to negatively impact the direction of the district.

After Dr. James W. Tyler’s short stay as Interim Superintendent from 1988-1989, Albert Jones worked diligently to restructure RPS for nearly three years until he was
dismissed without cause in 1991. His leadership spawned ideas and initiatives that were
garded without cause in 1991. His leadership spawned ideas and initiatives that were
handed to the next Superintendent, Lucille M. Brown. Her four-year stretch as the
superintendent was filled with ups and downs including the clustering controversy of
1992. After Brown’s efforts to redirect the district in the early 1990’s, Patricia Conn was
hired in 1995 and then dismissed from her position as superintendent after less than two
years. She said, “In retrospect, I erred in trying to do too much too fast in Richmond”
(Weatherford, 2003, p. 124). She went on to say that the board micromanaged the system
rather than sticking to its mandate of setting policy (Weatherford, 2003). Albert
Williams took over as superintendent in 1997, but even with his five year stay, high
turnover in the position led to frequent upheavals in how the system was run over time.
For instance, each person’s changes to district policies, processes and philosophies made
it difficult to build stability. Local reporter and interviewee “Mr. Jackson” said,

There has been so much turnover…. You had all these different regimes.
There was no real continuity, so it’s hard to point at any cohesive entity as
being consistently and uniformly positive (Jackson, 2008).

The reputation of RPS became one that was difficult to manage, and the school board was
viewed as hard to work with. A former president of the Virginia State Board of
Education said, “There’s no doubt that a lack of consistency in that position [of
superintendent] has hit the Richmond Public School system very hard” (Weatherford,
2003, p. 122). There were also persistent complaints from inside and outside of the
district that favoritism played a role in the hiring practices of RPS, especially in the upper
administrative positions (Kollatz, 2002). Jackson said, “There were people, who’ve
never seemed to retire. When they retired, they became consultants, kind of stayed on the
payroll” (Jackson, 2008).
To dispel the notion of faulty hiring practices, the school board hired the Virginia School Board Association (VSBA) to look for Richmond’s next superintendent. After four months of searching, 13 candidates were presented to the board, with only one recommended from in-state, Deborah Jewell-Sherman, Richmond’s Associate Superintendent. School board member Reginald Malone said, “Many of the out-of-state candidates were leery of Richmond, because of its reputation of not keeping superintendents” (Weatherford, 2003, p. 124). After great debate among board members, in July of 2002, Jewell-Sherman was named Richmond’s new superintendent with a 5-3 vote (one member abstained). Her responsibilities were vast and her challenges were multifaceted. Before examining the superintendency of Jewell-Sherman, a closer look at the redirection efforts after the controversial clustering of students by race highlights various programs and initiatives. Also, a closer look at the rapid changes in leadership outlines the ongoing district challenges into the twenty-first century.

Redirection Efforts

After a decision was reached on February 23, 1993, regarding the clustering of students by race in two of Richmond’s public schools, the system began focusing its attention on improving its image. Superintendent Lucille M. Brown provided leadership to promote many policies, community programs and developmental efforts to help erase the stigma that was impacting RPS. The efforts to redirect the mission of RPS began immediately after the previous goal of bringing white and black middle-class families back into the city schools foundered on the clustering controversy. Following a difficult time in RPS, former school administrator and interviewee “Mr. Bean” felt the district
needed to deal with its past mistakes and change its ways (Bean, 2008). The school board looked at ways to start redirecting their mission to move on from the past and look to the future.

On February 25, 1993, the Richmond Public School Board began this process by agreeing to hire an independent consultant to conduct a school census to revalidate school enrollment, determine population trends and to help develop a needs assessment. The city manager of Richmond indicated the city administration would cover the cost of the census (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 305). A baseline effort started on March 2, 1993, when the results of the one and a half year study by the Richmond Renaissance Education Task Force were reported to the board. The task force found many current practices in RPS to be “state of the art” compared to most systems in the United States. From this assessment an action plan was devised for the system:

1993 Action Plan:
- Begin building support in the entire community
- Start on a detailed implementation plan to address:
  1. Pre school initiatives
  2. Learning barriers
  3. At risk students (over 50%)
  4. High mortality rate (5th highest in nation)
  5. Foster care kids (4 times the state average)
  6. Juvenile arrest rate for drugs (5 times the state average)
  7. Juvenile homicide rate (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 318-20)

District wide programs and initiatives.

At this same meeting, the board directed the superintendent to evaluate the potential of joining the Council of Urban School Boards (CUBE) that consisted of 70 urban school systems (p. 310). On March 16, 1993, RPS joined CUBE for $5,250. Action goals included achieving racial, ethnic and socio-economic integration within the
metropolitan area and building confidence in urban public education (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 322). The CUBE program was a method for RPS to share programming ideas with other predominately black school districts recovering from the effects of school desegregation.

On April 20, 1993, the Community Outreach Program was created. The program involved 200 businesses, organizations, religious groups, institutions and individuals to help build partnerships with the Richmond community. The Weed and Seed Program was also installed on April 20th. This federally funded drug related program was designed for communities to reclaim neighborhoods, with safe havens established in places like Blackwell Elementary School in Richmond. On May 4, 1993, the Toyota Families for Learning Program was instituted as a collaborative early intervention model for family education. In addition to early childhood intervention, the need of addressing the graduation rate within the district was a priority. On February 25, 1993, the drop out rate was down to 5.5% from 12.6% in 1989; however, the rate was still above the state average of 3.26%. On December 6, 1994, RPS adopted the Cities in Schools Program to address the dropout rate through community partnerships (School Board Minutes, 1994, p. 177, p. 320, p. 336, p. 344). The Cities in Schools Program was seen by the board as a valuable resource to combat truancy.

The board also worked on improving the lines of communication in the system with the Richmond Education Association (REA). Bylaws to Section 7.04 of the School Board Policy were passed on April 20, 1993 to increase communication procedures between school board employees and outside parties in Richmond (School Board Minutes, 1993 p. 340). On May 11, 1993, a public forum was held with diverse segments
of the community to improve lines of communication for delivering support services to youth. The idea was to present strategies, ideas or programs for helping each person view themselves as a part of a greater whole (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 344). Local politician and interviewee “Mr. Thompson” recalls the efforts of the community to support programs such as this. He said,

> We adopted the schools, particularly businesses adopted schools to do things in a particular school like work with enrichment programs and reading programs. They used public figures. I know I used to go to the schools every year and read to the kids. So they did a lot of enrichment things to help the kids in the stressful environment (Thompson, 2008).

Another example of the greater Richmond community’s involvement started on August 24, 1993, when the Colonial Williamsburg Pilot Project was adopted by the board to focus on the reversal of the present trend among students toward historical illiteracy through hands on living interpretations (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 456). To help prepare students in RPS for academic assessments, the board adopted a Division Wide Improvement Plan on September 7, 1993; for continued improvement on test scores (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 478). In working with the City of Richmond, the school board was striving to allocate money to address the infrastructure needs of the district, and on May 4, 1994 the Capital Improvement Plan for 1994-1999 was adopted for this purpose. The plan called for $86,365,500 in funding for the five-year period. To address the immediate needs of the district, $18,655,000 was recommended for the 1994-95 school year (School Board Minutes, 1994, p. 604). Former school administrator and interviewee “Mr. Wright” felt that financial investments were good for the schools; however he also said:

> It’s easier for a school division to manage growth than it is to manage decline. But trying to retrench is extremely painful. And so you have
teachers and students working hard in schools but on top of them is the layer of bureaucracy and political intrigue in the city trying to control the organization for reasons other than the education of the children (Wright, 2008).

Exemplifying this point was the debate among newly elected school board members in the fall of 1994 over the installation of a new mission statement. For two months, these members struggled to propose a new School Board Mission Statement, which was finally passed on October 4, 1994. Principles of the mission were for students to appreciate cultural diversity, become responsible citizens, and to lead productive lives so that RPS would be the choice of all Richmonders (School Board Minutes, 1994, p. 108). In the middle of the new school board’s efforts to address the multifaceted needs of the system’s students, Reverend Michael Williams of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) presented his concerns to the school board. His concerns pertained to the high concentration of poverty in Richmond and the low levels of literacy amongst its students. He offered a proposal that would enhance the efforts of the board and the division’s initiatives relative to increasing community involvement and partnership in education. He stated:

Many of the inner city children and youth are at risk; they are without hope, adequate attention, and unable to handle life. As a result, two generations of black children and youth are about to be lost to drugs, violence, early parenthood, poor health, unemployment, family disintegration, and the spiritual and physical poverty (School Board Minutes, 1994, p. 104).

The school board listened to his concerns and attempted to address them with the programs that were in place. The following year, on June 6, 1995, the Greater Richmond Community Corps Concept was approved by the school board to continue its intervention in the community. Superintendent Brown explained in her Annual Report that a
partnership between Richmond’s schools and the Greater Richmond Community Corps was adopted to address the rising crime and violence that was occurring in the Richmond community (School Board Minutes, 1995, p. 304). Former school board member and interviewee “Mr. Higgins” had a first hand look at the before mentioned efforts of RPS during the 1990’s. He said,

Starting probably in the mid-to late 90s, the futures for a lot of these kids started to change because we started to believe that they could do it. I know the kinds of challenges that existed before all this reform stuff started. I know how bad it was (Higgins, 2008).

The efforts of RPS to address the needs of the students attending public schools were evident through the many programs and policies implemented since 1993. As beneficial as these initiatives were to students, the system was still struggling to deal with the lingering complexities of the failed school desegregation process. RPS central office administrator and interviewee “Mr. Smith” was not aware of any programs that were implemented to directly repair the racial resegregation that was regaining momentum during the 1990’s. Rather, according to “Mr. Wright:” “The school system was just responding to the minor issues that were popping up” (Wright, 2008). Furthermore, local religious leader and interviewee “Mr. Sanders” said,

Classrooms can come up, but the fact of the matter is it ain’t just about your effort. It’s really about resources. So you basically are in as bad of a situation as you were before, if you don’t do something with what you do have (Sanders, 2008).

Sander’s felt that even though RPS was implementing many programs, they were neglecting the major issues of class and race, and the lack of resources devoted to addressing these problems. Former Richmond student and interviewee “Mr. Grant” saw the efforts of RPS as a battle against a force to be reckoned with. He said:
And so the quality of teaching started to decline, the tax base support for their schools started to decline. And so there were a series of events, almost like a perfect storm of things that were happening that I think adversely affected the school system’s efforts (Grant, 2008).

While efforts to reform were taking shape, the Governor’s School at Thomas Jefferson High School was going through a difficult situation. City Councilman Henry W. Richardson was concerned that students attending the Governor’s School at Thomas Jefferson (Tee-Jay) were being treated differently than the neighborhood students, causing resentment among the community (School Board Minutes, February 25, 1993, p. 208). Local journalist and interviewee “Mr. Jackson” said, “The Thomas Jefferson Governor’s School was perceived as elitist” (Jackson, 2008). Discussion ensued to move the Governor’s School from Thomas Jefferson during the early 1990’s. A decision was made on December 16, 1993 to keep the program at Thomas Jefferson with modifications to the enrollment; it was decided that Richmond students would have enrollment priority (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 531). Eventually, by 1998, the Governor’s School moved to Maggie Walker High School, and Thomas Jefferson High School continued to house several other magnet programs. Maggie Walker was vacant for years, and was renovated to exclusively house the Governor’s school by 2001-02.

Ongoing District Challenges

Controversy at Bellevue Model Elementary School was looming since 1993. Principals Sylvia Richardson of Bellevue and Frances McClennen of Ginter Park were reassigned at the end of the 1992-93 school year. This situation raised concern about how RPS was viewed in the press (School Board Minutes, 1993, p. 435). At the
conclusion of the 1993-94 school year, the white enrollment at Bellevue had dropped from its peak of 75 students to 30. At the conclusion of the 1994-95 school year, the white enrollment at Bellevue plummeted to 6 students out of about 370 pupils. Reports were surfacing about a secret plan to bring white pupils back to the school, and Brown was heard saying that Assistant Principal of Bellevue Jean Whitlock would not become the next school’s principal because she lacked the proper image to attract white parents to the school (Rowley, 1995); (Farmer, 1995).

Ginter Park’s white students also declined from 70 to 50. The following table lists the most racially mixed Richmond public schools for the 1993-94 school year, which did not include either Bellevue or Ginter Park.
Table 7

“Clustering” Split City: Separation in School Sparked Political Storm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open High</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher Elementary*</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox Elementary</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munford Elementary</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cary Elementary*</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community High</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binford Middle*</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Hill Elementary</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruffin Road Elementary</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elkhart Elementary</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Model School
(Adapted from Richmond Times-Dispatch, May 16, 1994)

Table 7 lists the ten schools in RPS that had a higher percentage of white students than the district had overall in 1994. RPS was 91% black, 8% white and 1% other in 1994, while the city itself was 55% black, 45% white and 1% other. Commenting on post-court mandated school desegregation “Mr. Higgins” said, “We don’t have an integrated school system anymore, and it’s really a black school system” (Higgins, 2008). Brown wanted the city’s demographics to be reflected in the school system; however, school officials had no specific integration strategies (Farmer, 1994). To complicate matters, on January 11, 1995, Brown presented a graph to the school board showing the percentages of youth living in poverty in urban areas of Virginia. According to the graph, Richmond ranked
the highest compared with Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Hampton, Newport News, Arlington, Alexandria, and Roanoke (School Board Minutes, 1995, p. 203).

*Rapid Leadership Changes*

By 1995, RPS was faced with many challenges. In the spring of 1995, Brown added to these challenges by announcing her retirement. RPS now embarked on the difficult process of trying to fill its superintendent vacancy in the middle of trying to establish orderliness within the district. Brown’s retirement came at a juncture where RPS was striving to build consistency with its policies and programs. According to School Board Chairman Melvin D. Law, “The future of the City and its ability to realize its potential and to enhance its reputation is tied to the perception of the school system” (School Board Minutes, 1995, p. 262). This intensified the need to quickly select a new superintendent to manage the turbulent district during a demanding period.

In July of 1995, Patricia Conn was named the new superintendent of RPS. In her first report to the school board on July 6, 1995, she presented her vision and goals for the upcoming school year. Her vision stated: “To make the Richmond public schools the standard by which all other urban school districts are measured, demonstrating high student achievement, peaceable schools and a supportive learning environment” (School Board Minutes, 1995, p. 419). Her main goals were somewhat in line with Brown’s six year comprehensive Education Plan that was put into effect four years prior. The 1991-1997 plan outlined the division’s major goals, methods for assessment, and strategies for improving the quality of education (School Board Minutes, 1991, p. 387). Conn took the basics of Brown’s plan and added the goals of enhancing the image of the school division
and maintaining a healthy fiscal environment. In addition to revamping the district’s goals, Conn presented a proposed logo to the board that she believed would improve the public concept of the division’s image. The new logo showed an adult and a child standing in front of the City showing the connection between the public schools and the community. The words on the logo read: “Richmond Public Schools: The Hub of Our Learning Community.” She recommended that the proposed logo replace the current division logo. The board agreed to defer any decision on this item to a subsequent meeting (School Board Minutes, 1995, p. 419). Other changes that were instituted by Conn for the 1995-96 school year were:

- Change the name of the downtown offices from Central Administration to the Support and Accountability Center (SAC)
- Integrate and streamline SAC operations, emphasizing boundary-crossing teams
- Combine the Curriculum Materials Center and the Professional Development Center into a new entity: The Instructional Resource and Training Center
- Request four new Board policies; civic values and service learning; collaboration with community; student progress; site-based planning and management
- Begin planning the conversion of comprehensive high schools to theme focused schools featuring small school units
- Restructure middle schools so that every child is connected to a group of caring adults in each school
- Change the employee appraisal system from an input based to a results based approach
- Implement (Total Quality Management) principles throughout the organization
- Intensify, focus and integrate professional development opportunities
- Align volunteer and partnership programs with new goals
- Establish pathways for teacher sharing and teamwork
- Establish a peer support system for principals
- Identify a farm site where troubled youth can be educated using a hands-on approach
- Establish community-learning centers for children and families
- Seek relief from state and federal rules and policies
- Identify priority schools for intensive problem solving support
  (School Board Minutes, 1995, p. 439)

Shortly thereafter, Conn announced her priority schools list. The list included Wythe and Armstrong High Schools; Boushall, Chandler and Mosby Middle Schools; Whitcomb Court, Carver, Oberby-Sheppard, Chimborazo, Blackwell, and Oak Grove/Bellemeede Elementary Schools. She said this list was determined through longitudinal school data, system wide student testing and student attendance and student suspensions from 1992 through 1995. She believed by identifying schools with the greatest needs, the system would begin to improve its image and student achievement. Conn also created several task forces during her first year as superintendent; student progress, business and community collaboration, civic values and service learning and school based planning and management were examples of her initiatives to meet the needs of all students (School Board Minutes, 1995, p. 455).

During Conn’s tenure as superintendent, the school board passed a “Proclamation” on May 23, 1996, ten years after cross-town busing ended in RPS. The Proclamation brought attention to the history of the school desegregation process of 1954 through 1986 and gave meaning to post-court mandated school desegregation in RPS. The Proclamation stated in the post-Brown era, congressional response to inequity ensured that dual systems of education were eradicated and the annals of the RPS reflect the responses of the division and community to concerns and resolving solutions which have shaped the district as it currently exists (School Board Minutes, 1996, p. 641).

The school board, superintendent and the entire Richmond community felt the significance of this proclamation at this juncture of unitary status. After cross-town busing ended, RPS strove to grapple with the socio-economic consequences of school
desegregation. This Proclamation allowed for reflection and the realization that the school district was still dealing with the remnants of cross-town busing.

Meanwhile, Conn continued to manage the district that, according to the Richmond Afro-American Newspaper, had become synonymous with the word “turmoil” (Crittendown, 1996, p. A14). Still, on June 17, 1996, Conn presented her two-year and twenty-year visions for Richmond’s schools. She focused her vision for the next two years on the Internet, keyboarding, technology and community partnerships. Her twenty-year vision was focused on general education giving way to high caliber academic and technical education (School Board Minutes, 1996, pp. 669-671). Conn’s visions and goals were aimed at helping teachers address the needs of their students for years to come. Amid the challenges presented in the predominately black RPS, Chandler Middle School Principal Anna Gee said, “There is no difference in educating black children as opposed to white children…. You have to use different strategies with all kids” (Crittendon, 1996, p. A14). Gee felt that education in Richmond was moving in the direction it needed to go in 1996. She said, “By addressing the superintendent’s five goals, we’re also addressing our children’s needs…. We’re in an era where we’re experiencing diminishing parental control and involvement. We’re going to have to work diligently with the community at large to establish partnerships (Crittendon, 1996, p. A14). As RPS worked toward achieving success for its students throughout the district, Conn was involved in a series of confrontations with school employees.

The quarrel began when Conn forced school employees to stay at work during an annual basketball championship, which was traditionally taken off by some of Richmond’s educators (Weatherford, 2003). Consequently, Conn transferred and fired a
few school employees who were insubordinate in the matter. The school board later removed the superintendent’s power to hire, transfer or fire employees. The board publicly chastised Conn for her insubordination (Giampietro, 1997). Ultimately, on January 16, 1997, the school board suspended Conn unanimously for 45 days with pay (School Board Minutes, 1997, p. 190). Many positive and negative opinions about Conn’s suspension were shared at the February 3, 1997 school board meeting. For instance, community member Donald Hatcher expressed concern regarding racism in the school system and hidden agendas. He claimed, “Citizens do not know what is going on” (School Board Minutes, 1997, p. 210). On March 1, 1997, with a 5-4 vote, Conn was terminated without cause and placed on administrative leave (contract boycott) for a period of 90 days (School Board Minutes, 1997, p. 229). At the March 3, 1997 school board meeting, more public reaction (mostly negative) was shared during the public information period. People felt that a contract boycott was too costly and that the board needed to reconsider their decision. People stated that it felt like there was a dark cloud cast over the children and the division as a result of the disciplinary actions taken against Conn (School Board Minutes, 1997, pp. 230-31). The school board immediately began looking for a new superintendent in the spring of 1997. There were numerous public hearings held during the summer of 1997 regarding the desired qualities of Richmond’s next superintendent. In addition, there was a great deal of concern expressed about the stigma the whole episode cast upon RPS and the future of it and its students (School Board Minutes, 1997, pp. 11-14).

During the absence of a superintendent, the school board decided to revamp the 1995-1998 strategic plan Conn created, which was based on Brown’s original six year
comprehensive plan (1991-1997). The board felt the reformatted goals created a clear guidepost for excellence and were essential to creating a new focus during the superintendent lull. Others in the district expressed their concern of having any changes made before a new superintendent was appointed (School Board Minutes, 1997, p. 65).

Finally, on September 18, 1997, RPS appointed Albert Williams as the district’s new superintendent. Under William’s leadership RPS aimed to establish consistency for the district. Roger Gray, President of the Richmond Educational Association said:

Williams is going to need unified support to win the battle he’s up against: (SIC) pitiful test scores—among the lowest in the state—bloated per-student spending that’s among the highest in the state, large classroom size, an aging infrastructure, and unwieldy proposed $200 million budget, high truancy rates, teacher apathy, stiffer standards of accreditation tied to funding and accreditation soon to be instituted by the state, and perhaps, above all, a poor image (Giampietro, 1997, p. 15).

Williams encouraged all citizens of Richmond, including people without children in RPS, to step up and get involved by volunteering in mentoring programs. He also asked that Richmonders, who sent their children to private schools, to tell him what they were getting elsewhere that they could not receive from RPS. He said, “Our school administration can work toward creating a system that meets their needs” (Giampietro, 1997, p. 18). At the same time, RPS was receiving additional financial assistance from the federal government based on the March 13, 1997, Partnership to Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 1997. Under the Act, the federal government assisted states and communities by providing up to half the cost of interest on bonds or other financing mechanisms for schools construction, renovation, and modernization. Approximately $1 billion would go to states based on the existing Title I grant formula for disadvantaged children, and about half would go directly to 100 school districts. RPS was one of the
100 districts in the nation that met this criteria, thus they received $5,894,896 in additional funding to address the needs of the system. (School Board Minutes, 1997, p. 295).

*Improvement Obstacles*

Still, the community was concerned about the direction of RPS. At the November 3, 1997 school board meeting, community member Urchie Ellis urged the board to make its public schools more acceptable to middle-class families with children. He requested the board coordinate with city council for city planning concerns to reorganize boundaries of school attendance zones. He recommended the school board recognize schools are the major reason for people not choosing to live in the City of Richmond (School Board Minutes, 1997, p. 122). On May 4, 1998, the school system’s “Reorganization of the Title I Program” occurred to optimally serve the students of the division. It was announced that Title I funds would serve as many schools as feasible. Resources were equally distributed among the schools based on the economic condition of the children in each school’s community. Additional schools were afforded Title I services, while schools currently implementing a Title I program would continue to maintain high levels of quality (School Board Minutes, 1998, p. 241). The challenge of meeting the needs of students with a lower socio-economic status, coupled with the increasing call for higher levels of academic achievement, created a strenuous environment within RPS.

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, RPS continued to face challenges stemming from the past. After several years of varying initiatives, the district still strove
to achieve continuity while trying to change its negative public image. For instance, RPS set out to enhance the image of its schools and to engage the community as part of their vision for the next 5-10 years (School Board Minutes, 2000, p. 23). Superintendent Albert Williams and the Richmond Public School Board sought ways of working together to address issues such as mismanagement of money, high arrest rates, a rising truancy and dropout rate and low academic performance on the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments at almost all of Richmond’s schools. Additionally, the City of Richmond’s demographics stabilized, with a largely poor black population making up the majority of the school system by the year 2000. Richmond’s former School Board Chairman, Reverend Miles J. Jones gave the reason for these issues in an interview with the Richmond Times-Dispatch on October 15, 2000. He said, “Racism is a central element in the school system’s problems. You can't possibly understand public education in this region without understanding racism, regardless of the causes; the problems have to be confronted” (Intress, 2000, p. 1). Former Richmond Mayor and middle school Principal Roy West said,

Public education ought to be priority number one on the city’s list of needs. Richmond’s worst problem is its schools, and they have reached an abyss beyond description…. If I had children of school age, I wouldn’t send them to Richmond public schools (Kollatz, 2002, p. 53).

These two perspectives of former contributors (both of whom are African-Americans) to the development of RPS during and after cross-town busing help illustrate the socio-economic conditions of the district as of 2000. The issues defining the school system were deeply entrenched in a difficult and painful history of segregation and resegregation by race and class. Local journalist and interviewee “Mr. Jackson” summed up Richmond’s situation by saying:
There was a lack of continuity that made a bad situation worse. This abandonment of the system by the middle class, largely white, but some blacks, made for a more challenging and expensive student body to educate at a time when the tax base was shrinking and you had instability. Never mind that in the backdrop of this, we got the crack cocaine epidemic and triple-digit homicides during the 1980s and then into the early ‘1990s. So it was just not a happy time. Half the town was just collapsing around us. Retail-wise, the City of Richmond was having a lot of problems, and those city schools were also having a lot of problems (Jackson, 2008).

Former Richmond student and interviewee “Mr. Grant” added to Jackson’s summation:

“What we’re experiencing now is still an aftershock of those things that happened 30 and 40 years ago” (Grant, 2008). The insight provided by these informants depicts the challenging situation RPS was in due to disastrous conditions of the past.

Plaguing RPS, among other things, was its flawed spending and accounting practices. For instance, a school system auditor said, “The spending records of the district’s exceptional education department were so badly kept that it was impossible to determine how much was being spent on the program” (Foster, 2003, p. 2). The school board was determined in 2001 to cut operating costs after the findings of a financial report showed the system was spending an extra $25 million a year operating and staffing too many old buildings at less than capacity. Also, Patrick Henry and Bellevue Elementary Schools were both seen as obsolete and in need of renovation. School board member Mr. Higgins was convinced that it was time to downsize the number of schools in the district. Richmond was spending more per student than its suburban neighbors, Chesterfield, Henrico and Hanover. For instance, with 58 buildings, Richmond operated as many schools for its 26,000 students as Henrico did for its 39,000 students and Chesterfield for its 50,000 students. To help address this financial disparity, the school board began pondering the merger of Armstrong and Kennedy High Schools (Lazarus,
By 2003, the merger was set to happen; however, problems between the two communities stirred fear that students from the two school zones would engage in violent altercations if forced to attend the same school (Wermers, 2003).

In 2000, school violence was reported by the local media to be on the rise in RPS. However, as noted in Richmond Magazine: “Statistics are difficult to assess since figures such as ‘fighting’ are self-collected by school divisions and sent to the State Department of Education. And there is no clear delineation between what constitutes a fight and an assault” (Kollatz, 2002, p. 70). For instance, Richmond reported 2 assaults and 599 fights for the 1999-2000 school year, while the adjacent Counties of Chesterfield posted 310 assaults and 791 fights, and Henrico reported 310 assaults and 131 fights. Incidentally, both of these counties are predominantly white. Especially tarnishing to Richmond’s image were two violent incidents between students and teachers that were widely reported in the media (Kollatz, 2002). Two years later, according to the Richmond Police Department, there were 206 arrests at Richmond city high schools. The most common types of arrest were for disorderly conduct, assault and battery and threatening with death or injury (Wermers, 2003). Reports such as these continued to cast a negative light on the safety and security of RPS during the early years of the twenty-first century. Thirty-year veteran teacher of RPS, Mrs. Hortense Mitchell Liberti felt that the district was troubled, but not beyond hope. She said, “I simply get tired of the negative press. Bad things happen in County schools, but of course, it isn’t banner headlines in the morning paper” (Kollatz, 2002, p. 71).

Truancy was another problem that RPS was attempting to address. Truancy officers and the Cities in Schools program were struggling to bring down the percentage
of students with unexcused absences. During the 2000-01 school year, 29% of Richmond’s students had accumulated more than 10 unexcused absences, which was only down 1% from the prior year (Wermers and Redmon, 2002). Specifically, the truancy rate was 14% in the elementary grades, 39% in the middle school grades, and 56% in the high schools. The district’s overall attendance rate was about 93% in its elementary schools and about 87% for its secondary schools (Baugh, 2003). While battling truancy, efforts continued on improving student achievement through a variety of programs designed to reach accreditation standards.

*High-stakes testing.*

The Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, which were administered for the first time in the spring of 1998 as indicators of academic achievement in Virginia’s public schools, only intensified the matter. The Virginia Assessment System was created by the State Board of Education to measure student achievement. RPS created two complementary programs that included the Virginia Standards of Learning Assessment Program and the Virginia State Assessment Program. Both of these assessment programs provided parents, students, and teachers with information about student achievement. In compliance with state requirements, Richmond participated in both assessment programs. During the spring of 1998, Richmond students enrolled in grades 3, 5, 8, and in selected high school courses were administered the SOL’s. The SOL’s consisted of state-developed, criterion-referenced tests designed to measure student mastery of the academic content and skills specified in Virginia's Standards of Learning. In June of 1995, the Virginia Board of Education adopted the revised Standards of Learning in four
academic content areas: English, mathematics, science, and history/social science. They specified in clear terms the academic content and skills that Virginia public school students were expected to learn at each grade level. These Standards of Learning represented high expectations for students (School Board Minutes, 1999, p. 203). While RPS was preparing its schools for SOL testing, the superintendent worked on a two-year and twenty year plan for restructuring the district.

The decline of student enrollment in the fall of 2000 further exacerbated the issue. The student enrollment of RPS was down to 26,500; a 38% decrease from 1970. Superintendent Williams claimed the school system was meeting the challenge with new programs, standardizing schedules, content and teaching strategies. He said, "We have a transient student population, now [with curriculum continuity], if a child goes to a new school, the reading program will be the same. We don't have to waste days assessing the child and seeing where he or she fits in” (Intress, 2000, p. 2). Williams felt the improvement on 1999’s SOLs from 1998’s test scores demonstrated that the changes were working. Three schools reached the level of state accreditation in 1999 compared to zero in 1998 (Intress, 2000). However, student performance was low compared to where the state expected the students to be academically. Former student and interviewee “Mr. Grant” shared his reasoning for this subpar performance:

...in the mid-‘60s, this notion of disadvantage kinda came into the lexicon. And the notion that, they [black students] can’t quite perform up to that same level, they need some additional help. And I think, psychologically, that shifted—the feelings of self-efficacy on the part of students and maybe some expectations on the part of teachers in terms of what kind of level of performance they could get out of these students. And I think we were seeing the residue of that when [SOL] testing started (Grant, 2008).
During the 2000-01 school year, RPS sought input from the community on how to improve student achievement. The school board hired a Richmond-based architectural firm to conduct a survey and host community dialogs to find out what Richmond residents wanted out of their public school system. The survey results of about 250 people said that Richmond residents wanted strong neighborhood schools, but also the choice of open enrollment to send their children elsewhere in the city (Wermers, 2002). It was apparent that the issue of neighborhood schools and open enrollment was still lingering ten years after the internal marketing efforts subsided with the controversy over clustering students by race. Seemingly, the notion was poor black students were bringing down the success of neighborhood schools in Richmond. According to educational expert Beth Sattes:

> With the Richmond Public School system now 90 percent black and nearly 80 percent impoverished, the fact that family socio-economic status is related to school achievement doesn’t mean that rich [white] kids are smarter. It means that, in more affluent families [regardless of race], children are more likely to be exposed to experiences that stimulate intellectual development (Foster, 2003, p. 6).

Because RPS inevitably reflected the socio-economic conditions of the city’s majority population, it now seemed too many observers that the difficulties of improving academic achievement were greater than ever.

Magnifying the educational challenges of RPS was the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that was signed into law on January 8, 2002. This federal mandate required all public schools to administer a state-wide standardized test annually to all students. NCLB redefined the federal role in K-12 education to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students (School Board Minutes, 2002, p. 226). This
accountability measure was in addition to the state accreditation standards already set forth by Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. NCLB stated:

Schools, school divisions, and states are rated according to the progress toward the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This federal law requires states to set annual benchmarks for achievement in reading and mathematics leading to 100 percent proficiency by 2014. Schools, school divisions, and states that meet or exceed all annual benchmarks toward this goal are rated as having made adequate yearly progress (AYP). Schools, school divisions, states must test at least 95 percent of students overall, and 95 percent of students in each of the following subgroups: white, black, Hispanic, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and students identified as disadvantaged. Annual accountability ratings are based on achievement during the previous academic year or combined achievement from the three most recent years (NCLB, 2001, p. 4).

NCLB required that schools receiving Title I funding, based on high levels of students eligible for free and reduced lunch must make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on test scores. This meant that each year students in schools with high poverty rates must do better on standardized tests than the previous years by meeting set passing percentages or face sanctions. NCLB stated:

If a Title I school fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress, then it is put on a list of ‘failing schools’ published in the local paper, and parents are given the option to transfer to another school. If it does not meet AYP for a second year, then it must provide special tutoring for its economically disadvantaged students or possibly face further sanctions of being taken over by an outside agency (NCLB, 2001, p. 1).

During this time, William’s continued to battle with the school board over decisions of how to address district priorities (Weatherford, 2003). In January of 2002, Williams made an unexpected announcement. He stated, for personal reasons that he would be retiring early from his position. Williams felt that he had done all he could to help RPS during his five years as superintendent. When he left, he told the board: “You’ll either get one of two people to replace me—somebody who is about to get fired, or somebody
who is willing to be fired in six months” (Weatherford, 2003, p. 124). Williams was politically savvy and lasted the longest of any superintendent since the end of cross-town busing in 1986; however, he said, “I was tired of fighting with a squabbling, indecisive school board (Weatherford, 2003, p. 124). The search for Richmond’s seventh superintendent in 14 years began with hopes of finding someone who could effectively lead under challenging circumstances.

Conclusion

This chapter critically analyzed the redirection efforts made by RPS that followed its unsuccessful internal marketing approach of the early 1990’s. The high turnover rate of superintendents was examined from the end of cross-town busing in 1986 through unitary status in 2006. During this inconsistent period, RPS had seven different superintendents and attempted many different programs and initiatives for establishing consistency. Ongoing district challenges included a rapid turnover rate in district leadership between 1995 and 1997, during which time RPS had three superintendents in three years. The obstacles precluding RPS from making improvements were exacerbated by the Standards of Learning (SOL) state assessments.

This examination into the effort of RPS to find direction during ongoing challenges illustrated the complexities facing the district. Difficulties ranged from district misspending, school violence, high truancy and dropout rates, low student achievement and a high superintendent turnover rate in a mismanaged school district.
The next chapter looks to the future and examines the impact of SOL testing on RPS in conjunction with changing population patterns.
CHAPTER 7
Accountability during Adversity

Introduction

This chapter examines the continued socio-economic challenges facing Richmond Public Schools (RPS) at the beginning of the twenty first century, and analyzes the administrative interventions taken during high-stakes testing. First, census data pertaining to school enrollment, race, poverty status and median household income of Richmond’s settlement patterns (1980-2000) are examined. This graphical analysis is supported by interviewee testimony pertaining to Richmond’s metropolitan demographic shift, leaving RPS anxious of what the future would bring. Next, approaches taken by a new superintendent to address issues in 2002 as well as governmental intervention programs designed to improve Richmond’s schools are analyzed. Then, the impact of high-stakes testing on RPS through state and federal accountability measures is scrutinized. Finally, twenty years of unitary status of RPS is examined by utilizing 2006 Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment results and other socio-economic indicators.

Demographic Settlement Patterns

This section illustrates the demographic trends of the Richmond metropolitan area from 1980-2000, through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) census tract mapping. Census data pertaining to race, school enrollment, median household income and poverty levels in Richmond display the settlement patterns before and after the end of the cross-town busing in 1986. Evident by the white flight and declining tax base of the 1960’s
and 1970’s, the mapping data in this section illuminates the resegregation of Richmond and demographic shifts of the school system as of 1980.

To begin, Orfield said, “Desegregation plans tend to be more successful when they involve both cities and suburbs” (“White”, 1992, *preface section, para.1*). A number of city-suburban plans succeeded at desegregation in the United States, but courts ruled against such plans in Detroit, Houston, Atlanta and Richmond; Judge Robert R. Merhige’s proposal to consolidate the City of Richmond with Chesterfield and Henrico Counties in 1970 was Richmond’s attempt at metropolitan desegregation. Still, Virginia had the largest increases in the proportion of blacks attending predominantly white schools in the United States during the 1970’s; however, most of the whites fled the city schools during cross-town busing, leaving RPS predominately black and the city resegregated.

RPS went through drastic demographic changes during the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s. The outmigration of whites and middle-class blacks created an underclass in Richmond during cross-town busing (Wilson, 1980). The socio-economic divide between Richmond and the surrounding counties of Chesterfield and Henrico widened during cross-town busing and thereafter. Major demographic differences developed between RPS and neighboring school districts in Chesterfield and Henrico Counties. As a result of the developed underclass, a belief construed in metropolitan Richmond that the county schools were better than the city schools. “This is a falsehood,” says local politician and interviewee “Mr. Thompson:” “The media plays a role in the reputation and the perception that the schools in the county are superior to the city” (Thompson, 2008). According to a 1994 study conducted by Harvard University of predominately
black school districts: “No evidence whatsoever” was found that the extra money given to the all black school systems has resulted in better educations for their students (Williams, 1993, p. B1). The study highlighted that $7,028 was provided per pupil for Richmond students during the 1991-92 school year, which was the sixth highest rate in the state and $3,000 more than Chesterfield. The study pointed out that in 1993 only 37% of Richmond’s sixth graders fully passed the Virginia Literacy Passport Exam. In Henrico, Chesterfield and Hanover Counties, the pass rates were 68, 80 and 82 percent. School board member and interviewee “Mr. Higgins” commented on the past comparisons of Richmond’s schools to County schools by saying:

   The poverty issue is the main reason why you got urban school systems like Richmond struggling with the academic program and why it is so unbelievably unfair to compare the progress of kids in Richmond to the progress of kids in other school systems like Chesterfield (Higgins, 2008).

This issue points to the fact that RPS was dealing with socio-economic obstacles, stemming from cross-town busing thus, hindering its students’ academic achievement (Williams, 1993).

For example, Lauren Watkins, a sophomore at John Marshall High School in Richmond, had no white teachers or classmates in 1994. The monochromatic classrooms were nothing different from what her grandmother saw 60 years ago. Lauren believed that it was not socially healthy to be in a predominantly black school in an increasingly diverse world. She said, “It would help tremendously to come in contact with different races and different cultures of people because America is not all black and America is not all white” (Williams, 1993, p. B1).

To illustrate this point, the 2000 United States Census data of Richmond’s school enrollment by census tract area of the city for both white and black students is mapped in
figure 1 below. The top map shows the black student enrollment, and the bottom depicts the white enrollment numbers of the public and private school students living in Richmond as of 2000. Each map has a legend that contains five shades of a color representing five different ranges of total number of students enrolled in school per tract area. Dots are scattered across each map representing the city population density for each race. Also on both maps are symbols representing the location of the public and private schools in the city of Richmond.
(Created from U.S. Census data, 2000)
Figure 1 shows the status of Richmond’s school enrollment numbers for the year 2000, by demonstrating the concentration of the black and white population throughout the city, as well as the racially dominated areas of the city’s student enrollment. For instance, much of the black population is spread throughout the city, whereas the white population is condensed in central to western areas of Richmond; closer to more of the city’s private schools. However, one census tract of Richmond has less than 75 black people living in it (West End) as evident by the absence of a dot in this area. The school enrollment of black students living in the city is predominantly on the South Side of Richmond, as well as the North Side with very few census tracts representing less than 300 white students. The white student enrollment data illustrates the lack of white students living in much of the city other than the West End. Most of the North Side is abandon of white school-aged children. Once again, with RPS being 91% black and 8% white in 2000, it is clear that the vast majority of white students living in the city were attending private schools. Former RPS administrator and interviewee “Mr. Wright” recalls discussions he had with people in the community about the before mentioned demographics of Richmond. He said,

And it used to offend me when people at my church or people that I would know who live in the counties would make stereotypical statements about the schools where I worked, not knowing any of the kids or the lives that they were living. So, it sort of made you a little defensive. You would try to explain, but a lot of times you were talking to people who didn’t care. It wasn’t their problem (Wright, 2008).

The fact that RPS was majority black and neighbored predominately white school districts such as Chesterfield and Henrico, made it challenging for people working in the city’s schools to not be affected by the negative perceptions of outsiders.
Next, figure 2 exhibits the census tract percentage changes of Richmond’s overall black population from 1980 through 2000. Census data from 1980, 1990 and 2000 is depicted in the following three maps’ census tract areas. The legend contains percentages of black population starting at under 10% and going up to over 55%. Each census tract is shaded differently to represent these population percentages.

Figure 2:
Figure 2 is a visual representation of the changing racial demographics before and after cross-town busing ended in RPS. The top map shows the black population percentages per census tract during 1980; it is noticeable that fewer of the census tracts have over 55% of a black population compared to 1990 census data. The census tract
areas increase slightly by 2000 as well. Richmond resident and interviewee “Mr. Morgan” provided insight on the changing population of Richmond after the attempt to desegregate the schools. He said,

So the population radically changed during those several decades, and the numbers are just amazing. You know, so it really was the aftermath. The consequences of desegregation, and I think you can see that in all of the communities. From the 80s we probably begin to see that the black middle class lives in the suburbs too. The great cradle of entrepreneurship and the consequence of desegregation (Morgan, 2008).

It is interesting to note that the changes in census data from 1980 to 1990 are greater than the changes in data from 1990 to 2000. It is apparent that the population patterns for both blacks and whites stabilized during the 1990’s, after the drastic demographic shifts of the school desegregation era. In turn, the predominately black study body in the city schools was solidified. This demographic settlement occurred during the decade after cross-town busing ended. Former school administrator and interviewee “Mrs. Lee” remembers questions she was asked about the students with whom she worked with in the 1990’s. People would ask her: “You work with all of those poor children who must have awful behavior problems? Aren’t they all black” (Lee, 2008)? Lee recalls feeling bothered by these perceptions, yet optimistic for the future of all her students, black and white.

Former Richmond administrator and interviewee “Mr. Miller” heard often in the 1980’s and 1990’s that people felt the schools had deteriorated because they were all black (Miller, 2008).

Figure 3 presents the poverty status of white persons in Richmond from 1980 through 2000. The census data is depicted in three maps showing shaded census tract areas representing ranges of white persons at or below the poverty line. Dots are also
scattered throughout the maps to show the population density of the white population in the city during those twenty years.

Figure 3:
Figure 3 demonstrates a significant change in the number of white people at or below the poverty line from 1980 through 2000. It is clear that in 1980, there were census tracts in Richmond comprised of white people living in poverty. Those areas were mostly on the South Side; however, some North Side areas were highly concentrated with poverty-stricken white people. The census tract areas of the city with over 1,500 white people at or below the poverty line actually increased between 1980 and 1990; a few areas on the South Side enlarged their numbers of white people living in poverty. However, by 2000, the white people living in poverty within the city limits of Richmond decreased sharply. Also, as evident by the bottom map’s concentration of dots and darker shaded tracts in the West End, most affluent white people had migrated to neighborhoods in this area of the city during the 1990’s. Interviewee “Mr. Wright” saw living decisions made by white families first hand as a former school administrator in Richmond. He said,
In the North Side of the city, there were affordable homes and so, at the elementary schools, you had larger percentages of white students. But as soon as kids approached puberty and their parents were getting concerned about their social relationships, that’s when there was a mass exodus. I think for some people, they had a fear of the [inter-racial] dating issue. For others, it was more a concern that their white children would be exposed to a lot of profanity or sexual innuendos or talk about drug use. So, it wasn’t purely race. I think in the ‘70s, we’re talking purely race. In the ‘80s, we’re talking socioeconomic and value-based concerns (Wright, 2008).

Further speculation for the extreme decline of white people living below poverty includes the influx of affluent whites to the city as part of gentrification, and the exodus of white people in poverty to the nearby counties of Chesterfield and Henrico.

Figure 4 presents the poverty status of black persons in Richmond from 1980 through 2000. The census data is depicted in three maps just as figure 3 demonstrated the shaded census tract areas representing ranges of persons at or below the poverty line; however, figure 4’s maps provide the poverty status data for black people. Dots are also scattered throughout figure 4’s maps to show the population density of blacks in the city between 1980 and 2000.
Figure 4:

Poverty Status of Black Persons in Richmond Virginia 1990 Census

Block Population

1 Dot = 10

Persons At or Below Poverty Line

- Under 275 Persons
- 275 - 550 Persons
- 550 - 675 Persons
- 675 - 1000 Persons
- Over 1000 Persons

Poverty Status of Black Persons in Richmond Virginia 1990 Census

Block Population

1 Dot = 10

POVERTY RATIO

- Under 275 Persons
- 275 - 550 Persons
- 550 - 675 Persons
- 675 - 1000 Persons
- Over 1000 Persons
Figure 4 shows a slight flux in the poverty status of black people living in Richmond between 1980 and 2000. There are some shifts in the concentration of census tracts containing high numbers of black people living at or below the poverty line in 1990; however, no significant changes are detected over this twenty-year period, unlike the shifts noticed in figure 3 for white people. Former central office administrator and interviewee “Ms. Newman” said of the difference:

The poor kids got the poorest school experience. So even though they were supposedly integrated, there was a great disparity in the experiences of those going to the different schools (Newman, 2008).

The conclusion drawn by this comparison is that poverty stricken black people living in the city after school desegregation were not only trapped in Richmond, as evident by figure 4’s maps, but also remained in poverty over time. Former school administrator and interviewee “Mr. Bean” worked with many families who lived in poverty. He said,
Poverty is a bitch; you see I had kids whose parents left in the morning before they got up and probably came home at night after they’ve gotten home from school, so they hardly didn’t see their parents at all except for a short time at night (Bean, 2008).

Bean highlights how the lack of parental involvement impacts the academic achievement levels of students living in poverty. Interviewee “Higgins” felt there needed to be more understanding by educators in the 1980’s and 1990’s that the students were in need of assistance because they were in poverty not because they were black (Higgins, 2008). It is also important to note that many of RPS employees who were black and living above the poverty line where not residing in the city. According to Higgins:

I came to realize that the majority of our [black] employees lived in the counties or sent their kids to the private schools…. As the middle-class started leaving, the schools became filled with poorer and poorer children, with the exception of some pockets [of the city] (Higgins, 2008).

The affluent pockets of the city were located mainly in areas of Richmond where magnet programs or model elementary schools were located, which were serving the most affluent and typically white students, who were attending their neighborhood schools. Former RPS student and interviewee “Mr.Grant” had the following perspective:

I think we do have a confounding of race and class that probably exacerbated some of the issues, so it created these pockets of poverty in the inner city that certainly relates to race because most of them are African American, but it’s also a class issue (Grant, 2008).

Race and class both played a role in the decision making process of where people would live and send their children to school. Resegregation by race and class was having a profound impact on Richmond and the surrounding region. Richmond School board member Carol Wolf stated:
Society is multi-racial, but schools are still segregated. The economic future of Richmond is at risk. The property tax base of the city is directly linked to the quality of the education system. The failure of as a region to address and diffuse the concentration of poverty in just a few neighborhoods doesn’t only hurt Richmond, but it hurts the competitiveness of the whole region (School Board Minutes, 2003, p. 416).

The focus of figure 5 is on median household income of blacks in Richmond.

Figure 5 shows the median household income of the black population for the years 1990 and 2000. Each map has shaded census tract areas that correspond to a value range for median household income. In addition, each map has dots scattered throughout pinpointing the concentration of the black population in the city.

Figure 5:
Figure 5 first illustrates high concentration areas of poor black people living in certain sections of the city after the end of cross-town busing. Even though the median household income for several census tract areas improved, the concentration of the poorer black population intensified in a few sections by 2000. One census tract area in the West End of Richmond, that is especially obvious, went from a median household income of over $80,000 in 1990 to under $14,000 in 2000. This is a clear influx of white families to the West End Mary Munford Elementary School neighborhood community, and an outmigration of blacks, as a result of a booming housing market in a predominately white safe haven section of Richmond. White parents moving out of Richmond after their children completed elementary school was a common practice throughout the city in the 1990’s that cannot be seen in figure 5. However, noticeable from the maps in figure 5 is the movement of more affluent black families towards the far West End and South Side of Richmond. This dynamic left other areas of the city with high concentration rates of
poverty stricken black families, and neighborhoods representing low median household incomes. The low median household income for the black population of Richmond combined with the poverty status levels of a de-escalating white populated school system defined the socio-economic status of RPS as of 2000. According to the “State of the City” report, racial healing and dialog between interest groups was needed to address regional issues such as poverty (School Board Minutes, 2003, p. 249).

*Administrative Interventions*

In August of 2002, Deborah Jewell-Sherman officially became the seventh superintendent of RPS since cross-town busing ended in 1986. Highlighted in Jewell-Sherman’s three-year plan was her mission to change Richmond’s educational culture (School Board Minutes, 2002, p. 66-7). She set out to improve Standards of Learning (SOL) scores, the district’s management style and transportation policies (Pittman, 2002). Jewell-Sherman’s three and one half year contract stated that her job was tied to the performance of schoolchildren on SOL tests. Her contract specified by June of 2003, when the first round of 2002-03 SOL results are released, at least 20 of the city’s 55 public schools must be fully accredited, which was double the 2002 rate. Also, at least 16 of the city’s 31 elementary schools were expected to have pass rates of 70% or higher on third grade SOL tests for reading. Her contract also stated that no more than 12 schools could be accredited with warning (Weatherford, 2003).

Jewell-Sherman set out to meet this challenge by creating a culture of continuous commitment to student success in Richmond. Her vision of an excuse free education and
high expectations for all students was embraced by the district. Associate Superintendent Yvonne W. Brandon said, “A commitment was made by the district to show that the students would excel not in spite of whom they were or where they lived, but because of who we are” (Brandon, 2007, p. 2). Jewell-Sherman met her contract challenge in 2002-03 when RPS had 23 schools fully accredited; however, preliminary scores listed only 11 schools as accredited before the school system adjusted its numbers to include test retakes (School Board Minutes, 2003, p. 189). Also, 9% of the Richmond public school students eligible to take the 2003 SOLs did not take them in 2002-03. Still, Jewell-Sherman met her contract goal. School Board Vice-Chair Stephen Johnson said, “I don’t know how [Jewell-Sherman] went from 11 [accredited schools] to 23. I’m going to ask them to rerun those numbers…. I think they’re playing games” (Foster, 2003, p. 6). Contrary to Johnson’s feelings, school board member Charles Nance attributed the turnaround to Jewell-Sherman’s leadership. He said, “Most outspoken critics … should now acknowledge the leadership of Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman, who set high standards for Richmond children, and who refused to accept any excuses for failure” (Foster, 2003, p. 6). Jewell-Sherman set out to build on these improvements and to prepare the district for meeting the performance standards of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. In 2003, she acquired grant funding from the United States Department of Education (USDOE) to have The Council of the Great City Schools strategically investigate the effectiveness of RPS.
New Direction

The Council of the Great City Schools report was entitled: “Charting a New Course for the Richmond Public Schools,” and it set out to review the district’s efforts of improving student performance and to propose ways to accelerate it (School Board Minutes, 2004, pp. 194-196). The Council also reviewed the district’s federal programs to ensure they were aligned with NCLB and to assess the district’s special education operations. The main findings of the report were:

RPS needs to change some bad habits. The school board has been taken to fighting the superintendent rather than battling the forces of illiteracy. The biggest challenge facing RPS involves the system’s ability to pull together and raise student achievement. The school district has a highly fractured program to boost student performance, the legacy of too many initiatives piled on top of one another over too many years. The district has, until recently, lost its focus. Its efforts have become incoherent and unintelligible; its moorings have loosened, and its unity of purpose has splintered…. In short, the Richmond school district has had trouble hitting its mark over the years because so many people in the system are aiming in different directions (Baugh, 2003, p. 12).

The synopsis of the problems preventing RPS from achieving greater success provided credible evidence for systematic changes to occur within the district. The Council provided key recommendations for the system’s curriculum and instruction, federal, and special education programs. They were:

A. Curriculum and Instruction
   1. Develop a coherent vision for what it wants to achieve.
   2. Set measurable goals for academic improvement.
   3. Establish a new accountability system for attaining academic goals.
   4. Standardize district wide instructional strategies and curriculum.
   5. Provide district wide professional development on the implementation of the new curriculum.
   6. Ensure that reforms are implemented at the classroom level.
   7. Use data to monitor progress and decide on instructional interventions.
8. Incorporate literacy reforms into the preschool program and extend them through the high schools, grade-by-grade.
9. Focus on the district’s lowest performing schools.

B. Title I and Other Federal Programs
1. Mesh NCLB’s adequate yearly progress goals with those proposed for the district and individual schools.
2. Give principals greater latitude in the expenditure of Title I funds, but target their use around a small set of district instructional priorities.
3. Continue to blend the district’s open enrollment program with NCLB’s choice requirements.
4. Require that supplemental service providers align their programs with the district’s new reading and math initiatives.
5. Redeploy the district’s Title I parent set-aside funds to school-based activities.
6. Link the district’s tuition reimbursement program to NCLB’s highly qualified teacher requirements.
7. Overhaul the school-by-school Title I allocation system to give it more uniformity and fairness.
8. Use a grade span allocation system to target Title I funds on elementary and middle schools where they can be more effective.

C. Special Education
1. Explicitly address special education students in the district’s new strategy for improving student achievement district wide.
2. Establish clear and objective district wide criteria for placing students in special education that rely less on subjective judgments.
3. Continue to encourage placement of students in the least restrictive environment and collect better data, consistent with federal requirements, on how this is being done.
4. Sharpen the district’s professional development to include strategies to help both general and special education teachers handle all identified disabilities and behaviors.
5. Reorganize the district’s Exceptional Education department.
6. Place greater focus on more instructional strategies for special education and relatively less focus on compliance.
7. Boost school-level capacity to conduct manifestation determinations.

The advice from the Council of the Great City Schools impacted RPS in designing meaningful reform policy. Board member Malone reacted to the recommendations by
stating: “Our alignment is questionable, we aren’t focusing on any real reform; we’re just focused on the SOLs” (Wermers, 2004, p. A9). Conclusions from the Council of the Great City School’s report on RPS efforts of improvement stated:

The Richmond Public School system made some important strides over the last year or so. Still, the district is clearly working under a number of socio-economic constraints. At the same time, the Richmond Public School system has not made the situation much better for itself. The School Board has been marked by a fair amount of internal squabbling. The district has not provided the level of instructional direction and support for its schools. The district’s instructional programs have become incoherent. The district’s staff members are not always well-versed on the latest reading and math research or prepared to implement it. The fact that the district had no strategic plan for improving student achievement is emblematic of the challenges that Richmond faces. The lack of direction undercuts the district’s ability to accelerate student performance citywide (Baugh, 2003, pp. 86-87).

Highlighted in the report were successful intervention programs designed to improve student achievement such as programs at Chimborazo and Blackwell Elementary Schools involvement of tutors, in-school remediation, Saturday school, community volunteers, and extended day programs. The most notable program implemented across RPS was the Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) program developed by the Governor’s office (Baugh, 2003, p. 41). Twenty-four schools in the city of Richmond were utilizing the PASS program. For example, Whitcomb Court Elementary turnaround in 2004 was attributed to the PASS Initiative. Whitcomb was partnered up with a better performing school to learn what was working well there. A coach was then assigned to Whitcomb from the state to help faculty and administrators focus their attention on academic priorities (Kastner, 2004).

Other successful interventions included Woodville Elementary’s boosting of their SOL scores through a non-faith based mentoring program. Woodville’s comprehensive
approach included the formation of a special alternative classroom for disruptive students, bringing parents in as volunteers, offering educational opportunities for teachers and parents and utilizing the school social worker. Also, the Boys to Men Program at Patrick Henry Elementary School was a successful intervention initiative that created an alternative classroom for boys who were often classified as disadvantaged and not expected to achieve academically (Goodrich, 2003). In addition, students from Huguenot High School and James River High School students in Chesterfield County were seeking ways to bridge the cultural divide through a special forum on race relations and cultural diversity. According to a 2003 publication of The Parents’ Exchange, approximately 200 students discussed community stereotyping, segregation and affirmative action at a community forum to improve race relations in metropolitan Richmond (Parent Exchange, 2003). Another bright spot occurring in RPS included George Wythe High School of the Arts theater group’s 2002 selection as United States representatives at the Edinburgh Theatre Fringe Festival in Scotland. Unfortunately, reported in Richmond Magazine, the school system had not done a thing at all to publicize the story to the community (Kollatz, 2002). Still, the PASS program developed by the Governor’s office to intervene in 24 of Richmond’s public schools was finding the most success in the district through its disbursement of funds for instructional purposes (Baugh, 2003).

State Government Interventions

Further intervention from Governor Mark Warner occurred in September 2003 when he announced a School Efficiency Review for three school divisions in Virginia as part of his larger “Education for a Lifetime” initiative. RPS was one of three school
divisions selected. The goal of the review was to identify administrative savings to be gained through best practices in organization, service delivery, human resources, facilities, finance, transportation, technology management, and other non-instructional expenditures. This would allow divisions, such as Richmond, to put administrative savings back into the classroom. The School Efficiency Review suggested that a net savings of more than $2,139,292 annually or 4.5% of the 2003-04 non-personal services budget of $46,772,894 million could be had if RPS fully implemented their recommendations. To put the amount in perspective, the report stated: “The potential savings is equivalent to the starting salaries of 47 new teachers (with benefits)” (Warner, 2004, p. 3). Also, RPS was seemingly spending an inordinate amount of funding on transportation. The review claimed in 2001-02, RPS spent $475.20 per pupil for transportation (Warner, 2004).

To assist with the efficiency of RPS and put more money into the classrooms for instruction, 27 recommendations from the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Secretary of Finance were provided in the review. These recommendations addressed a wide range of district misspending that could have been directed at classroom instruction. Regardless, the Governor’s Efficiency Review provided RPS a guide for creating a more economically sound finance department. Commendations for RPS in the review included an adopted teacher recruitment strategy that actively used the talents and resources of the local business, banking, and commerce communities. By attracting the best candidates and matching them with the most appropriate school and principal, RPS dramatically reduced its first year teacher turnover rate from 25% to less than 4% between 1997 and 2003 (Warner, 2004, pp. 96-111). Most importantly, under Superintendent Jewell-
Sherman, the district made great strides toward achieving full accreditation for all its schools. The review stated: “This progress should be noted and celebrated. RPS faces many obstacles and challenges that other divisions in the area do not face— but the division is moving forward despite those challenges and not using them as an excuse for failure” (Warner, 2004, p. 112). The review also commended RPS for the steady decline in its dropout rate. In 1996-97 the RPS dropout rate was 6.5%, almost double the statewide rate of 3.5%. The Richmond rate fell steadily, year by year since then. The rate for 2001-02 was 2.7% compared to the state rate of 2.0% (Warner, 2004).

These interventions were aiming to address the spectrum of issues that were impacting the district. However, the major concern affecting the entire district was the spending costs for programs like the Community Education Partnership (CEP) program. This program was designed to operate as an alternative program for students with disciplinary or academic problems. Members of the Richmond Public School Board were confused as to why Jewell-Sherman proposed CEP, which cost $5.7 million more to fund than their already established alternative programs: Educare, Bridge and Richmond Accelerated Program (RAP) (Goodrich, 2004). Regardless, the private company was hired with criticism over Jewell-Sherman’s reasoning for proposing the new intervention to conquer violence, truancy and poor performers in RPS (Roop, 2004).

By 2005, battles within the Richmond Public School Board lessened after management recommendations were provided by the Council for Great City Schools and the Commonwealth of Virginia. With the help of off-site retreat meetings between school board members and school system administrators, trust began to build and teamwork ensued (Foster, 2005). School board member Reginald Malone said, “There
has been a transformation in Dr. Jewell-Sherman’s willingness to work with everyone, and I think that’s a testament to her as well as School Board Chairman Steve Johnson” (Foster, 2005, p. 20). For instance, Whitcomb Court and Patrick Henry closing in 2005 were unanimously decided by the Board 9-0 with Jewell-Sherman fully supporting the decision (Kastner, 2005). Efforts by Jewell-Sherman and the Richmond Public School Board to work together continued during the high-stakes testing era. The decisions made by Jewell-Sherman and the school board through 2006 and their impact on the students are looked at more closely in the next section.

**Student Performance**

Richmond was held accountable by state SOL assessments and the federal government’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The socio-economic conditions of Richmond’s public school children developed a pressure-packed situation for the system. The district’s goal was to ensure that the best educational opportunities were being provided for its children beyond the SOLs. As of 2005, Jewell-Sherman was pleased with the recent progress made in working with the school board to focus on student achievement versus internal fighting. Based on the 2003 Council of the Great City Schools report, the Virginia Department of Education required the Richmond Public School Board to sign a “Memorandum of Understanding” for submitting a plan to the state to improve faulty leadership and other inadequacies in the system. The agreement with the state was set to last through December 31, 2006, and if RPS did not live up to its end of the deal, a court order could compel it to do so (Kastner, 2005). Jewell Sherman stated:
I am very pleased and proud to report that our school board has embraced [a cohesive] direction to the extent that they have signed a memorandum of understanding with our State Board of Education to say what specific things we are willing to hold ourselves accountable for (Casserly, 2005, p. 8).

With the actions of the board and superintendent demonstrating a unified management system, the SOLs presented an opportunity for RPS to demonstrate academic improvements in a district that was still perceived by many as substandard.

**Strategic District Interventions**

Under the adopted Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, students had to pass some of the SOL tests to earn a high school diploma. Beginning with the graduating class of 2004, students had to earn verified credits to qualify for a Standard or Advanced Studies diploma. A student earned a verified credit by passing the course and the end-of-course SOL test for that subject. Six verified credits were required for a Standard diploma; nine verified credits were required for an Advanced Studies diploma. At all appropriate grade levels, schools were required to include results from the SOL tests as a part of a set of multiple criteria in making the promotion and retention decisions for individual students (School Board Minutes, 1999, p. 212). In 2001-02, RPS reported graduating 1,201 students (647 standard high school diplomas; 383 advanced studies diplomas; 27 special diplomas; 47 certificates of completion; 88 GED certificates; and nine special certificates). The percentage of students earning an advanced studies diploma decreased from 50% in 1997-98 to 32% in 2001-02 (Baugh, 2003, p. 14). The need for academic improvements grew as graduation and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmark increased in the years to come.
With RPS struggling to address graduation rates, the Commonwealth of Virginia set its NCLB proficiency bars for the 2003-04 school year at 61% for all grade levels in reading and 59% in math. Minimum subgroup size was set at 50 students. The district had approximately 43 Title I schools, all but five of which were school wide. Data from the 2002-03 state testing indicated that Richmond had approximately 18 schools in stages I or II of school improvement under NCLB. Three schools were in school improvement (level I), meaning they were required to provide choice under NCLB. Fifteen other schools were in school improvement (level II), meaning they were required to offer choice and supplemental services (Baugh, 2003, p. 14).

The continued efforts of Jewell-Sherman and the Richmond Public School Board working together began to pay off over the next several years. On January 31, 2004, RPS embraced its new vision statement:

RPS will become the ‘Capital Choice’ for families in Richmond City and a nationally recognized ‘Flagship’ model of urban education as indicated by our commitment to excellence, high student outcomes and continuous progress in meeting state and national educational goals (School Board Minutes, 2004, p. 219).

RPS tirelessly worked to come out from under the federal sanctions they were given due to past low performance. Utilizing “Charting the Course,” and embracing Jim Collin’s work from Good to Great, applied business principles to the district resulting in improved student achievement. Former school board member and interviewee “Mr. Higgins” said, “We got in a situation that was very difficult to turn around, but…we saw some progress going on, which was very encouraging” (Higgins, 2008). Consequently, RPS was featured in a study entitled, “Beating the Odds,” released in 2005 by the Council of the Great City Schools. The study showed that in the past three years, the percent of
schools in Richmond reaching full accreditation increased from 18% in 2002 to 76% in 2005, an average annual improvement rate of 29%. Over two years, the rate of improvement in the percent of Richmond's schools reaching full accreditation, which means the students were meeting the benchmarks in reading, English, math, science and social science, was 58%. Richmond's percent of improvement over the two-year period was more than twice the percent of improvement for the state as a whole. During an interview about the report Dr. Jewell-Sherman stated:

We embraced the notion that failure, for us, was not an option. As a team, we started ‘Charting the Course.’ It's a course of action that entailed central office staff going into every school and sitting down with school staff and reviewing the data and disaggregating it along the lines of No Child Left Behind. (Casserly, 2005, pp. 2-4).

After Richmond’s SOL improvements, Fairfax County began sending its administrators and teachers to Richmond to find out how to close the achievement gap between subgroups. Fairfax wanted to replicate what Richmond was doing to propel all of their students, of all nationalities, ethnicities and abilities from good to great. RPS became very scientific and thoughtful about what was being teaching, how they taught it and how to intervene where necessary. Jewell-Sherman said, "The goal was to make sure that every student is most adequately prepared, not only for those assessments, but for future learning opportunities both in high school and after high school" (Casserly, 2005, p. 6). Former Richmond school administrator and interviewee “Mrs. Lee” said, “I do believe that under Deborah Jewell-Sherman there has been a tremendous amount of growth” (Lee, 2008). The growth of RPS is measured in many ways ranging from management to student performance. The rise in state accreditation levels and federal adequate yearly progress attainments are examples demonstrating the system's progress.
Measuring Growth

By 2006, state accredited schools in Richmond rose to 44 (88%) from 23 (44%) in 2003. Schools achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Richmond increased to 41 schools (82%) in 2006 compared to only 12 schools (23%) in 2003. “Higgins” saw high stakes testing as an excellent opportunity for Richmond to improve its teacher quality.

He said:

I believe that the SOLs and No Child Left Behind really were tailor-made for the school systems like Richmond… [prior to the SOLs] a number of the teachers felt that, if a child came from the projects and didn’t have a daddy, came in not knowing the alphabet, not knowing colors, not knowing anything, that those kids—you just have to babysit them. So, when the SOLs came along and we basically said, that our kids were expected to pass the same test that kids in Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico had to pass; there was really a stellar change. And it really took hold when we started having schools that were 95% African-American or 85% free and reduced lunch becoming accredited. So, a lot of stuff simultaneously kind of happened (Higgins, 2008).

The accountability aspects of NCLB focused on subgroups for English and mathematics. NCLB’s mandate forced districts to look at the specific subgroups to ensure that students representing those categories were achieving AYP on state tests. Table 8 illustrates the achievement levels of RPS compared with the state averages by AYP subgroups according to 2005-06 SOL English testing data.
Table 8
Percentage of Students Passing 2005-06 SOL Assessments (AYP Subgroups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(English Performance)</th>
<th>Richmond</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Identified as Disadvantaged</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficient Students</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Virginia Department of Education Website, 2009, p. 4)

Despite the improved performance of RPS students, the division did not make AYP for the 2005-06 school year. The only subgroup that missed the benchmark was limited English proficiency scores. As a result the district was assessed as not making adequate yearly progress in 2005-06. However, all other subgroup benchmarks were met including those for math. Table 9 lists the math achievement levels of RPS compared with the state averages by AYP subgroups for the 2005-06 school year.
Table 9

Percentage of Students Passing 2005-06 SOL Assessments (AYP Subgroups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Mathematics Performance)</th>
<th>Richmond</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Identified as Disadvantaged</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficient Students</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Virginia Department of Education Website, 2009, p. 4)

As Table 9 illustrates, RPS met all AYP requirements for math in 2006. Results indicated there was room for improvement. However, Richmond scored above the state averages in four of the nine-subgroup categories. RPS did not shy away from the challenges set forth by NCLB and worked diligently to concentrate its effort on instruction for future state assessment opportunities (Brandon, 2007).

**Looming Concerns**

In 2005, controversy over the legitimacy of the SOL results at Oak Grove Elementary School was reported in the midst of these improvements. Reports said that educators at Oak Grove improperly changed answers before being submitted to the state for scoring. State officials found changes on 141 different tests from Oak Grove due to Principal Tommye R. Finely allowing teachers to transfer student answers from test booklets to answer sheets (Lazarus, 2005). Also, as the district was improving its overall
percentages of schools making AYP, Chandler Middle School had failed to make the mark on their English SOL tests for the sixth straight year in 2006. This caused the federal government to intervene, forcing the school to restructure. Chandler had already been required to offer special services like tutoring and allowed students the option of transferring to a better performing school. Restructuring of the school was a last-ditch effort before being shut down, taken over by the state or becoming a charter school under the management of a private organization (Kastner, 2006).

Truancy was another issue still afflicting RPS during improvements in SOL scores. In 2005, Mayor L. Douglas Wilder developed a program to address truancy in Richmond. He presented his plan to the school board that included:

- Bringing parents in for conference when their children had three unexcused absences.
- Setting up a hot line to report truancy.
- Launching citywide truancy sweeps; and
- An intensive counseling and enforcement program in three neighborhoods with high truancy and crime rates (Ress and Kastner, 2005, p. 1).

Mayor Wilder’s plan was not well received by the Richmond Public School Board including Superintendent Jewell-Sherman because the school system had already implemented a program to combat truancy. The school district received a $695,000 grant from the state in 2005 to address the truancy issue. As a result, truancy rates had decreased in Richmond from 22% in 2003-04 to 12% in 2005-06 as a result (RPS, 2008). Dropout rates were also declining in RPS. As of 2005-06 the dropout rate was down to 2.46% from 15.27% in 2003-04. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Richmond Public School Board and Mayor Wilder was negative, as evident by the watchdog panel he created for RPS in 2005 (Paris, 2008). Additionally, the relationship between the
Mayor Wilder and the Richmond Public School Board caused strife in the community. Discussion of changing constitutional authority to appoint the superintendent by the mayor, and to move central administration out of City Hall damaged public opinion of RPS (School Board Minutes, 2005, p. 18, 759).

Although negative public opinions about RPS remained, the leaders of the district continued to work toward addressing the socio-economic issues of the city. Regarding this pursuit, Richmond public school’s central office administrator and interviewee “Mr. Smith” said,

I think Richmond has risen to the standards and actually is willing to exceed, to go beyond the schools and into the community. I really believe that—I see that in all of the tasks, all of the initiatives, all of the plans that have been implemented (Smith, 2008).

RPS improved student achievement by developing, implementing and continuously evaluating a rigorous and cohesive curriculum. Academic success on SOL assessments helped foster the strategic gathering of information to improve instructional decisions (School Board Minutes, 2007, pp. 1-5). Still, RPS remained racial polarized evident by ethnic statistics for the 2005-06 school year. The student population, as listed in Table 10 below, is a result of the history leading up to 2006.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Totals</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21,990</td>
<td>1,732</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>167</td>
<td></td>
<td>24,726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent

|       | 88.93 | 7.0   | 3.38     | 0.67  | 100.00|

(Adapted from Richmond Public Schools Website, 2008)

In addition to the ethnic data of Table 10, the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch at the time of this study was 74.4% of the approximately 25,000 students
attending RPS. By 2006, RPS developed into a stable operating system with many students coming from unstable environments. Socio-economic conditions of the city were impacting the schools despite the infrastructure development and regentrification efforts in various pockets of the city. Yet, RPS remained socially, economically and racially segregated in 2006.

Conclusion

The continued challenges facing RPS at the beginning of the twenty-first century were highlighted to provide a closer look at the issues of most concern to the district. Additionally, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) census data pertaining to school enrollment, race, poverty status and median household income of Richmond’s settlement patterns from 1980 through 2000 were mapped demonstrating migration patterns of white and blacks. The development of small sections occupied by affluent whites and vast areas of poor blacks living throughout Richmond illustrated cross-town busing’s impact on Richmond’s settlement patterns in the 1980’s and 1990’s. The census tract maps were supported by personal accounts pertaining to Richmond’s demographic shifts of the late twentieth century.

The strategic approach taken by Superintendent Jewell-Sherman was analyzed through outside agency investigations and governmental intervention programs designed to improve the school system. In addition, strategic interventions by the district to address looming concerns were scrutinized. The impact of high-stakes testing on RPS was also examined through the improvement on SOL scores during a period in which
socio-economic challenges persisted in the city. The demographics of RPS twenty years after cross-town busing ended were listed for interpretations in the concluding chapter of this study regarding unitary status in RPS (1986-2006).
CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to critically analyze post-court mandated school desegregation in Richmond Public Schools (RPS) after Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr.’s decision in Bradley v. Board (1986) ended cross-town busing declaring the system unitary, meaning it was no longer operating as a dual school system for blacks and whites. Furthermore, the present study analyzed the management of RPS from 1986 through 2006 concerning the socio-economic conditions of a resegregated city. Twenty years of management decisions, community reactions, demographic changes, academic performance and related controversies from 1986 through 2006 were critically examined to provide an analysis of how RPS grappled with the after effects of the court mandated school desegregation process. The effort was to tell the story of how RPS and the community (i.e., its educators, policy makers, residents, parents, former students and others) responded to the end of the desegregation process between 1986 and 2006. The decisions and actions of RPS under unitary status were examined to illustrate the history after Judge Merhige’s 1986 decree. Moreover, conditions pertaining to race and class were critically analyzed to help expand understanding and to clarify meaning of this period.
Research Questions

Research questions used to help drive the present study were:

1. What role did de jure and de facto school desegregation in Virginia play in the development of RPS since 1986?

2. What was the relationship of race and class in the perception of people working in RPS from 1986 through 2006?

3. How did people associated with RPS deal with the results of school desegregation after the end of cross-town busing in 1986?

Historical Background

The 1954 United States Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education, (Brown 1) stated that segregated schools deprive minority children of equal access to education (Brown v. Board, 1954). From 1954 through 1959, the Brown decision met “massive resistance” in Richmond, which reflected Virginia’s official political state-wide posture of resisting the integration of public schools.

The “passive resistance” era of 1959 through 1970 prolonged school desegregation. Deliberate decisions and actions taken by the Richmond Public School Board to delay school desegregation prompted court intervention. In 1962, Bradley v. Richmond School Board sought a racially nondiscriminatory school system in Richmond with the elimination of dual attendance zones for black and whites. After minimal success in the 1960’s with freedom of choice desegregation plans, Judge Merhige suggested the feasibility of the voluntary consolidation of Richmond and the Counties of
Chesterfield and Henrico into one single school district in 1970. This suggestion was in a response to the outmigration of whites and middle-class blacks to neighboring counties.

Merhige’s suggestion met opposition, and in *Bradley v. Board* (1970) he mandated Plan III to bus students across town to desegregate Richmond’s public schools. Judge Merhige continued to seek the merger of the City of Richmond and the Counties of Chesterfield and Henrico until it was rejected on appeal to the United States Supreme Court in 1973. This upheld the U.S. 4th Circuit Court’s decision in *Bradley v. Board*, (1973) to continue cross-town busing in Richmond. The results of the cross-town busing process in Richmond exacerbated segregation and stymied the opportunities of a growing black underclass. By 1986, RPS had become 87% black, and by default was no longer operating as a dual system for blacks and whites; Judge Merhige declared the district a unitary system in *Bradley v. Board* (1986), thus ending court mandated school desegregation.

**Findings**

The intent of the present study was to help fill the gap in the literature pertaining to RPS during the years of unitary status from 1986 through 2006. The analysis of archival information, historical documents, interviewee testimony and important secondary sources regarding this period yielded several findings. These findings were presented through the critical analysis of primary documents such as school board minutes, newspaper articles, court decisions, government documents, school board
policies and directives, census data, student demographics and test scores and other pertinent documents.

*Preparations for Unitary Status*

Measures were taken for managing a resegregated school system prior to Judge Merhige’s *Bradley v. Board* (1986) court decree. The decisions made in preparation of the district’s unitary status were important for transitioning from cross-town busing. Prior to 1986, cross-town busing was reduced in two phases. The first phase resulted in court-approved modifications to Plan III in *Bradley v. Board* (1970). The changes to Plan III included the 1977 K-5 Plan allowing students of two elementary schools to attend their neighborhood school, and the 1979 adaptation of Plan III into Plan G, which consolidated 7 high schools into 3 complexes. In the second phase, RPS realigned their Pupil Placement Plan in anticipation of Judge Merhige’s 1986 decision to end cross-town busing in Richmond. By 1986, the district was no longer held as a dual system as it was prior to cross-town busing. With the changeover to unitary status in 1986, the district set out to redefine itself by attempting to recreate neighborhood schools for children to attend in their attendance zones, which were previously divided for desegregation purposes. Open enrollment for students to attend any school in the city was also promoted from 1986 through 1991 to lure whites and middle-class blacks back to RPS. These efforts were a reaction to the fact that by 1986, RPS had become 87% black and 60% impoverished.

Richmond Public School Board minutes document the marketing efforts of the district to retain and attract white and middle-class black students during and after cross-
town busing. Interviewee testimony provided information about Richmond’s open enrollment policy and use of magnet and model schools that began in 1969 at John B. Cary Model Elementary School and expanded in the late 1980’s during unitary status. Magnet schools focused on career-oriented programs at the high school level, while model schools were created in middle and elementary schools to promote different educational themes. Cary, Fisher and Bellevue Model Elementary Schools were touted as some of Richmond’s best schools during that time, while other schools were battling to become neighborhood schools. However, families of school-aged children continued to make house-purchasing decisions based on available schools as well as the class and racial composition of neighborhood attendance zones. The evidence from census data, interviewee accounts and local newspaper articles is consistent on how race factored into the school choice decisions made by Richmond residents during this time. The changeover to a unitary school system included five years of restructuring efforts to reorganize the district after court mandated cross-town busing ended.

**Marketing Conflict**

From 1986 through 1991, RPS marketed their schools in two different ways. First, they sought to retain and attract whites and middle-class blacks through the promotion of neighborhood schools. Secondly, they were promoting open enrollment policies for which students could attend schools outside of their neighborhood. The concept of open enrollment was utilized by RPS to promote magnet and model school programs at various schools throughout the district. By 1991, RPS balanced the two marketing approaches due to the contradiction of promoting open enrollment schools and
the attempt of creating neighborhood schools in the city. In 1991, Superintendent Lucille Brown reaffirmed the district’s position in support of the open enrollment model school concept while embodying the neighborhood concept.

The two enrollment policies were the neighborhood school concept, which assigned most students to the school in their attendance zone after cross-town busing ended in 1986, and the open enrollment model school concept, which allowed students the option of applying to schools outside of their attendance zone. While various newspaper articles depicted an optimistic community perspective of the balancing of these two contradictory enrollment policies, minimal integration occurred throughout the district. Hence, the problem of balancing these two policies eventually led to the misguided attempt of diversifying schools by clustering white students in separate classrooms.

As described by interviewees, the stigma connected to RPS prevented these policies from halting the resegregation that occurred in Richmond and its schools. In turn, the efforts to overcome this stigma led to the publicly embarrassing fiasco of the controversial clustering decision at Ginter Park and Bellevue Model Elementary School in 1992. Ineffective management further complicated the matter, which continued to diminish the possibility of diversifying the district.

*Clustering Students by Race*

The clustering of students by race at Ginter Park and Bellevue Model Elementary Schools had a negative impact on RPS in 1992. The harsh debate between the community and the school system of how to handle the situation damaged the district’s
marketing efforts to attract whites to the city’s public schools. Media reports tarnished what little diversity had been accomplished prior to the clustering of white students in classrooms at Ginter Park and Bellevue. Richmond’s clustering gained national and international attention that negatively affected public opinion of the city’s public schools, which altered the school system’s efforts to appeal to underrepresented demographic groups within and outside the district. Efforts to desegregate schools during the cross-town busing era as well as during the first five years of unitary status diminished after this misguided decision. The negative attention stymied efforts by the district to attract whites and middle-class blacks back to Richmond’s schools. Thereafter, redirection became difficult for RPS with existing struggles hindering the management process.

The underlying causes of this situation were embedded in the school desegregation efforts of the past. Socio-economic resegregation developed in Richmond prior to the end of cross-town busing, and the hope of diversifying Richmond’s public schools under unitary status diminished with Ginter Park and Bellevue’s misguided efforts to bring racial diversity to their schools. Consequently, the mistake lessened the appeal of the district for underrepresented demographic groups. Since cross-town busing was court mandated in 1970, negative perceptions of RPS were perpetuated in the eyes of those who had abandoned it. Based on widespread negative media coverage of the clustering controversy, the public’s opinion that things had gone wrong once again in RPS reemerged. Furthermore, the impact of this situation was coupled with the City of Richmond’s economic disparities.
**Instable Management**

The instability of RPS after the system was declared unitary in 1986 is shown by the rapid turnover of superintendents, which created additional confusion and highlighted the lack of clear direction. RPS had seven different superintendents during the twenty-year chronology of this study. Following the clustering controversy of 1992, many different programs and initiatives were undertaken in a haphazard fashion. The programs and initiatives implemented during the 1990’s were debilitated by the high turnover rate in superintendents. During a three-year span, three different superintendents exemplified the rapid changes and inconsistencies in leadership. Frequent administrative changes negatively influenced the public’s opinion of RPS.

Richmond Public School Board minutes documented a multitude of redirection efforts by RPS to escape the trials and tribulations of the past. Difficulties grew for the district by the twenty first century, with several administrative interventions not proving beneficial. Also, the beginning of the high-stakes testing era put greater stress on the system to improve academic performance. By 2000, the poor spending practices of the district along with rising school violence, truancy, increased dropout rates and low student achievement were making a bad situation worse.

**Demographic Shift**

A demographic shift occurred in Richmond’s population between 1990 and 2000. Census data revealed that de facto segregation was alive and well in housing patterns throughout the city, with small sections of affluent whites and much larger sections of poor blacks becoming the dominate patterns. Richmond’s demographic shift of the late
twentieth century reflected changes in school enrollment, racial migration, poverty status and median household incomes. Resulting from white flight, the majority of Richmond’s public schools were now black and poor.

The intensified negative image of RPS was reflected in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) census tract mapping of Richmond from 1980 through 2000. The demographic changes from 1990 to 2000 were especially noteworthy. The city of Richmond’s demographics shifted dramatically into a poor black majority with a few white residential pockets. This is supported by personal accounts of interviewees who witnessed Richmond’s increased demographic shift during the 1990’s.

By 2000, the poverty levels of Richmond’s public school children were disparately greater than that of affluent children attending private schools in the city. These disparities were clearly defined by city neighborhoods. Worsening the class divide was the racial makeup of the majority black Richmond student body living below the poverty line in households with lower median incomes than that of white students. The substantiated demographic changes occurring at the end of the twentieth century gave even more reason for RPS to implement programs and initiatives to improve the district.

*Interventions*

After local and state investigations into the efficiency and effectiveness of RPS were completed, the district charted a new course and created a unified management system for working with the school board. Interventions taken by RPS to address these issues began with an administrative effectiveness investigation by the Council of Great City Schools and an Efficiency Review by the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Finance...
Interventions helped the district develop the Charting a New Course report and several recommendations for creating a more functional school system. Improvements were timely with accountability mandates from the state and federal government calling for increased levels of student performance.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 mandated states, school systems and individual schools meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in nine different student subgroups including racial and economically disadvantaged groups. Increased levels of student performance on Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments and schools meeting state and federal accountability measures occurred after 2003. Improvements in SOL scores signified an academic upturn for RPS. However, the diversification of students by race and class remained unchanged. The district was 89% black and 74% impoverished in 2006. Still, by 2006, the number of schools accredited by the state and those meeting AYP under NCLB increased; Richmond met the call with tremendous percentage increases of schools achieving state accreditation and students meeting AYP standards. However, the racial and class diversification of its schools and student body remained unchanged.

**Discussion**

The critical analysis of RPS as a unitary system attempted to tell the story of post-court mandated school desegregation in Richmond. The chronicled years of 1986 through 2006 pertaining to unitary status in RPS call for discussion. Resulting from the research questions of this study is an expanded understanding of this period. Three main conclusions may be drawn from the findings of the present study. They are as follows:
1. In anticipation of Judge Merhige’s 1986 decision to end cross-town busing RPS prepared for unitary status to the greatest extent possible given the existing residential segregation in Richmond.

2. The stigma connected to RPS during the 1990’s led to the misguided attempt of diversifying schools with racial clustering and a high turnover rate in superintendents.

3. Despite the lack of integrated schools, cohesive management designed to improve district needs helped RPS demonstrate a new level of academic success on Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments by 2006.

Conclusion #1

In anticipation of Judge Merhige’s 1986 decision to end cross-town busing, RPS prepared for unitary status to the greatest extent possible given the existing residential segregation in Richmond. Efforts by RPS to integrate schools during the transition from cross-town busing to unitary status reached a limit by 1991. Triangulation of interviews, court decisions and school board minutes provide evidence of this conclusion. De jure desegregation and de facto segregation in Virginia played a significant role in the development of RPS. The socio-economic conditions of Richmond and its public schools between 1986 and 2006 illustrate the impact of both de jure desegregation and de facto segregation. Because of de facto segregation in the metropolitan area, which created a predominately black population in Richmond, a limit was put on the district’s ability to follow the spirit of desegregation law. For instance, efforts to prepare for unitary status
prior to 1986 under de jure desegregation helped solve short-term problems; however, by 1991 the system was caught in a paradox of marketing schools internally against each other and in turn, the efforts of RPS to follow court decisions resulted in contradictory policies.

*Anticipation of unitary status.*

The anticipation of unitary status is reflected in the events leading up to the end of cross-town busing in 1986. For instance, in response to declining enrollment due to the abandonment of whites and middle-class blacks from Richmond and its public schools, modifications were approved during the 1970's to Plan III of *Bradley v. Board* (1970). For example, Fox and Mary Munford Elementary were returned to neighborhood schools under the K-5 Plan of 1977-78. In 1979, Plan G was adopted as a feeder plan system to consolidate 7 high schools into 3 complexes. These court decisions were an effort to save on busing costs and to create diversity in schools. In the years leading up to 1986, school leaders debated with the school board and local advisory groups on how to handle the changeover to unitary status. By 1986, de facto residential segregation was solidified, illustrated by 1980 and 1990 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapped census data. Resegregated neighborhoods were established and the city’s schools were predominately black and poor.

Unitary status was declared with the court ordered end of cross-town busing (*Bradley v. Board*, 1986) sixteen years after it began (*Bradley v. Board*, 1970). Legally speaking, RPS was no longer operating a dual school system for blacks and whites; nevertheless, the city’s schools were resegregated by 1986. Interviewee testimony and news articles described the transition from cross-town busing to unitary status as a
prepared and focused approach to restructuring the district. The court’s decree that RPS had achieved unitary status meant the letter of the law was followed by no longer operating as a dual school system for blacks and whites. However, the spirit of the law was not achieved due to the consequential and unbalanced demographics of the district. In other words, the process of attempting to desegregate schools led to a resegregation of the city, which created distinguishable black and white neighborhoods throughout Richmond. Predominately white neighborhoods sending their children to local private schools instead of their neighborhood school motivated Richmond public school leaders to market schools to those parents. On the other hand, the predominately black neighborhoods lacked diversity in their schools because white students were no longer bused out of their neighborhoods into a black neighborhood school across town. The promotion of neighborhood schools, especially in predominately white neighborhoods, was a direct effort to bring back the whites that had left during cross-town busing.

Actions during unitary status.

During the first five years after court mandated school desegregation ended, actions were taken by RPS to improve the district. Extraordinary efforts were made to diversify schools under the unitary status decree; however, the socio-economic realities faced by RPS made this difficult. RPS developed a Pupil Re-assignment plan for most students to attend their neighborhood schools with minimal busing needed. In 1986, RPS sought further financial relief from the courts during the changeover process. The adjustment period was difficult, and RPS grappled with several problems during the first five years under unitary status. RPS spent a great deal of time and effort trying to get a
foothold, and to align itself with the changing dynamics of city policies. The attraction of private schools in the city made the task of retaining white and middle-class blacks increasingly difficult. After a superintendent change in 1989, the restructuring of RPS became the focus of the district instead of the political shenanigans that were negatively impacting public opinion. Superintendent Jones’ reorganization plan of 1991 promoted the development of model schools and schools with magnet and model programs. These touted schools under Richmond’s open enrollment policy forced the district to literally compete against its neighborhood school policy. The attempt of RPS to address the internal marketing of its neighborhood and open enrollment schools was seemingly the best approach it could take given the socio-economic conditions of the city.

The policy of establishing model schools at the elementary level after unitary status was declared in 1986 contradicted the motives of the neighborhood school concept already in place. For instance, the model schools that were created after cross-town busing ended were in predominately black neighborhoods (Binford Middle, Fisher and Bellevue Elementary). This concept was meant to lure whites to these schools to create a diverse student body. The promotion of magnet schools in the late 1980’s, as well as successes at the Governor’s School, Open and Community High Schools were also used as marketing strategies by the district. In addition, model school programs were implemented in nine different elementary schools by 1991. The open enrollment policy that was in place for model schools and schools with model school programs allowed for parents in Richmond to send their children to any public school in the city. The problem that followed was the battle between schools to enroll students either in their neighborhood schools, in model schools or in a school with a model school program
across town. For example, Mary Munford Elementary acquired a model school program in 1991, and after a decade of trying to bring whites back to their former neighborhood school, it eventually became a desired school for students throughout the city. In turn, this stimulated an influx of affluent whites to its neighborhood, and an enrollment waiting list for students throughout the city. Consequently, the popularity of Mary Munford affected the enrollment interests of city residents to nearby and once revered John B. Cary Model Elementary School. The contradiction in terms of enrollment policy had to be clarified by Superintendent Lucille Brown in 1991. The district stood behind both policies in an effort to gain from the marketing approach of their internal conflict. However, the reorganizing of the district was confronted with socio-economic ramifications stemming from the school desegregation process of 1954 through 1986.

Conclusion #2

The stigma connected to RPS during the 1990’s led to the misguided attempt of diversifying schools with racial clustering and a high turnover rate in superintendents. The clustering of students by race at Ginter Park and Bellevue Model Elementary Schools sparked controversy in the community, rehashing a past stigma of deep-rooted racial and class division in RPS. Thereafter, inconsistent management practices between 1993 and 2003 resulted in a high turnover rate in superintendents. Based on the analysis of primary sources such as school board minutes, newspaper articles, superintendent’s reports and interviewee accounts, the recurrence of negative perceptions regarding the values and behaviors of RPS entered the community. The historically entrenched stigma of deep-rooted racial and class division associated with RPS resurfaced after this publicly
drawn-out ordeal unfolded in the media. The situation significantly impacted the
district’s marketing momentum of 1986 through 1991 for diversifying the schools by race
and class. Furthermore, after this fiasco, five different superintendents served over an
eleven-year period and three during a three-year span. The district’s management
inconsistencies were perpetuated with several different approaches for trying to establish
redirection.

*Misguided attempt to diversify schools.*

The historical practices of families resisting the desegregation of Richmond’s
public schools seemingly led to the ill-advised attempt of Ginter Park and Bellevue to
bring diversity to their schools by clustering white students in the same classrooms.
Since court mandated school desegregation began in 1970, many whites and some
middle-class blacks moved out of the city or sent their children to private schools. The
restructuring efforts of the district during the five years after cross-town busing ended
brought about various attempts to diversify the schools. The inability of these policies to
attract the desired demographic groups set the stage for the ill-fated clustering of white
students in classrooms at Ginter Park and Bellevue. Essentially, the intent of making
RPS desirable to whites materialized into the clustering fiasco at these elementary
schools. Inconsistent management began immediately after the Richmond Public School
Board became aware that Bellevue Principal Sylvia Richardson was clustering white
students in the same classrooms. The dispute between Principal Richardson and
Superintendent Brown demonstrated inconsistent policy interpretation. Richardson
justified her decision to cluster students by race based on section 8.20 of the district’s
Bylaws and Policies concerning the social and emotional well being of students. Brown adamantly refuted Richardson’s policy interpretation. Allegations and reports of clustering cases at other city schools began to circulate in the media, but Brown dismissed these cases after she conducted a three-day investigation. Soon thereafter, the Chairman of the Richmond School Board announced that clustering was also taking place at Ginter Park Elementary School. This raised the questions as to whether more cases were occurring in the district, unbeknownst to Brown and the school board.

Attempting to resolve the matter at Bellevue, Brown did not feel Richardson provided a professional response for viably rectifying the situation. Negative media reports fueled the controversy, and parents began speaking out about the issue. Opinions varied throughout the community on whether to cease clustering at the end of the semester or school year. To the misfortune of district efforts to resolve the situation quickly, a procedural loophole was found. As a result, the decision making process was drawn out for another month. After an internationally publicized public hearing was held, drudging up the history of school desegregation in Richmond, a decision was made to end clustering immediately.

Clustering students by race rehashed a deep-rooted stigma of RPS. Once the previous goal of bringing white and middle-class black families back to city schools was diminished with the mismanagement of the clustering controversy, the possibility of achieving an integrated district under unitary status appeared even less attainable. The clustering controversy was a defining moment, leaving an indelible mark on the district’s attempts at diversification in a de facto segregated city. Capping off the clustering case was the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) finding that RPS violated the Civil Rights Act of
1964 by discriminating on the basis of race. Later, the OCR concluded that RPS had resolved the matter, not withstanding the stigma accompanying the process. The creation of culturally isolated city schools after this incident was emblematic of the paradigm shift that climaxed after cross-town busing ended in 1986. Deep-rooted racial and class division continued to rehash itself.

**High turnover rate in superintendents.**

Over a decade of evidence from 1993 through 2003 illustrates the inconsistent management practices that followed the 1992 clustering controversy. Despite attempts by several different superintendents to control the issue and move forward, instability within RPS resulted. In an effort to redirect RPS after the clustering fiasco, Superintendent Brown and the school board hired a task force to address district operations. A needs assessment generated by the task force spawned many programs and initiatives that were of merit; however, inconsistencies prevailed in the streamlining of efforts between the school board, community and the different superintendent regimes that followed Brown’s. From 1995 through 2002, RPS had four different superintendents. Each superintendent had a different approach for addressing district needs. Quarrels and controversies between superintendents, school boards and employees added to the complexity of moving on from the instability of the past.

Deborah Jewell-Sherm (2002-2006). Their average term was less than three years; more poignantly, during the eleven years following the clustering cases, RPS had five different superintendents and three within a three-year span. The high turnover rate in district leadership began after Brown’s efforts to redirect the district were unsuccessful; she retired early. Conn was hired in 1995, and amid controversy was dismissed from her position in less than two years. Williams took over in 1997, and even with his five-year stay, the high turnover rate of the position led to the reputation that RPS was difficult to manage and the school board was viewed as hard to work with. Complaints about favoritism in hiring practices of upper administrative positions were prevalent. In 2002, Deborah Jewell-Sherman was hired and began her tenure as superintendent that continued through the end of the present study.

In the middle of these superintendent changes, the state Standards of Learning (SOL) academic performance assessments were implemented in 1998. RPS had to comply with SOL testing and face public scrutiny for not meeting expected accreditation standards. By this time, RPS reflected an increasingly lower socio-economic demographic group, which magnified the district’s problems to the outside community. For instance, in 1998 no schools were accredited and in 1999, only three schools met state accreditation standards.

Mismanagement lurked into the twenty-first century. Issues such as money management, high arrest rates of students, rising truancy and dropout rates, and low academic performance were prevalent. According to interviewees, the byproducts of the school desegregation process still loomed in the hearts and minds of Richmond residents. Faulty spending and accounting practices, such as costly expenses for buildings with low
student enrollment compounded the situation. Misleading school violence reports by the media also added to the stigma of RPS. For instance, in 2002 statistics on fighting from the State Department of Education had no clear delineation between what constituted as a fight and an assault; however, reports portrayed RPS as more violent compared to Chesterfield and Henrico Counties based on undefined figures. In addition to the high turnover rate of superintendents were high levels of truancy and low student achievement. RPS was desperate for finding a solution to this untimely downturn.

Conclusion #3

Despite the lack of integrated schools, cohesive management designed to improve district needs helped RPS demonstrate a new level of academic success on SOL assessments by 2006. Improvements in the district’s business operations in 2003 led to greater academic success thereafter. Triangulation of primary sources including census data, interviewee testimony and SOL data add credibility to this conclusion. By 2000, the demographics of the City of Richmond stabilized leaving RPS with a largely poor black majority. Academic improvements began with cohesive management practices specifically designed to efficiently and effectively address district needs and student achievement on the SOL assessments. In 2003, RPS underwent efficiency and effectiveness investigations to improve business operations for student achievement. The district suffered from inconsistent direction until management improvements were made in 2003, which turned RPS into an academically improving district, as defined by SOL scores. Essentially, the high-stakes testing era, including state and federal accountability measures on SOL assessments set forth by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001,
provided RPS with a simple goal to achieve as a district. However, divisions of race and class remained in the city and the persistence of school resegregation remained.

*Changing population patterns.*

Richmond experienced demographic changes in its population trends during and after school desegregation. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) census tract mapping illustrated the population changes between 1980 and 2000 for the present study. Evident by the white flight and declining tax base of the 1960’s and 1970’s, the mapping data in this study illuminated the resegregation of Richmond and demographic shifts of the school system as of 1980. By 1986, RPS was grappling with socio-economic obstacles that were hindering academic improvement. The population patterns for both blacks and whites stabilized during the 1990’s after drastic demographic shifts during school desegregation occurred. The predominately black student body in the city schools was solidified. This demographic settlement occurred during the decade after cross-town busing ended. By 2000, the number of white people living in poverty within the city limits of Richmond decreased sharply. Poverty stricken black people living in the city increased. Race and class impacted where people were living and sending their children to school.

Consequently, the already limited diversity in the district dissipated with inconsistent management and low student achievement. Interest lagged for many whites and middle-class blacks to send their children to a Richmond public school, especially one with a high percentage of students who were black and of a lower socio-economic status. During the 1990’s, the intensification of poor socio-economic conditions in the city enhanced the public’s negative opinion of the district. As a result, little hope
remained in attracting whites and middle-class blacks back to the district. Segregation by race was evolving into segregation by class, evident by the concentration of poverty in Richmond from 1990 to 2000.

In 2001, NCLB brought forth federally mandated state-wide standardized testing and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) measures for student performance. In 2002, RPS strategically began seeking solutions to overcome the impact of poor socio-economic conditions on student achievement. The Title I schools in Richmond faced the possibility of federal sanctions if Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) were not met in all nine demographic subgroups for math and reading. Given the changing population patterns, RPS set out to make improvements.

*Implemented interventions for improvements.*

After the Council of the Great City Schools and the Governor’s office conducted effectiveness and efficiency reviews of the school system, a hands-on-detailed oriented approach was created to meet management and curriculum objectives. Misdirected efforts under the six previous superintendent regimes helped create district instability since unitary status was declared in 1986.

Strategic administrative interventions in 2002 began the process of addressing SOL standards. A commitment was made by the district to change the educational culture through management operations and student performance. In one school year, the number of schools accredited by the state went from 11 to 23. In 2002, the district also developed a facilities master plan to prioritize school building needs for creating attractive school environments. In addition, The Council of the Great City Schools investigated the effectiveness of RPS and provided a report for the district entitled:
“Charting a New Course for the Richmond Public Schools.” The findings of the report suggested systematic changes for increasing student achievement. Twenty-seven key recommendations were made by The Council to improve on curriculum and instruction, Title I and other Federal Programming and special education needs. Meaningful reform policy was created from these recommendations to enhance successful intervention programs for improving student achievement. For instance, the Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) program positively impacted students and schools.

In 2003, RPS was selected by Governor Mark Warner of Virginia to undergo a School Efficiency Review. The review yielded an identification of areas where administrative savings could be found through non-instructional expenditures. The outcome allowed RPS to put back over $2.1 million dollars into the classrooms. Twenty-seven recommendations from the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Secretary of Finance were provided to RPS for capitalizing on these savings. From these recommendations, a simplified management system focused on resources and relationships to improve student performance on SOL assessments was created. After the implementation of these recommendations, more resources were redirected into the classrooms for instructional purposes. Additionally, by 2005 the dropout rate decreased to 2.46%, down from 15.27% in 2003. The adoption of the Community Education Partnership (CEP) program aided this progress by providing alternative programming for students with disciplinary or academic problems. Since efficiency and effectiveness actions were taken by RPS, student performance became the district’s focus. The transformation of the district’s business practices allowed for greater emphasis to be put on the academic needs of the students.
In 2005, a “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) was signed by the Richmond Public School Board and given to the Virginia Department of Education for district improvement. In response to the MOU, RPS utilized the essential actions prescribed by The Council of Great City Schools Report to develop a Balanced Scorecard (BSC) for charting its course. The strategic management approach implemented by RPS created a management system for translating its mission and vision into action. By utilizing “Charting the Course,” business principles were applied to the district, which resulted in improved student achievement. The 2005 Council of the Great City Schools study entitled: “Beating the Odds,” presented the total number of state accredited schools in Richmond increasing over three year from 18% to 76%. By 2006, the percentage of Richmond’s state accredited public schools had risen to 88%. Also, by 2006, 82% of Richmond’s public schools met AYP standards set forth by NCLB. Seemingly the accountability measures of NCLB were allowing RPS to flourish academically. The district as a whole did make AYP in 2005; however, in 2006, it only missed the mark in the limited English proficiency subgroup for reading. In 2006, RPS scored above state averages in four of the nine-subgroup categories.

Still, the stabilization of district management practices and student achievement was hindered by controversy and low academic performance at some schools in 2005 and 2006. For example, in 2005 it was found that 141 SOL answers were changed at Oak Grove Elementary, thus creating doubt about the legitimacy of academic improvements made in RPS. Also, in 2006, Chandler Middle School faced federal sanctions due to their inability to make AYP for six straight years. Public debate over how to handle truancy was another issue impacting the perception of RPS. The unchanging demographics of
RPS were most notably hindering the appeal of the city schools for whites and middle-class blacks that, for the most part, were continuing to stay away from the city’s public schools. Membership totals reflected an 89% black school system, of which nearly 75% were impoverished. Improvements on SOL assessments did not change the well-established resegregation throughout the city’s schools.

To conclude, by 2006 the high-stakes testing era, consisting of state and federal mandates for increased student performance on SOL assessments set forth by NCLB, provided RPS with the opportunity to achieve at something, given their unsuccessful attempts of school integration. By 2001, AYP regulations by the federal government forced RPS to make improvements. This accountability brought forth the task of meeting Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO’s) for math and reading on SOL assessments for nine different demographic subgroups. By 2003, the goal of the district as a whole was to significantly improve SOL scores and to achieve state accreditation. Based on the analysis of data sources, RPS accomplished this goal. The district’s increased academic achievements on SOL assessments helped RPS gain some rare public approval, during an era where student performance on high-stakes tests measured school success.

It seems that Richmond’s public schools benefited from the high-stakes testing era, despite the poor socio-economic conditions of the district. The post-court mandated school desegregation era of RPS is filled with trials and tribulations of attempting to integrate schools, working to establish direction and efforts to increase student achievement. After being declared a unitary system in 1986, RPS attempted to market and diversify schools while grappling with the increased socioeconomic resegregation of the city. The efforts of RPS to maintain direction during the 1990’s were met with
stigmatizing controversies and a rapid turnover rate in superintendents. Finally, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the high-stakes testing era created a need for systematic changes for improving student performance. Interventions for cohesive management between the school board and superintendent were established and “best practices” for teachers were implemented to focus on academic improvements. Thereafter, RPS turned into an academically improving district, at least as defined by SOL scores, yet they remained a resegregated system.

In addition to the complexities driving RPS to meet accountability standards of the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the human factor was the impetus behind district improvements. By 2003, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) standards based accountability system led RPS to view SOL assessments as an integral part of instruction and as a tool for enhancing learning. Federal and state pressure to succeed on SOL assessments created a difficult situation for RPS’s precarious management system, which was a result of previous leadership inconsistencies. However, the educational culture of RPS changed in 2003 under the leadership of Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman Richmond’s seventh superintendent since cross-town busing ended in 1986. Jewell-Sherman set out to improve SOL scores by turning the district’s management system around. Her leadership helped create a culture of continuous commitment for student success.

Tremendous improvements in business operations for financial management were made over the next three years. An effective and efficient management system led by Jewell-Sherman helped put more money into classrooms for student achievement. The district embraced her vision of an excuse free education with high expectations for all
students. Improving student achievement by developing, implementing and continuously evaluating a rigorous and cohesive curriculum complete with formative assessments for academic success became the number one goal of RPS. The strategic gathering of information, by educational leaders in the district, to improve instructional decisions helped RPS demonstrate academic success on SOL assessments by 2006. Superintendent Jewell-Sherman and her administrative staff demonstrated quality educational leadership during a demanding period. Former school board member and interviewee, “Mr. Higgins” encapsulates how administrative leadership helped turn around RPS:

In a system where teachers and principals had all wrote off a huge percentage of the kids, all of a sudden now the attitude was that our goal is to get everybody across the finish line.... I saw first hand how [NCLB and SOL’s] were transforming Richmond Public Schools from a system that felt that kids who were poor and came from families whose parents had dropped out or their mothers had dropped out of school and we can’t do anything to improve this situation, into this attitude that we can do it…and we did (Higgins, 2008).

As a final point, metropolitan school consolidation is seemingly still the most viable solution for integrating public schools in Richmond. The continued outmigration of many whites and middle-class blacks from RPS, since cross-town busing ended in 1986, gives reason for this argument. As proposed by Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. in Bradley v. Board (1971), the merger of Chesterfield, Henrico and Richmond school districts would create a racial and socioeconomic mix within the metropolitan area public schools. However, the current Law of Virginia Code 22-30 states: “No school division shall be composed of more than one county or city” (Virginia Code, 1971, § 22.1-25). It is necessary to re-visit the General Assembly’s 1971 decision on Article VIII, Section V of the Constitution of Virginia, entitled the “Powers and Duties of the Board of Education”. A revision is needed to the statement that “the power to operate, maintain
and supervise public schools in Virginia is, and has always been, within the exclusive jurisdiction of the local school boards and not within the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education” (Va. Const., Article VIII, Section V).

The socio-economic consequences conveyed in this study’s critical analysis of post-court mandated school desegregation in RPS provide justification for reconsidering metropolitan consolidation. The implications of school desegregation on the Richmond metropolitan area make the case for merging Chesterfield, Henrico and Richmond school districts. However, approving the merger of these school districts requires changing the Commonwealth of Virginia’s historical tradition with respect to its establishment and operation of schools. Nonetheless, the Richmond metropolitan area has a collective responsibility to address inner city decay and the negative implications of school desegregation on RPS. The opportunity to deal with concentrated poverty and resegregation in Richmond would be possible under the control of a single school board for Chesterfield, Henrico and Richmond public schools. Metropolitan consolidation is the most practical equalitarian concept for school integration.

**Comparisons with Literature**

Prior to this study, historical treatment of events in the Richmond public schools after unitary status was declared in 1986 was limited. This study attempted to help fill the gap in the literature by providing historical analysis of the twenty years after unitary status was declared by Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. in *Bradley v. Board* (1986).

The present study was built on the case study conducted by Johnson, McGrath, and Williams (1989) entitled: *Richmond Public Schools: A Citizens’ Perspective*. Their
The present study also supplements the work of Philipsen (1999): *Values-Spoken and Values-Lived: Race and the Cultural Consequences of a School Closing*. The social and cultural consequences of school desegregation described in Philipsen’s study tie into the present study’s analysis. Similar to the Richmond community, the ramifications of
desegregation, school closings and cross-town busing in the small rural community studied by Philipsen, had a profound effect on the schooling and academic achievement of black students. These consequences, albeit in a larger community, were evident during Richmond’s transitional years from cross-town busing to unitary status. This study’s analysis of Richmond’s response to the high stakes testing era that began at the time Philipsen’s study ended, added another dimension to the discussion. The present study demonstrated the efforts of RPS to make the most of the academic opportunities given the social consequences that weakened the black neighborhoods, as stated in Philipsen’s work. The redirection efforts embarked upon by RPS, after the deep-rooted stigma of the district was rehashed in 1992, demonstrated the daunting task of overcoming the social consequences described by Philipsen. Ultimately, this present study found the process of addressing these issues resulted in an emergence of an academically improving district amidst a persistently resegregated city.

Adding to the existing body of knowledge is specific documentation about RPS and the forces that shaped resegregation in the city. For instance, John Moeser’s (1981) book entitled: *A Virginia Profile 1960-2000: Assessing Current Trends and Problems* only predicted specific socio-economic factors affecting education in Richmond for 1982-2000. However, the hypotheses of Moeser (1981) are confirmed by 1980-2000 census data of school enrollment, racial migration, poverty status and median household income mapped in the present study. Conclusions drawn from this evidence support the predictions of Moeser and clarify meaning to the impact of these socio-economic factors on RPS during unitary status.
Moeser and Dennis’ (1982), *The Politics of Annexation: Oligarchic Power in a Southern City* only examined the limitations of the 1970 annexation of Chesterfield County through a political, social and economic lens. John Moeser and Rutledge Dennis’ (1982) book neglected the educational impact of annexation on RPS. Furthermore, the present study delved deeper into the ramifications of school desegregation and the socio-economic effects on RPS in the years after 1986. The restrictions found in the present study regarding Richmond’s efforts to address school desegregation after 1986 correlate directly with Moeser and Dennis’ (1982) research up until this point in history.

An example of a published report ending its research at the time the present study begins is Gary Orfield, Franklin Monfort, and Melissa Aaron’s (1989) *Status of School Desegregation 1968-1986: Segregation, Integration, and Public Policy: National, State and Metropolitan Trends in Public Schools*. The present study began where Orfield, Monfort and Aaron left off, and further analyzed trends of resegregation throughout Richmond. The specific socio-economic parallels that Richmond underwent since the end of their study relate directly to the residential patterns of the city since the end of cross-town busing. Additionally, the present study examined Orfield’s et al., (1989) research of the district’s attempts to move forward as a declared unitary school system.

Another study that ended at the point the present study began is Daniel Arkin’s (1991) dissertation on *Regime Politics Surrounding Desegregation Decision-Making During Massive Resistance in Richmond, Virginia*. The present study provided a critical analysis of twenty years after RPS was declared unitary, which Arkin (1991) briefly touched upon through his depiction of the school desegregation process from 1954
through 1986. The present study’s conclusions illustrated the effects, outlined by Arkin, regarding the impact of Richmond’s political regime on RPS during unitary status.

Most importantly, the aim of the present study continued the historical analysis of Robert Pratt’s (1992) *The Color of Their Skin: Education and Race in Richmond, Virginia 1954-1989*. The critical analysis of the present study directly connected with Pratt’s research from 1954 to 1989. Pratt’s conclusions that busing students within the city prior to 1986 fell short, and the three years thereafter were filled with challenges to deal with unitary status, were confirmed by the present study’s findings and conclusions. Furthermore, Pratt’s analysis of material from 1986 to 1989 was subject to further examination through 2006. For instance, the present study confirmed the experimentation with magnet schools Pratt defined in his research as potential luring mechanisms for whites to come back into the city. Additionally, Pratt pointed out that people had concerns about the magnet school concept in that it would eventually lead to socio-economic segregation within RPS. This belief came to fruition with the climatic clustering controversy of 1992 that was a direct effort by Ginter Park and Bellevue Model Elementary to counteract the racial segregation that was still occurring in RPS. These misguided efforts of RPS to diversify its schools after cross-town busing resegregated them led to further disparities in class status across the city. Segregation by race and class prevailed even greater thereafter. Unfortunately, the situation rehashed the deep-rooted stigma of RPS and diminished its already low appeal to whites and middle-class blacks with inconsistent management during rapid turnover in superintendents. Not until business practices and student achievement were addressed in 2003, did the academic achievement of RPS begin to increase. Subsequently, the present study, in conjunction
with the historical background established by Pratt (1989), helped tell the story of RPS as a unitary school system.

Finally, the research of Christopher Silver and John Moeser (1995) in their book *The Separate City: Black Communities in the Urban South 1940-1968*, was useful for the present study’s demographic analysis of RPS as a unitary school system. The present study utilized Silver and Moeser’s (1995) research to address the neighborhood school situations that were controversial during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. The precarious state of Richmond’s black separate city in 1995 described by Silver and Moeser (1995) is confirmed through interviewee testimony and demographic changes found in the present study. The transformation process of RPS into a unitary school system, given increased segregation of the black community, was expanded upon in the present study.

*Limitations to the Present Study*

The limitations of this study include the following choices by the researcher. The researcher chose to only look at perceptions of those individuals who directly worked in or were affiliated with RPS during the time period of 1986 through 2006. Thus, only a system’s level approach of the research was taken of how the history of school desegregation impacted the unitary status of RPS from 1986 through 2006. The researcher only chose to examine historical information and archival data directly related to RPS between 1986 and 2006 from a district standpoint, thus limiting the depth of data at school based levels. The data analyzed by the researcher only consisted of the resulting conditions of RPS related to the end of cross-town busing in 1986. The
researchers also only chose to focus on the impact felt on RPS without any direct comparisons made with the neighboring counties of Chesterfield and Henrico.

The Need for Further Study

Further investigation of unitary status in Richmond is suggested by the researcher to provide additional insight about RPS during this period. For instance, the specific impact of the events depicted in the present study at the school and classroom level could provide more conclusions about RPS as a unitary system. Poverty ratios and student performance could also be studied further to determine the achievement levels of students in RPS based on similar or differing demographics given post-court mandated school desegregation effects found in this study. Greater analysis of Standards of Learning (SOL) data could generate further conclusions about the impact of high-stakes testing on RPS. Further analysis of individual school’s achievement levels and their history since the end of cross-town busing could provide more meaning to schools’ academic improvements on SOL’s as well. Also, comparisons with surrounding county school systems to study the impact of school desegregation on the entire Richmond metropolitan area would provide a greater scope of socio-economic implications on the region. Additionally, a continuation of this study after 2006 would be beneficial for continuing the story of RPS as a unitary school system.
List of References


*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, 391 U.S. 430 (1968).


Kastner, L. (2004, October 10). Students make the grade: Whitcomb Elementary’s turnaround was a result of hard study, teamwork. *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.


Nance, C. (n.d.). Dr. Lois Harrison-Jones: The Richmond Public Schools’ new superintendent is a no-nonsense educator who has worked her way up the school system ladder. *Richmond Magazine,* 28.


*Plessy v. Ferguson* 163 U.S. 537 (1896).


Williams, M. P. (1993, February 22). On clustering in schools, we already have lost. *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.


Appendix A

Initial Introduction Letter

Date

Dear Mr. /Ms. /Dr.,

Hello, my name is Joshua Cole. As a doctoral student in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University, I am writing this letter to you as an introduction of myself and of my research.

I am currently an Assistant Principal at Hening Elementary School in Chesterfield. Prior to my current position, I taught at Chalkley Elementary School, where I received the National Milken Educator Award in ‘06. After teaching in Detroit and graduating with my Masters from Wayne State University in ‘02, I moved to Virginia to pursue my PhD.

My current research is focused on the Richmond Public School system and the post school desegregation time period of 1986 to 2006. I have discovered that since 1986, there has been little documented analysis about the state of the Richmond Public School system as it pertains to the post-cross-town busing era. Starting with the Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954 and continuing through the court case of Bradley v. School Board of 1986 there has been a great deal of documentation. However, very little research has been done regarding what has transpired within the Richmond Public School system since 1986. Thus, perspectives on this recent era will be the focus of my study.

Please know that I will be formally requesting your participation in my study via phone and/or email in 1-2 weeks. In the meantime, please consider the possibility of being interviewed by me for this study.

If you have any questions or concerns at this time or in the future, please feel free to contact me via phone or email. Also, if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a possible participant you may contact the following office:

Office of Research
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street
Suite 113
P.O Box 980568
Richmond, VA. 23298
(804) 827-2157

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Joshua P. Cole
(804) 677-8768
joshua_cole@ccpsnet.net
Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. How many years have you been associated with the Richmond Public School system and in what capacity (ies)?

2. Has the topic of school desegregation in Richmond ever come up amongst people you know? If so, what was said?

3. How did the desegregation process between 1954 and 1986 affect you?

4. How did it affect other people you know?

5. What role do you think school desegregation decisions from 1954 to 1986 in Virginia played in the development of the Richmond Public School system since 1986?

6. How do you think history has shaped the present time?

7. How do you think Richmond Public Schools have dealt with the results of school desegregation since the end of cross-town busing in 1986?

8. How do you think the issues of race and class have affected the perceptions of the people working in the Richmond Public School system?

9. How do you feel the desegregation process of 1954 to 1986 impacted the students in the Richmond Public School system during that time period?

10. How do you feel the students attending Richmond Public Schools at the time cross-town busing ended in 1986 were impacted?

11. How do you feel today’s students are affected by what has happened in the past?

12. Any final thoughts on the last twenty years of the Richmond Public School system as it relates to the post desegregation process?

*Use the phrase “Tell me about” whenever they lead into a discussion.*
Appendix C

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM


VCU IRB NO.: HM11335

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the study staff to explain any words that you do not clearly understand. You may take home an unsigned copy of this consent form to think about or discuss with family or friends before making your decision.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to tell the story of how the Richmond Public School community responded to desegregation between 1986 and 2006.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are considered a key informant for the period in question.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form after you have had all your questions answered and understand what will happen to you.

In this study you will be asked to participate in one interview that will last approximately 30-45 minutes. You are one of 18 people who have received a request for an interview. During the interview, you will be asked approximately 10-15 questions pertaining to the purpose of this study. You will have the opportunity to talk about your perspective and experiences as they relate to the purpose of this study. The interview will be digitally recorded so we are sure to get your complete answers, but no names of participants will be recorded.

Significant new findings developed during the course of the research, which may relate to your willingness to continue participation will be provided to you.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
Sometimes talking about this subject causes people to become upset. Several questions address potentially unpleasant issues. You do not have to talk about any subject you do not want to talk about, and you may leave or stop the interview at any time.

BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS
You may not get any direct benefit from this study.
COSTS
There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend in answering the interviewer’s questions.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of interview notes and recordings, audiotapes of consultations and interviews. Data is being collected only for research purposes. The data obtained will be identified by name. Audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet for 1 year after the study ends and will be destroyed at that time. Transcribed data included in the final research study will be kept indefinitely.

Information from the study and the consent form signed by you may be looked at or copied for research or legal purposes by Virginia Commonwealth University. What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers and other scholarly documents.

The digital recordings and the notes will be stored in a locked cabinet. After the information from the recordings is typed up, the recordings will be erased.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are being asked in the study.

Your participation in this study may be stopped at any time by the study staff without your consent. The reasons might include:
• the study staff thinks it necessary for your health or safety;
• administrative reasons require your withdrawal.

QUESTIONS
In the future, you may have questions about your participation in this study. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, contact:

Maike Philipsen, Ph.D.
Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Education
804-827-2630

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact:

Office for Research
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 113
P.O. Box 980568
Richmond, VA  23298
Telephone:  804-827-2157
You may also contact this number for general questions, concerns or complaints about the research. Please call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else. Additional information about participation in research studies can be found at http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm.

CONSENT
I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of the consent form once I have agreed to participate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant name printed</th>
<th>Participant signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Name of Person Conducting Informed Consent (Printed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion / Witness</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Investigator Signature (if different from above) Date 4
Appendix D

Definition of Terms

AYP: Acronym for Adequate Yearly Progress to measure achievement levels state-wide assessments.

Civil Rights Act of 1964: Federal law that made it illegal for schools and businesses to treat people differently on the basis of their race, religion or the country of their birth.

Clustering: Grouping students into classrooms by race.

Cross-Town Busing: The transporting of students across school-district boundaries, usually court-ordered, to make schools more racially balanced.

Desegregation: Process of abolishing racial segregation in public schools.

Dual Attendance Zones: Division within a school district that has populations representing two different sets of students based on a group characteristic, such as race.

Fair Housing Act of 1968: Federal law that made it illegal for businesses to discriminate against, or treat unfairly, different races in the sale or rental of places to live.

Freedom of Choice: Process by which parents are allowed to choose the school of choice for their student if they meet certain criteria for enrollment.

Grade-Pairing: Plan created to reduce busing and keep students together through their entire public education. After finishing elementary school, children would attend a nearby middle school; after middle school children would attend one central high school.

Gray Plan: Collection of recommendations made by Senator Garland Gray and his committee. The committee suggested that the local school boards be given the right to decide which students would be assigned to which schools. It also suggested that money be given to white parents to send their child to segregated private schools instead of integrated public schools.

HEW: Acronym for United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare. This federal organization set up new desegregation guidelines in the mid-1960s. If any school districts resisted integration, they would cut off federal funds to the schools.
Integration: Process of bringing together different races in order for all people to enjoy the same benefits in society.

K-5 Plan (1977-1978): Desegregation plan created by Richmond Public Schools Superintendent Richard C. Hunter that attempted to keep white families in the city by keeping their younger children in neighborhood schools.

Magnet Schools: Concept used to promote academic programs at the secondary level.

Massive Resistance: Process by which the entire political body of Virginia resisted the integration of public schools.

Metropolitan Richmond Area: City of Richmond and the two neighboring counties of Chesterfield and Henrico.

Model Schools: First designed in 1969 to reflect the ideal example of integration and in the 1980’s developed into a marketing tool to promote academic programs at the elementary level.

NAACP: Acronym for National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, organization that was started in 1909 in New York City to improve the quality of life for African-Americans.

Neighborhood Schools Policy: Procedure for allowing students to attend school within their neighborhood instead of being bused across town.

NCLB: Acronym for No Child Left Behind, Public Law legislation enforcing greater accountability upon states, districts and schools to meet performance benchmarks.

Open Enrollment: Policy allowing students to attend schools outside of their attendance zone.

Passive Resistance: Process by which individuals within the state of Virginia made decisions and took action to integrate the public schools in a non-deliberate manner.

Plan III: Name given to the plan developed to implement extensive cross-town busing in Richmond Public Schools.

Pupil Placement Board: Committee of people designed by the state to make decisions for student enrollment at schools based on a set criterion.

Pupil Placement Board (Virginia): Committee that had the right to decide what school students attended. This decision was based on race.

Resegregation: The process of segregating again; after attempts of desegregation to re-establish neighborhoods, reflective of similar demographic groups as they were prior to desegregation.

Segregation: Separating one group of people from another group through customs, tradition, peer pressure, laws or personal preference.

Separate but equal: Concept that gives states the right to segregate races of people in public transportation. This idea was extended to allow races to have separate but similar quality facilities, like schools and restaurants.

Socio-Economic Conditions: Social and economic factors involved in an environment.

Symbolic Interaction: A person’s socially constructed self that may appear centered, unified and singular within multidimensional and diverse social relationships.


The Stanley Plan: Collection of 13 acts that were passed to keep schools from integrating.

Tuition Grants: Device of massive resistance in which Virginia gave money from public funds to parents to send their child to private schools to prevent integration.

Unitary Status: Court declaration of no longer operating as a dual system for blacks and whites.

White-Flight: Term used to describe the trend of white families moving out of neighborhoods that black families have moved into.
VITA

Joshua Paul Cole was born in Big Rapids, Michigan. He earned a Bachelors of Science in Elementary Education from Central Michigan University, and a Masters of Administration in Educational Leadership from Wayne State University. He worked as a teacher for Detroit Public Schools in Michigan and for Chesterfield County Public Schools in Virginia. He received the 2006 Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award for Excellence in Education. He also served as an elementary school Assistant Principal in Chesterfield County.