SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

A STAFF REPORT OF
THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION
ON CIVIL RIGHTS

October 1977

U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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- Study and collect information concerning legal developments constituting a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;
- Appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;
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PREFACE

The United States Commission on Civil Rights released on August 24, 1976, its report to the Nation: Fulfilling the Letter and Spirit of the Law: Desegregation of the Nation's Public Schools.

The report's findings and recommendations were based upon information gathered during a 10-month school desegregation project. This included four formal hearings (Boston, Massachusetts; Denver, Colorado; Louisville, Kentucky; and Tampa, Florida); four open meetings held by State Advisory Committees (Berkeley, California; Corpus Christi, Texas; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Stamford, Connecticut); a survey of nearly 1,300 local school districts; and 29 case studies of communities which had difficulties with desegregation, had moderate success with desegregation, or had substantial success with desegregation.

Subsequent to the report's release, considerable interest was generated concerning the specifics of the case study findings, which, owing to space limitations in the national report, were limited to a few brief paragraphs. In an effort to comply with public requests for more detailed information, Commission staff have prepared monographs for each of the case studies. These monographs were written from the extensive field notes already collected and supplemented, if needed, with further interviews in each community. They reflect, in detail, the original case study purpose of finding which local policies, practices, and programs in each community surveyed contributed to peaceful desegregation and which ones did not.

It is hoped that the following monograph will serve to further an understanding of the school desegregation process in this Nation.

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

This report reviews the history of school desegregation in Providence, analyzes the roles of various individuals and groups in the desegregation process, and discusses the community's response.[1] The report concludes that, while problems still remain, progress toward desegregation has been made.

The City

Providence is the capital of Rhode Island and the largest city in the State. The city has experienced a steady decline in population since World War II and exemplifies the movement to the suburbs that has been a national trend since the 1940s. Total population for Providence declined from 253,504 in 1940 to 248,674 in 1950 to 207,409 in 1960. The population dropped to 179,213 in 1970, a net loss of 28,285 (or 13.6 percent) in a decade when the population of the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) increased slightly. This net loss is accounted for by a decrease in the white population of 34,187 persons (from 195,525 to 161,338) while black population increased by 4,722 (from 11,153 to 15,875). In 1970 blacks made up 8.9 percent of the population and persons of Spanish-speaking background made up 0.8 percent of the population.[2]

Since 1970 the white population has continued to decrease while the black population has increased steadily. Other minority groups such as Portuguese, Cape Verdeans, and South and Central Americans have increased dramatically through immigration.[3] The population includes other ethnic groups, each with strong political and religious ties.

The ethnic groups live in separate neighborhoods within the 16-square mile city. This division into adjacent but rather distinct neighborhoods is important to the understanding of desegregation in Providence.[4] The areas known as the East Side and the South Side contain the major concentrations of black population. Portuguese neighborhoods are located in the lower East Side, while the Hispanic neighborhoods are primarily located on the South Side. The west and north areas of the city are the centers of the white population, largely Italian and Irish. In addition, the upper East Side, where several colleges and private schools are located, as well as the southernmost and easternmost fringes of the city, are largely white areas.

The city operates under a "strong mayor" form of government which gives the mayor and, to a lesser degree, the city council, major control over city government, including the administration of the public schools. The city council is composed of 26 members, 2 from each of 13 wards. In 1976 the city council had two minority members, both black. The first was elected in 1969 and the second in 1974.[5]

The School District

The total student population of the Providence School District has steadily declined since the early 1960s. The total number decreased from 25,908 in 1966 to 20,680 in 1975, a decrease of 20.2 percent. The number of black students, however, has increased from 4,159 in 1966 to 5,228 in 1975, by which time black students made up 25.3 percent of the student body (see table A).[6]

Although the school district did not collect data on Spanish-speaking background students, information from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) indicates that Hispanic student enrollment has also increased significantly. The number of Hispanic students increased from 222 (0.9 percent) in 1970 to 379 (1.7 percent) in 1972 to 646 (3 percent) in 1973.[7]

Steadily declining school enrollment, shifting population, and the overall desegregation effort have led to the restructuring of the schools. Several times elementary and middle schools have been consolidated or closed. Because of these consolidations and closings, the total number of schools decreased from 54 in 1966 to 40 in 1975. These 40 schools include 4 high schools, 8 middle schools, and 28 elementary schools.

The size of the school district's staff has decreased since the 1960s along with the student population, but the percentage of minority teachers and administrators has increased slightly. Before 1970 blacks made up 5 percent of the teaching staff and 1 percent of the principals (see table B). At that time there were no Hispanic or Portuguese teachers or principals. In 1975 blacks made up 7.2 percent of the teachers and 9.1 percent of the principals. Four Hispanic and five Portuguese teachers have also been hired. The percentage of minority staff, however, still does not begin to approximate the percentage of minority student enrollment.

Until 1968 the policymaking body for the school system was a seven-member, all-white school committee elected on a citywide basis. In September 1968, following a voter referendum, the committee was replaced by a nine-member body appointed by the mayor. The newly appointed committee had two black members.[8]

Table A

Student Population by Race
Providence Public Schools
1966-1976

	Total	Other*	Black**	Percent
1975-76	20,680	15,452	5,228	25.3
1974	21,455	16,315	5,140	24.0
1972	23,626	18,234	5,392	22.8
1970	25,181	20,049	5,132	20.4
1968	26,674	21,421	5,253	19.7
1966	25,908	21,749	4,159	16.0

* The "other" category includes white, Hispanic, Portuguese, Asian American, and American Indian students. The Providence School District was unable to provide a more complete breakdown by racial and ethnic groups.

**The "black" category generally includes Cape Verdeans.

SOURCE: Providence, Rhode Island, Providence School District, fact sheet sent to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Table B

Staff by Race and Ethnic Group
Providence Public Schools
1967/69-1975

Year	Total	Black	% Black	His-panic	% His-panic	Portu-guese	% Portu-guese
TEACHERS:							
1975	1,223	88	7.2	4	0.3	5	0.4
1969	1,320	66	5	0	0	0	0
PRINCIPALS:							
1975	33	3	9.1	0	0	0	0
1967	38	1	2.6	0	0	0	0

SOURCE: Providence Public Schools

II. THE EVOLUTION OF DESEGREGATION

Background

According to a longtime community organizer, "Rhode Island through the early 1960s was known as the Mississippi of New England."[9] Looking back at that period, former Mayor Joseph Doorley described the general attitude toward immigrants and minority groups in Providence as "out of sight, out of mind."[10] However, other descriptions offered by interviewees included "everything was fine, everyone stayed in their own part of town," and "everyone co-existed."[11]

The process of desegregation in Providence through 1971 was reviewed in The Bus Stops Here, written by Anna Holden under a contract with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. She cites several causes for racial imbalance in the schools and describes examples of discriminatory practices in the system in the early 1960s. Among the causes cited are: residential patterns which created pockets of minorities; zoning according to racial neighborhoods; the replacement and renovation of schools on the same sites to contain minority enrollment; and a blatantly discriminatory policy allowing whites to transfer out of predominantly minority schools. The result was racially identifiable schools; the black schools were older, run-down buildings known as the "poor" schools with "undesirable student bodies."[12]

Stimulus For Desegregation

Community interest in desegregating the Providence school system began in the early 1960s. The growing national concern about integration was one of several factors leading to the organization of biracial community groups such as Help Our Public Education

(HOPE), which was formed to promote integration in the schools. The East Side Neighborhood Council, an established, predominantly black community group with a strong political orientation, also became involved in the community struggle to integrate the public schools. Then, in 1962, the passage of a bond issue to build a badly needed replacement for two old East Side elementary schools, Doyle and Jenkins, provided the catalyst for increased pressure to desegregate.

According to Anna Holden, the school department responded to this pressure by commissioning a study of the Doyle-Jenkins area. On the basis of demographic and sociological data, the study concluded that the schools as proposed would not meet community expectations for desegregation or student educational needs. The study proposed several alternatives, and biracial community groups continued to press for a more innovative approach to creating a racially balanced school. Among the suggestions were the following: a contemporary building design, a model education program, a new attendance area to bring about better racial balance, an end to the permit system allowing whites to transfer out of predominantly minority schools, and a program to educate the community on the advantages of desegregation.[13]

One principal described it this way:

> The interplay among college professors, parents, and community leaders offering ideas on the building design led to an interplay on desegregation, to a desire for racial balance, and a desire to build a new experimental model school for quality education as well.[14]

The new Lippitt Hill Elementary School, a citywide magnet school, opened September 7, 1967, 4 years after the Providence School Committee approved a replacement for the Doyle and Jenkins Schools. The kindergarten to third grade school, which was open to students throughout the city, had a well-publicized, innovative educational program. In the first year the voluntary open enrollment policy produced a student population that was 65 percent white and 35 percent black (whereas

the two schools replaced by Lippitt Hill had been as much as 97 percent black). Several persons said that a key ingredient behind the success of the new Lippitt Hill School was the designation of a principal, Tom McDonald, who immediately demonstrated his interest in multicultural education. His encouragement and "personal charisma" produced increased parental participation and inspired teacher interest in quality education.[15]

No further action was taken toward desegregating the schools, and all other schools in the district remained highly segregated as student assignments continued to reflect segregation by residential neighborhoods.

Early Efforts

The failure of the school committee to take the initiative in developing a citywide desegregation plan or policy led to a new wave of community pressure under the leadership of Rev. Raymond E. Gibson, then chairperson of the Rhode Island Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. The summer of 1966 saw the formation of the Negro Leadership Conference by biracial civil rights organizations. The new coalition pledged to end segregation in the Providence public schools. The conference negotiated with Superintendent Charles O'Connor to make an overall desegregation policy statement which called for the following: the busing of both black and white students if busing were necessary; hot lunch programs for schools without cafeterias; special training for teachers; upgrading of qualified black personnel; a public information program on the necessity of desegregation; and a reevaluation of educational materials to ensure an accurate portrayal of black Americans.[16]

Without the support of the school committee, Superintendent O'Connor proceeded to implement his policy and developed what became known as the O'Connor Plan.[17] The plan consisted of two distinct components to deal with the two major concentrations of black population. It did not include all the schools in the

city. The East Side component revolved around the completion of the new integrated magnet school, Lippitt Hill, and the development of its experimental educational program. The South Side component consisted mainly of a reassignment of students by changing attendance zones to mix blacks with whites in bordering neighborhoods. This component included few educational improvements and little busing was necessary.

The O'Connor Plan was supported by local newpapers and local and statewide educational, religious, and civil rights organizations, but there was little overall community and political support. There was opposition from both black and white neighborhood groups which opposed mandatory reassignments, rezoning, transportation of students, and what they considered to be unnecessary expenditures.

Some whites feared a possible decline in the schools' academic standards and others objected to the busing of white students into "inferior" black schools. Because the O'Connor Plan affected only those white schools bordering black residential neighborhoods, a growing number of whites opposed sending black students only to a limited number of schools. There was growing sentiment that all schools should receive black students and increasing support for Reverend Gibson's demand for a citywide desegregation plan.

The attitude of blacks toward desegregation also varied. Some simply accepted the plan as inevitable, while others supported it as a means of improving the quality of education. Still others opposed the loss of their neighborhood schools.

In general, there was very little organized opposition to or promotion of the desegregation plan, except for a few public meetings held to gather support for the plan.[18]

According to most persons interviewed, the political leadership of the city was moderately in favor of the desegregation proposals. Mayor Doorley supported it from the beginning and made his position

public. Doorley, who was reelected several times by large pluralities, said he "caught some flak" but suffered no real political damage because of his position, although he admitted "it might have been different in a close election."[19] Most members of the city council, tending to share the opinions of the neighborhoods they represented, individually were against desegregation. However, for the most part they went along with the mayor and approved plans and funds at his request.

Although not all seven members of the school committee were opposed to desegregation, the committee as a whole demonstrated no initiative. There was perhaps some realization that they would have to act sooner or later in response to pressures from community groups and to avoid court intervention.

Grassroots resistance to the O'Connor Plan grew as it became more and more an issue for political candidates. The plan, however, never came before the school committee; and in 1966 Mayor Doorley, then running for reelection, asked for its postponement until he could appoint a committee to draft a plan more acceptable to the community.[20]

III. DESEGREGATION OCCURS

The Providence Plan

The task force appointed by Mayor Doorley was a 27-person broad-based citizens' group which included educators, administrators, and community leaders and represented a cross section of the community. As Rev. Raymond Gibson stated, "A lot of people worked on the plan...many became built-in advocates for it."[21] Other interviewees commented especially on the important involvement of the academic community. On April 12, 1967, the task force issued its conclusion which contained many elements of the original O'Connor Plan and became known as the "Providence Plan." This plan called for the examination of de facto segregation and set racial balance guidelines calling for a 30 percent maximum on black enrollment in any school. The school committee immediately endorsed the plan, which was to go into effect in September 1967.[22]

The basic principle of the plan was the extensive reassignment of students from the largely all-black and all-white schools to achieve the stipulated maximum of 30 percent black enrollment in any school. The new assignments were mandatory and transportation was provided for children assigned more than a mile from their homes.

The Providence Plan was implemented in three phases. Phase I, implemented in September 1967, affected 27 of 29 elementary schools and involved the transfer of 2,600 students (54 percent black, 46 percent white). Because minorities expressed dissatisfaction with various aspects of the plan (such as the closing of some neighborhood schools and one-way busing), modifications were made during the first year and again during the 1968-69 school year. For example,

in the summer of 1967, south Providence residents objected to the proposed conversion of Flynn School, a community center for afterschool and antipoverty programs, to a citywide education center for the handicapped and slow learners. After several rallies and the threat of a school boycott, the school committee agreed to the formation of a broad-based committee of citizens and educators to develop plans for a second school with a special education program at Flynn. This second model magnet school opened on January 30, 1968, with 265 white and 150 black students.[23]

Phase II was implemented in September 1970 to desegregate middle and junior high schools by changing attendance zones and assigning a greater number of blacks to the overwhelmingly white schools in west and north Providence.[24] Other modifications were made at the elementary school level to eliminate the resegregation which had taken place in schools desegregated under Phase I. A new racial balance formula was developed as a result of a new State guideline that the "racial composition of any school shall not deviate more than 10 percent from the overall black-white ratio of all schools at the same grade level."[25] As a result of a complete reevaluation of the schools, during Phase II under Superintendent Charles Bernardo the middle schools were restructured and ninth graders were assigned to the high schools.

Efforts to desegregate the city's four high schools and to set up racially oriented feeder systems began in September 1971 during Phase III. Based on the State formula, black students should have made up between 8 to 28 percent of the high school populations. At the time, Hope High was 32 percent black and Central High was 42 percent black. In contrast, Classical High (the city's only college preparatory high school) and Mt. Pleasant High were only about 1 percent black. Admission standards at Classical were modified to make it possible for more blacks to qualify for this college prep school, and students were reassigned at the other high schools to achieve racial balance.[26]

Although "forced busing" was an issue within the community, neither the length nor the time of the bus ride was of concern to most parents. Because the distance across the city is at most 4 miles, the bus trips were relatively short and most students were bused for an average of 10 or 15 minutes.

Because as many students as possible were reassigned to desegregated schools in bordering neighborhoods, the percentage of students bused was and remains relatively small. Because of these reassignments, the number of students bused has fluctuated from 16 percent of the total school population in 1968-69 to a high of 20 percent in 1970-71 when Phase III was introduced. In February 1975 only 2,845 students were bused, approximately 14 percent of the school population.[27]

Changes in the number of students bused occurred as the school system was restructured and attendance zones changed. The first modifications were made during the second year of Phase I after white parents protested that some white schools had not been assigned black students. Additional busing of white students was introduced after blacks protested the disproportionate one-way busing of black students. In spite of these efforts, a disproportionate number of blacks are bused and the inequitable "burden" of transportation has caused minority resentment against the plan.[28] (This issue is discussed in the following section of this report.)

Implementation

Between 1964, when the desegregation effort began, and 1976, nine men headed the school department. There were three full superintendents--Charles O'Connor, Richard Briggs, and Charles Bernardo--and six acting superintendents.[29] The three superintendents have been praised for their commitment to desegregation and their efforts to desegregate the schools.[30] Nonetheless, according to several persons interviewed, the high turnover of top administrators caused a lack of continuity in leadership and contributed to many of the problems which emerged as the plan was implemented.

Primary responsibility for the details of the plan was left to Superintendent O'Connor, who worked with his assistant for Federal programs and the two coordinating principals for the East Side and the South Side. Other principals and teachers as well as professors from the local colleges and universities played smaller roles in the development of the plan.

Throughout the desegregation process, the school department received information and ideas from the community. It held several public hearings and took steps to keep the public accurately informed about the plan and to reassure apprehensive parents. Various activities were held to enable parents to meet the coordinating principals and to bring black and white parents and students together. According to one parent, "It was a tremendous community effort...the plan was properly sold...it was more than just the law-of-the-land approach...more was done by cooperation than by mandate."[31]

Two biracial community groups, the East Side Neighborhood Council (ESNC) and Help Our Public Education (HOPE), actively promoted the desegregation plan. They placed full-page ads in the Providence Journal and circulated other information asking all citizens to support the desegregation effort. Other biracial coalitions such as the Fearless Fifty (a group of civil rights leaders from the South Side), the Urban League, and the NAACP also continued to pressure leaders not to retreat in the face of opposition.[32]

The media, particularly the Providence Journal, were generally considered extremely cooperative in informing the public about the plan. The Journal supported the Providence Plan through its editorials and was described by many as engendering a positive, calming influence on the community. The paper presented the plan clearly, discussed possible effects in detail, and publicized statements by political and community leaders in support of the plan. It provided valuable historical and statistical information and encouraged community participation in desegregation.

Throughout the desegregation process, the school department actively sought Federal and State funds. Substantial funds were received under Titles I, III, and VII of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1972 Emergency School Assistance Act (ESAA).

The school committee is criticized by Anna Holden for inefficiency and lack of leadership. Ms. Holden reports that the committee frequently cancelled meetings, held secret sessions, kept inadequate records, and ran up a sizable deficit.[33] As the community became involved in the desegregation process the public became aware of the school committee's inability to function efficiently and increasingly lost confidence in the group. In 1968 Mayor Doorley campaigned for reelection on the promise to improve the situation, and in August of that year a small number of voters turned out to approve a referendum calling for a nine-member board appointed by the mayor to replace the elected committee. The budget of the new group was to be controlled by the city council. Several weeks later Mayor Doorley appointed the nine members, of whom two were black.

The desegregation effort also affected the composition of the faculty in the Providence public schools. Prior to 1967 there were no black principals or assistant principals and no blacks in administrative positions. By 1971 there were five black administrators, including one middle school principal and one special assistant for equal educational opportunity. As shown in table B, 22 black, 4 Hispanic, and 5 Portuguese teachers were hired between 1969 and 1975.

The desegregation plan also provided for compensatory personnel and for other efforts to improve the quality of education in the schools. In addition to 11 new elementary guidance teachers and 8 reading specialists, 72 aides were hired. These aides, predominantly black, were trained to be teacher aides, audiovisual assistants, bus monitors, and community liaisons under a "New Careers Program" sponsored by the local poverty program.[34] As a result of the new staff,

class sizes were reduced and special remedial programs were offered.

Staff training and development workshops were given for all teachers and counselors before and during the implementation of all phases of the plan. Several sessions per year were conducted on behavior modification, interpersonal relations, and the use of innovative programs. However, community leaders questioned the adequacy of the training and some interviewees felt teachers had not been sufficiently sensitized to teach in a multiracial and multiethnic classroom.

Although one of the requests of the Negro Leadership Conference had been the evaluation of educational materials to ensure an accurate portrayal of the American black, no real progress was made until after repeated demands by high school students in the early 1970s. At that time black history classes were introduced. Similarly, no provisions were made for bilingual-bicultural education during the first few years of desegregation. Only minimal programs have been undertaken in relation to the Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Hispanic populations, which have expanded since 1970. These programs have been criticized by Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Hispanic leaders as inadequate.[35]

Community Concerns

Despite the support of the media and certain community groups, the desegregation effort was not backed by a large number of parents. According to many persons interviewed, parental opposition impeded the implementation of the Providence Plan and increased the tensions and problems in the schools in the late 1960s and early 1970s. White parents were said to have feared that academic standards would be lowered in the desegregated schools. Some continue to feel that desegregation has not only lowered the academic level of the system, but also that the effort to "understand" students of a different race has lowered disciplinary standards and led to a permissive and unruly atmosphere in the schools. Some white parents also objected to

the busing, particularly of white students into black neighborhoods. The white community for the most part maintained a strong desire for the status quo--a system of neighborhood schools. Despite the number of parents who did not favor desegregation, no strong, organized opposition to the plan developed. However, some white parents supported the plan as a means for improving the entire school system.

The minority community, on the other hand, strongly supported the plan as a means of improving the quality of educational opportunity even if busing were required. There was an almost universal feeling among blacks that desegregation would allow minorities access to better facilities, better schools, and a better education. However, some blacks opposed losing their neighborhood schools and objected to the disproportionate number of blacks bused. Others expressed fears about the atmosphere in the schools after the reassignment of students and about the future of their children in a system still dominated by whites.

According to one community leader, Gioconda Salazar, the Hispanic community in Providence was generally supportive throughout the implementation of the desegregation plan.[36] Many Hispanics, however, now believe desegregation will mean greater dispersal of Hispanic students. While they would like their children's English to be improved by increased contact with white students, they fear dispersal could hinder the preservation of their own language and culture. Ms. Salazar stated that she has heard several complaints that Hispanic children do not feel comfortable in the "white atmosphere" in the schools and that some were made to feel inferior because of their language and customs. The Hispanic community, she added, is becoming increasingly concerned over the inadequacy of the school system's bilingual-bicultural program.[37]

Discipline and Racial Tensions

Each phase of the Providence Plan was marked by waves of tension sometimes resulting in serious

disruptions. Some of the problems may have stemmed from an overreaction on the part of school officials or parents to normal disciplinary incidents such as minor scuffles or the use of bad language. However, major school disruptions with racial overtones occurred at various times. Some incidents were caused by white students, others by black students: whites were threatened in minority neighborhoods; buses with black students were stoned in white neighborhoods. Uniformed and plainclothes police were called into the schools on various occasions.[38]

In 1968 Hope High School was closed for short periods three different times. In May 1969 there were several outbursts at two junior highs and two high schools, including a student rampage through Hope High School, which caused extensive property damage. On that occasion, teachers demanded police protection and refused to return to school for 4 days. Racial conflict closed Central High for 1 week in October 1971. Disturbances and student boycotts closed the school again in March 1972, and in April of the same year Mt. Pleasant High School was forced to close for a few days. September through December of 1972 was again a period of severe tension and unrest at Hope and Central High Schools. More than 80 students were disciplined for their invclvement in the fall disturbances and the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) was called in to investigate the incidents. Then, on September 19, 1974, a disturbance involving several hundred persons at Central High resulted in several injuries and arrests. Approximately 25 police officers were required to restore and maintain order. The school operated on a reduced schedule for the next 2 weeks but attendance declined from 1,900 students to as few as 333. This incident caused tensions to increase at Mt. Pleasant High, and racial scuffling broke out in that school 1 week later. Most students left school and a small group was later involved in a shoplifting raid at a downtown store.

There is no general agreement on the role played by Providence police during these conflicts. Their role in quelling disturbances in schools was described by

some as a routinely good performance of duties. Black students, however, have complained of heavy-handed police activity and many believe police in the schools pose a threat to blacks and cause increased resentment. Several persons interviewed, including a retired policeman, called for more training to increase police sensitivity to minorities.[39]

Within the schools the nature of discipline problems changed during the process of desegregation. According to several teachers, the most frequent discipline problems prior to desegregation were tardiness and smoking whereas after desegregation general unruliness and defiance of authority became more common.

IV. IMPACT: SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

Desegregation that began in 1966 had a major effect on the entire school system. In addition to the desegregation of the schools, the school structure itself was changed as 14 elementary schools closed and 2 experimental model magnet schools opened.

Although it is difficult to measure the 9-year process, most persons interviewed said that there are many advantages to the desegregated system and that the Providence Plan is working moderately well. Persons praised the increased community involvement in public education which grew out of the desegregation process as well as academic improvements such as new teaching methodologies, nongraded curriculum, and other special programs at the magnet schools. Other advantages cited that are more directly related to desegregation include greater understanding among and less stereotyping of different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and better preparation for life in a pluralistic society. Several persons said that race relations in the community had improved since the early years of the process. One white parent looked to the future with optimism:

> The first classes integrated in 1967 will be graduating soon...there have been very few unpleasant social experiences....The future looks good on the basis of the experience of a whole new generation who never attended anything but desegregated schools.[40]

Although statistical evidence was not available at the time of this study, the majority of educators and community leaders interviewed said that they firmly believed that the quality of education was improved by the desegregation process. They view the process of

desegregation as occurring over an extended period. They realize that they have gone through a long learning period, during which many fears and myths were destroyed. They acknowledge growth and a willingness of the community to continue working together to ensure total desegregation in Providence. Former Mayor Doorley was enthusiastic about the plan. "The plan's successes far surpassed our expectations," he said.[41]

Although the "phasing" process or gradual method of desegregation was supported by some interviewees, others criticized the process as being only a partial solution to the problem and as creating added occasions for uprootings and confusion. However, almost all persons interviewed agreed that many problems related to desegregation remain and that many needs of the students are not being met.

One major problem is the continuing underrepresentation of minority teachers in the school system. In 1975 there were 88 black teachers on the faculty of 1,223 persons, or 7 percent of the total. There were four Hispanic and five Portuguese teachers.

Because of budget cutbacks, the school department's efforts to hire additional minorities have been greatly restricted. Administrators said that they were constrained not only by union contract but also by State law which requires the school system to rehire laid off staff (who are mostly white) before hiring new teachers.[42]

Persons interviewed stressed the importance of increasing minority staff both to provide role models for the minority students and to improve communication between faculty and minority students. Parents, community leaders, and students said that insensitivity on the part of many teachers remains a serious problem and that the human awareness training offered at the time of the study was not adequate. They said that most white teachers did not understand the lifestyles of minority students, were unable to communicate with them, and were largely insensitive to their needs. In additions, many teachers were described as having low academic expectations and high "behavioral problems"

expectations of minority students, a factor which was seen as restricting the students' development.

A second problem frequently cited is the tendency toward resegregation in the classroom and the continuation of a "white" atmosphere in most of the schools. These problems are summarized in the administration's application for an ESAA grant, which says: "Physical desegregation on a systemwide basis has been successful. However, in individual schools racial isolation persists and quality integrated education remains a vague and distant goal."[43] Minority parents and students said that, despite the progress in reassigning students to desegregate the schools, the atmosphere in many schools is not good.

Although the white student population is diminishing steadily, thus increasing the percentage of minority students, the schools continue to be dominated by an overall "white" atmosphere. Minority students do not feel "at home" and do not participate fully in school activities, according to several interviewees. Some interviewees also said that ability grouping, phasing, tracking, or "reading by objectives" programs have tended to resegregate the classrooms.

The high schools continue to retain their identities as "white" or "black" schools. Classical and Central, two high schools within one block of each other, have entirely separate facilities. They have been and continue to be socially, racially, and educationally separate. Classical always was and remains known as a white, college prep school. Central always was and remains known as a vocational school for minorities and lower-income whites.

The degree to which nonacademic activities have been desegregated varies from school to school and from activity to activity. There is little participation of minority students in extracurricular and afterschool social activities except for athletic programs; however, there are some examples of good interracial student activity during school. The most important of these is the establishment in the high schools of biracial committees which meet with principals and

teachers in the effort to increase minority student participation in all activities.

A third problem is the school department's failure to maintain racial balance in the schools in accordance with the State guideline. Because of shifting population and enrollment patterns, in 1973 several schools were out of compliance. Some exceeded the guidelines by only a few percentage points while others were more seriously out of balance. In fall 1973, for example, according to a U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare survey, Ralph Elementary School had only 7.5 percent minority enrollment (16 blacks out of 214) and Regent Elementary had only 9.7 percent (29 blacks out of 300), while Fogarty Elementary had a high minority student population of 70.5 percent (213 blacks and 115 Spanish Americans out of a total of 471) and Flynn Elementary had 40.6 percent (192 blacks out of 473). Similarly, in the middle schools the HEW survey shows West Middle School with 17.4 percent blacks (152 blacks out of 873) while Bishop Middle School had 50.2 percent minorities (170 blacks, 136 Spanish Americans, and 6 Asian American out of a total of 635).[44] In addition to the declining white population and shifting black population, the dramatic increase in Hispanic and Portuguese population has focused attention on the lack of adequate multilingual-multicultural programs for language-minority groups.

A fourth problem is the disproportionate number of black students bused under the plan. In 1975, of the 2,545 elementary and middle-grade students bused, 1,370 (or slightly more than a third) of the 3,947 blacks in those grades were bused while 1,175 (or 10 percent) of the whites were bused.[45]

The issue of busing continues to attract public attention. However, a white parent whose children have been bused for several years said that, because all neighborhoods are involved in the busing, "busing is not such a bad word anymore."[46]

There is a sharp division of opinion concerning the effect of the national controversy over busing on the situation in Providence. Some say it encourages local

activity to prevent disruptions which occurred in other cities, while others say the controversy jeopardizes local efforts by encouraging those opposed to desegregation and increasing community tensions. Mayor Doorley said:

> Especially when the President and Congress speak against busing it is hard to convince local people it is good, even when it is working here.[47]

NOTES

1. Reports of these interviews are on file at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C., 20425. All information not specifically footnoted in this monograph is derived from information given by a number of people during the interviews for this study.

2. The Providence SMSA includes part of Worcester and Norfolk Counties in Massachusetts in the north, part of Kent County in the west, and the eastern edge of Washington County on the south. U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Characteristics of the Population, 1970 Census of Population, Rhode Island, Tables 11, 24, 67, 91, and 97; Characteristics of the Population, 1960 Census of Population, Rhode Island, table 21.

3. Charles Fortes, executive director, The Providence Corporation, staff interview, Providence, R.I., Jan. 29, 1976 (hereafter cited as Fortes Interview).

4. Anna Holden, The Bus Stops Here (New York: Agathon Press, 1974), pp. 132-39. This book is used extensively as a source for this monograph.

5. Joseph Doorley, mayor, Providence, R.I., staff interview, Providence, R.I., Feb. 5, 1976 (hereafter cited as Doorley Interview).

6. Providence, R.I., School Department, factsheet sent to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, January 1976 (hereafter cited as School Department Factsheet). The school department provided data for only the black and the total school population. White, Hispanic, Asian American, and white Portuguese students are included in the total. Persons whose families came from Cape Verde, who are sometimes classified as Portuguese, and who have a separate cultural and racial identity from both white Portuguese and blacks, are generally classified as black.

7. U.S., Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Survey of Elementary and Secondary Public Schools, 1970, 1972, and 1973.

8. Doorley Interview.

9. Fortes Interview.

10. Doorley Interview.

11. These quotes are typical of the comments made by many persons interviewed and cannot be attributed to any one person.

12. Holden, The Bus Stops Here, pp. 154-67.

13. Ibid., p. 169.

14. Mary O'Brien, coordinating principal, Providence School Department, staff interview, Providence, R.I., Jan. 28, 1976.

15. Ibid., and others.

16. Holden, The Bus Stops Here, p. 179.

17. Ibid., pp. 179-85.

18. Derived from information gained during interviews for this study; also from Holden, The Bus Stops Here.

19. Doorley Interview.

20. Ibid.

21. Rev. Raymond Gibson, staff interview, Providence, R.I., Feb. 4, 1976.

22. Providence, R.I., School Board, Minutes, "Citywide Integration in the Providence Public Schools," Apr. 13, 1967.

23. Holden, The Bus Stops Here, pp. 213-23.

24. Providence, R.I., School Board, minutes, "Part II, Citywide Integration in the Providence Public Schools," July 9, 1970.

25. Holden, The Bus Stops Here, p. 258.

26. Holden, The Bus Stops Here, pp. 259-60.

27. School Department Factsheet.

28. Holden, The Bus Stops Here, pp. 203-07.

29. A new superintendent, Dr. Jerome B. Jones, has been hired since the research for this study was completed.

30. Robert Ricci, acting superintendent, Providence School Department, staff interview, Providence, R.I., Jan. 28, 1976, and others.

31. Cornelia Lanou, white parent active in the Parent Teacher Association, staff interview, Providence, R.I., Feb. 6, 1976 (hereafter cited as Lanoue Interview).

32. Holden, The Bus Stops Here, pp. 174-76.

33. Ibid., pp. 233-35.

34. Ibid., p. 199.

35. Gioconda Salazar, director, Spanish Speaking Program of the Urban League of Rhode Island, staff interview, Providence, R.I., Jan. 29, 1976 (hereafter cited as Salazar Interview); Fortes Interview; and others.

36. Salazar Interview.

37. Ibid.

38. The source for the incidents described in the following paragraphs are numerous articles from the Providence Journal, which are on file at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C.

39. Harold Doran, retired police officer, Providence Police Department, and assistant personnel director of the Rhode Island Commission on Human Rights, staff interview, Providence, R.I., Feb. 6, 1976, and others.

40. Lanou Interview.

41. Doorley Interview.

42. Dr. Theodore J. Haig has been named to oversee the school department's equal opportunity, desegregation, and affirmative action programs since the research for this study was completed.

43. Providence, R.I., School Department, Application for Assistance under the Emergency School Aid Act, 1975-76, p. 14.

44. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "Survey of Elementary and Secondary Schools," fall 1973, vol. I, p. 23.

45. Arthur M. Zarella, student relations administrator, Providence School Department, letter to Emilio Abeyta, USCCR staff, Mar. 4, 1976.

46. Lanou Interview.

47. Doorley Interview.

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