



# Progressive Education in Black High Schools

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDY, 1940-1946

Craig Kridel

#### DEDICATION

To William A. Robinson, William H. Brown, and Secondary School Study teachers who, through their faith in experimentation and belief in progressive education methods, sought to build school communities that were more compassionate, more generous, more humane, and more thoughtful.

To those compassionate, generous, humane, and thoughtful Secondary School Study teachers and students who participated in this Museum of Education research project.

# Progressive Education in Black High Schools

**THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDY, 1940-1946**

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a financially-supported research unit of the College of Education and an institutional member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

*The Secondary School Study Exhibition*  
[www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html)  
[www.museumofeducation.info/ssss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/ssss)

This limited edition exhibition catalog is published to commemorate the seventh-fifth anniversary of the Secondary School Study.

WITH SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE SPENCER FOUNDATION  
AND THE DANIEL TANNER FOUNDATION

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Design: BellRose Studio

Published in Columbia, South Carolina  
ISBN 978-0-692-55579-8  
Manufactured in the United States of America

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## Preface

BETWEEN 1940 AND 1946, the Rockefeller Foundation's General Education Board funded the Secondary School Study, involving sixteen high schools in the American Southeast. [1.] While this catalog serves to introduce the experimental project to educational historians and researchers, perhaps more importantly, the publication features—if not celebrates—this 1940s program for the schools' students, teachers, and communities. *Progressive Education in Black High Schools: The Secondary School Study, 1940–1946* includes images and text from the Museum of Education's web exhibitions that have been constructed during the past six years and invites Museum patrons and those individuals from the sixteen communities to learn more about the important and, alas, forgotten educational practices of these remarkable schools. With the release of this catalog in 2015, the Museum of Education officially recognizes the 75th anniversary of this historic project.

The Museum's web exhibitions, presenting over 500 images and 750 statements about principals, teachers, instructional methodology, curricular programs, and civil rights activities, focus primarily on the academic life of individual schools during the 1940s. The vignettes are not meant to lessen the accomplishments and accolades from prior or subsequent decades, nor do they diminish the significance of the social and athletic dimensions of school life. Rather, the exhibits describe the experimental efforts of 1940s progressive educators as they sought to further conceptions of black secondary education. School portrayals have been

crafted intentionally to be suggestive—to allow important questions to hover over the catalog and web exhibitions rather than to be answered with questionable certainty. For that reason, the exhibits and catalog are less interpretive than what readers have come to expect from synoptic texts and conventional school histories. Research findings and claims for this project are modest: our exhibits do not articulate a black education methodology of the era, highlight the glories of progressive education, or even confirm the impact of the Secondary School Study, nor are they intended to do so. Nonetheless, from a careful review of this catalog and the web exhibitions, school alumni, researchers, and educators may garner many insights into the efforts of period administrators, teachers, students, and parents as they sought to develop and construct strong secondary school communities.

Much has been written about black education during the Jim Crow era; yet, as Adam Fairclough has noted, while scholarship is substantial, "direct evidence from the classroom is surprisingly scarce" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 48). This assessment has also been made within the field of curriculum studies by Herbert Kliebard in *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* (2004) and, more recently, underscored by Larry Cuban in *Inside the Black Box of Classroom Practice* (2013). Such lack of classroom portrayals is complicated further by the traditional themes of historical research in black education. Contemporary historians, often drawing upon period reports and records, seek to describe national (albeit,

often Southern) trends, statewide efforts, and/or individual school accounts (Anderson, 1988; Siddle Walker, 1996; Fairclough, 2007; Rury and Hill, 2011). Important insights about black education arise from such research, and this project could not have been undertaken or, in fact, conceived without this essential work. These historical studies, however, most typically cluster statistics, events, and policies by common time periods and locales rather than from common instructional and curricular methodologies. In contrast, the Museum's Secondary School Study research project seeks to enter the classrooms of the past by documenting a specific type of educational program that attempted to explore, experiment, and implement practices from a common curricular perspective—progressive education as articulated during the 1930s and 1940s from experimental projects coordinated and guided by the Progressive Education Association.

The Museum's exhibitions adopt a research methodology of institutional vignette, arising from various biographical traditions as well as from social science portraiture as popularized by Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot in *The Good High School* (1983) and practiced by Vanessa Siddle Walker in *Their Highest Potential* (1996). Yet, this research project is conceived less as a series of complete school narratives and more as an institutional mosaic (or a type of "prosopographical collage") of various school materials and comments from the teachers and students themselves. Further, these websites are works in progress and represent a research charrette as additional historical material is discovered and fresh memories, recollections, and insights come forth from participants and other researchers. My effort is to inform and, I hope, to encourage others to research further. Each exhibition calls—

cries out—for articles, dissertations, and books about the participating sites and their educational leaders, and I urge alumni and researchers to prepare their own accounts, histories, and memoirs of these important high schools. The catalog and web exhibitions have been prepared for a general audience and have attempted to refrain from using exhaustive bibliographic citations. Included in this publication, however, are three essays written for the educational researcher that address common misunderstandings of progressive education, experimental studies, and human relations from the 1940s.

By visiting each school site and examining primary materials, I came to realize that the Secondary School Study was an important extension of the work of the Progressive Education Association—yet, this research project could not compare in gravitas and educational significance with the Eight-Year Study and would not become a sequel to *Stories of the Eight-Year Study*, written by Robert Bullough and myself. Through my fieldwork, however, I have been able to witness the Secondary School Study's meaning for today as, in locale after locale, I met sincere, strong, righteous individuals—school alumni—engaged in struggles to inform their local politicians, school administrators, teachers, students, and even their children of the importance and uniqueness of their schools' communities. They were attempting to reconcile love for their schools with their anger toward school segregation and the countless acts of racism that they endured. Our conversations—official oral history interviews and unofficial discussions—were complex as so many interviewees would lapse into sorrow at the loss of community in today's African American settings. Nonetheless, their focus remained strong—to bring

recognition to a school that was selected to be included in this historic General Education Board project.

I realized that my efforts were not directed primarily for other educational historians who gather at the American Educational Research Association and History of Education Society conferences. Rather, this publication serves as a means to reinitiate conversations with school boards and city governments and to renew quests for school markers, displays of honor, and community centers at historic school sites. Indeed, the school descriptions and web exhibitions are more commemorative than critical. With efforts to further our scholarly understanding of curricular experimentation during the later Jim Crow period and the long civil rights era, I envision the Museum of Education's efforts more as an act of archival agency as school administrators and civic leaders are urged to establish places of honor—a museum, alumni room, or library/media center display—that serve to preserve precious documents and photographs of academic life, as has already occurred at some of the sites. I hope my efforts can in some way make a difference for these individual communities.

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As William A. Robinson and William H. Brown, directors of the Study, stated in their 1946 report, *Serving Negro Schools*, "The staff of the Secondary School Study acknowledges with profound gratitude the helpful cooperation of those who contributed their experience and counsel to the sixteen schools and to the two staff members of the Study" (Brown and Robinson, 1946, p. 8). Similarly, I wish to acknowledge with profound gratitude the many individuals who assisted with this

contemporary examination. My research quest began during an informal luncheon in 2001. Fate led me to Pearl High School alumnus Alice Epperson and, during our conversation, I realized that the Secondary School Study would become part of my life. For the next six years I visited archival collections in preparation for this research odyssey while also completing research on Progressive Education Association projects. From 2007 to 2015, I conducted archival and field-based research and staged over 150 oral history sessions with approximately 250 former students and teachers (between the ages of 75 and 102), community-educational leaders, and local historians.

Funding from the Spencer Foundation afforded me the opportunity to visit each school site to conduct oral history interviews and search for archival materials. During my preliminary archival work I decided that interviews must be in person. I could have increased the number of interviewees substantially by initiating telephone interviews and, indeed, some school portrayals could have benefitted. Yet, those issues of the oral historian—trust, rapport, and outsider status—caused me to realize that telephone content would be self-defeating for the intent of this project—namely, portraying experimentation in 1940s black progressive schools rather than preparing sixteen detailed school histories. At times I have questioned this decision; however, the in-person sessions proved so delicate to conduct that I believe I would have rarely captured similar degrees of thoughtfulness and good will via telephone interviews. I will forever be grateful to those Study students and teachers who accepted my invitation to participate in this atypical research project. Contemporary portraits of all 1940s teachers and students who have graciously partici-

pated in the Museum's Secondary School Study Oral History Project appear, as a form of appreciation and scholarly significance, in this publication. The accompanying web exhibitions, currently accessible at [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss), display many more remarks from each contributor.

I wish to thank those individuals who served as site coordinators for the Museum of Education, helping to organize my visits: Alice D. Epperson, Nashville, Tennessee; Brenda Dalton James, Greensboro, North Carolina; Alma Loftin Johnson, Natchitoches, Louisiana; Sedonia C. Johnson, Scotlandville, Louisiana; Genevieve Lancaster, Rocky Mount, North Carolina; James Mallard, Fort Worth, Texas; Cleveland Mayo, Newport News, Virginia; Thelma Brown Rush, Vicksburg, Mississippi; W. Mack Rush, Tallahassee, Florida; Mary Jo Smiley, Montgomery, Alabama; N. Carolyn Thompson, Americus, Georgia; Beverly Washington, Fort Worth, Texas; and Dale Williams, Moultrie, Georgia.

I greatly appreciate Daniel Tanner's interest in this project and the advice I have received from Robert V. Bullough Jr., Daniella Ann Cook, Chuck McDew, KaaVonnia Hinton, Hilton Kelly, Wayne Urban, and Alan Wieder. I thank Clifford Bevan, Louise DeSalvo, and Kenneth Wollitz for displaying to me the art of research and writing. I extend utmost appreciation to the Spencer Foundation for supporting my research through its Small Research Grants program. I thank the Rockefeller Archive Center for a 2008 Research Fellowship and a 2011 Scholar in Residence appointment. My many months of study at this glorious research center offered time for me to truly understand the Secondary School Study and to recognize the significance of implementative research and cooperative studies from

the 1940s. Rockefeller Archive Center staff—James Allen Smith, Michele Hiltzik Beckerman, Erwin Levold, Carol Radovich, and Thomas Rosenbaum—provided great assistance. Web exhibitions and site-exhibits were made possible with funding provided by the U.S.C. Museum of Education, a research unit of the College of Education and an institutional member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. I greatly appreciate the efforts of Lyn Bell Rose for the design and production of this publication and to Mary R. Bull and Melissa Meyer for assistance with the preparation of this catalog. This project was inspired by the important research of Cynthia Gibson Hardy, a doctoral student friend and colleague, who completed her Ph.D. dissertation, "A Historical Review of the Secondary School Study of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes," at Ohio State University in 1977.

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PLEASE KNOW THAT THIS EXHIBITION catalog represents an invitation to visit the Museum's web exhibitions that serve as an introduction to a significant but overlooked experiment in American education: the exploration of progressive education practices in black high schools. This catalog's length is finite; I am unable to include the many insightful comments of faith in education and the public schools that arose during the oral history interviews. Neither can this publication convey the numerous descriptions of societal injustices as well as the various subtle acts of pedagogical activism for social justice. Each school's web exhibition includes a display that recognizes these forms of micro-activism and disobedience, and I encourage patrons to visit these pages. The schools of the Second-

ary School Study were remarkable places and, even with cultural racism and institutional difficulties, display the accomplishments of committed educators and students who were exploring and experimenting with fundamental progressive education ideology.

I hope that through this institutional mosaic, the catalog and accompanying exhibitions will cause patrons to reconsider the important-yet-forgotten heritage of black secondary school education prior to the *Briggs v. Elliott* case and the *Brown* decision, to acknowledge the true injustices of a separate-and-allegedly-equal educational system, to recognize the names of distinguished black progressive educators and high schools from the 1940s, to appreciate the importance of preserving as well as presenting the material culture of those courageous teachers who forged strong educational programs within segregated communities, and to learn further of a spirit of progressive education that embraced cooperation, experimentation, and “democracy as a way of life” in the struggle for civil rights and social justice.

#### NOTES

1. While the official General Education Board funding for the Secondary School Study was expected to end in 1946, funds were allocated through June 1947 (GEB, 1946). In addition, specific site activities continued into the 1946–1947 and 1947–1948 school years. The project, however, is currently viewed as a six-year study.



# Understanding Experimentation in 1940s Black High Schools

## Origins of the Secondary School Study

*Prior to 1940 the Negro high schools of the South had been largely out of contact with the insights and school procedures resulting from experimental efforts and studies in the high schools of the nation. Several of the states had embarked upon programs of curricular improvement but there was much feeling on the part of the schools that these programs were being imposed on them and much confusion existed regarding the goals to be achieved and techniques for achieving them.*

—L. F. Palmer, principal of Huntington High School (1943b, p. 1)

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDY, sponsored by the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes (ACSSN) and funded by the General Education Board (GEB), was officially established in 1940 to assist high school teachers in experimenting with their administrative, curricular, and instructional methodology. While most black educators sought to achieve accreditation for schools, some believed that teachers were not involved in progressive education's "stream of educational ideas" and, thus, were placing too much emphasis on existing, traditional practices (Robinson, 1937b). With assistance from members of the Progressive Education Association (PEA), Secondary School Study participants came together to reconsider the basic purposes of secondary education and to address classroom problems—those curricular and cultural issues that so greatly affected the education of black youth. The Study staff viewed the method for educational change as guided discourse among school staff in what became a highly defined practice of "cooperation" as a way to construct common beliefs and values. By articulating an integrated and shared philosophy of education, Study

teachers experimented with activities that embraced the meaning of schooling in a democracy and examined the nature of learning and the relationship among student, teacher, and society.

As is the case with most educational studies, the project's foundation was established well before its official approval. One can easily view the origins of the Secondary School Study as having occurred at the 1937 ACSSN conference when the Committee on Resolutions reported that select black high schools should participate in the soon-to-be-launched Southern Study (1938–45), an experimental project for white schools funded by the GEB and sponsored by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. A one-person movement to initiate a high school study to introduce progressive curricular practices into the field of black secondary education also began at this conference with William A. Robinson's presentation, "Progressive Education and the Negro." Robinson, who would become director of the Study, pronounced the importance and significance of progressivism and publicly called for black schools to engage in experimentation similar to the Progressive

Education Association's in-progress Eight-Year Study, staged between 1930 and 1942 (Robinson, 1937b). [1.]

W. A. Robinson would not have been addressing a particularly supportive audience of black educators at this December 1937 meeting. The Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes was established not for experimentation, curriculum development, or the formulation of an educational philosophy; rather, the relatively new organization sought to support black colleges and high schools in their efforts to obtain accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The secondary schools' quest for this elusive sanction was intimately connected to the struggle for increased funding and better school facilities. Accreditation was seen as a modest but mandatory form of achieving equity. Previous ACSSN conference sessions typically bemoaned funding inequities, re-examined secondary school standards (for which there was a GEB-funded Southern Association Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards project underway), and reconsidered the vocational role and mission of the black high school (Carrothers, 1939; Brown, A., 1944). Yet, Robinson's presentation maintained that facilities and funding would not suffice—that black educators must redefine quality of life for teachers and students. He stated, "While I deplore the prevailing tendency of school officials to neglect Negro schools in the matter of spending the public's money, I hope for the day when the application of the principles currently known as progressive education will point the way to . . . the improvement of the experiences which are offered Negro children in our schools" (Robinson, 1937b, p. 64). Robinson's lifelong activism and struggle for civil rights never

faltered; however, his message to educators in 1937 was quite clear: more money was not enough to further black education. More carefully planned and thoughtful curriculum and instructional practices were necessary too.

Robinson's turn to curricular experimentation is somewhat curious, especially since in his role during the mid-1920s as president of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, he helped to lead a movement for the accreditation of black schools. While he would become a spokesperson for black progressive education through his involvement in this project, he had not publicly embraced its significance before 1937 (although it must be noted that he was serving as principal of a recognized progressive school, the Atlanta University Laboratory School). Merely a year before his presentation, he was lamenting the seemingly hopeless state of black education in the pages of *The Journal of Negro Education* as a participant in the 1936 symposium, "The Reorganization and Redirection of Negro Education." Robinson could not accept the traditional, narrow vocational role of black high schools, nor did he hold faith in a system where black educators had such little political control. Rather than turning toward progressive education, he maintained that black educators "must be courageous enough to arouse social unrest and a lively dissatisfaction with things as they are" (Robinson, 1936, p. 400). Activism rather than experimentation represented his method for change, similar to his participation in civil rights protests during the 1920s in Harlem with his roommate, E. Franklin Frazier (Robinson Jr., 2011; Delany and Delany, 1993, p. 137). In this mid-1930s critique of black education, Robinson had yet to conceive fully a vision for educational change. And, similarly, no other educators in the 1936 symposium

were turning to progressivism as a panacea for black high schools. In fact, *The Journal of Negro Education* symposium would implicitly portray the dismal state of black secondary education (later described by Secondary School Study staff as the “orphan of black education”) and focus primarily on the quest for school accreditation. At this 1937 ACSSN meeting, the importance of state certification would have guided the attention of most if not all black educational leaders, including Robinson whose career began as a school inspector for the state of North Carolina.

The year 1937 proved to be a turning point for Robinson. He published, as a prelude to his December 1937 ACSSN presentation, a brief essay in the spring 1937 *Virginia Teachers Bulletin* where he would define progressive education. With direct allusions to the PEA's Eight-Year Study, he conceived progressive education not as a set of beliefs or endorsed educational practices but as faith in the need for experimentation. Recognizing the inadequate facilities of black schools, he encouraged educators to adopt an experimental attitude and to reconceive “the school assembly, the cafeteria, the playground, the study hall, the homeroom, the office, the faculty meeting—all of the many situations in our schools . . . waiting for thoughtful changes” (Robinson, 1937a, p. 26). Robinson's faith in the process of educational experimentation was not unlike the perspective underway with the Eight-Year Study; yet, this was not mere hope for any type of change—experimentation was based upon discourse and cooperation among those actively engaged in program development, and through a loosely conceived notion of the experimental method, a common vision of progressive education would emerge. Such a perspective placed great emphasis upon the importance of a school philosophy—not a pre-

defined list of aphorisms but, instead, a series of common principles, forged through discussion and constructed during hours of meetings where individuals described *their* beliefs and aspirations (Bullough and Kridel, 2011). Robinson's view of progressive education became more tangible during the summer of 1937 after spending a semester at Ohio State University studying with Eight-Year Study staff and teachers from the Ohio State Laboratory School (considered one of the more innovative schools in the PEA's project). That summer term displayed to Robinson what types of curricular activities could be initiated at the secondary level and introduced to him the many examples of on-site progressive experimentation around the country.

It was said that in 1929, when progressive educators arrived in St. Louis for their national PEA meeting, they seemed ready to launch a recognizable progressive secondary education movement. This conference would inaugurate efforts to stage the Eight-Year Study. Similarly, after Robinson's 1937 summer study, he was ready to launch a progressive education crusade for black high schools and introduce a movement to reconceive the purposes of black secondary school education and, perhaps more importantly, redefine how black educators could initiate change in their schools and communities. Robinson's 1937 presentation, “Progressive Education and the Negro,” followed months later with his urging the ACSSN membership to engage in secondary school curricular experimentation. He would continue his studies the next year, as a GEB fellow, and attend the Progressive Education Association's 1938 Eastern Summer Workshop at Sarah Lawrence College (with its emphasis upon guidance, human relations, and the study of adolescence). This was not a mere weekend professional development

seminar. For six weeks, Robinson participated in various sessions with educators from throughout the United States. Workshop participants discussed and examined the purposes and individual problems of secondary schools, developing curricular materials—resource units—for use in their classrooms. The experience proved transformational for Robinson as it did for so many of the teachers and administrators who participated in these legendary PEA workshops (Ryan and Tyler, 1939).

Robinson seemed to combine his new found faith in progressive education with his past belief in confrontation for social change and educational equity. While he requested GEB support for a curriculum development project similar to the Southern Study, he also challenged the staff. Archival documents implicate him in maneuvering a 1937 ACSSN resolution to state that the organization “participate in any experiment in progressive education set up in the southern region,” and in urging the GEB to include black high schools among those white schools selected for the Southern Study (Favrot, 1939; Davenport, 1937, p. 35). He was well aware that the Southern Association was to receive support from the GEB for a white high school experimental project, a study that had been under development, and Southern Association staff was in the process of selecting schools for participation (Wraga, 2014). No southern schools—black or white—had been included in the Eight-Year Study (although a number of the participating sites were desegregated), and no black schools were to be included in the Southern Study. With allusions to democracy and citizenship, Robinson was challenging the GEB’s Southern Program staff, the Southern Association, and ACSSN, knowing that the Southern Study would never become a biracial project.

Nonetheless, Robinson would persist in his call for a black school study, publicly stating, “I am exceedingly fearful that . . . Negro high schools will be gravely neglected unless they themselves became active in their own behalf” (Robinson, 1937b, p. 65; Robinson, 1938a). These efforts would cause Robinson’s relationship with the GEB project administrators to become and remain strained throughout the duration of the project. He would be endorsed by the GEB but never fully accepted.

While the 1937 Committee on Resolutions motion led to little action, understandably, ACSSN would feature progressive education at its next meeting. At the 1938 conference, a keynote session included Ralph Tyler (the country’s leading spokesperson for school experimentation) describing ongoing progressive education studies, Hilda Taba (a national figure in curriculum development and social studies) introducing the philosophy of the Eight-Year Study, and Frank Jenkins (director of the Southern Study) recounting plans for that school project. Robinson, as chair of the ACSSN Commission on Secondary Schools, would lead the session’s discussion and call for redefining educational philosophies and reconstructing educational practices of black high schools (Tyler, 1938; Taba, 1938; Jenkins, 1938).

Robinson continued relentlessly throughout 1939 to obtain funding for an independent study of black schools by writing directly to GEB staff. Describing himself as an enthusiastic missionary for “a new approach to the task of educating children,” he wrote in November stating that if blacks were going to be educated, then teachers “must learn new ways of approaching their tasks and new reasons for their educational activities” (Robinson, 1939, p. 1). In December of that year, the General Education Board finally approved an explor-

atory six-month grant for ACSSN to begin a study of selected black schools “to discover the needs of Negro youth at the secondary level, and to provide educational services in terms of their growth and development” (General Education Board, 1939). To begin on January 1, 1940, the Secondary School Study was born. The research project would continue to be supported by the GEB, albeit with quite modest funding in comparison to similar studies of this period, for the next six years.

### **Black Public Secondary Education circa 1940 and the Secondary School Study**

WHILE THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDY had been approved and funded, ACSSN members were uncertain, as one would expect, how to establish a vision for black secondary education. Inequity in funding was overwhelming. In the Southern states, the average annual expenditure for a black student was \$19 in comparison to \$49 for a white student (Brown and Robinson, 1946, p. 17). Funding for buildings and equipment was even worse. In Alabama, white school grounds and equipment allocations were five times greater than the amount of support for black schools (Johnson, C., 1941). The 1940s black public high school was neither common nor its curricular and instructional practices particularly well-conceived. Robinson and Brown describe the curriculum “to consist generally of assignments and recitations based on whatever textbook” was available (Brown and Robinson, 1946, p. 17). Further, black secondary education’s role in society was unclear, at times viewed as either unnecessary for those youth planning to enter the work force or as a mere (and seemingly questionable) precursor for entry into higher education and the professions. Black private

colleges, often providing “pre-postsecondary education” along with their higher education offerings, had helped dictate secondary education practices during this era, and black and white educators were devoting much more attention to the role and purposes of the primary school. Secondary School Study staff would soon realize that the development of the black public high school “has been and is now beset with many difficulties peculiar to the social patterns of the Southern States” (Brown and Robinson, 1946, p. 3). In fact, in rural areas the term “high school” was not always used to identify the school buildings. Many rural communities identified their secondary schools as “county training schools” where, as the name indicated, there was a much clearer purpose and reason for existing. During the 1930s, PEA members sought to reconceive secondary education’s role as more than college preparatory and, thus, significant for all youth. Robinson envisioned the Secondary School Study as a way to redefine and expand the high school curriculum to serve those black youth who were not necessarily intent upon continuing their education at the post-secondary level (Robinson, 1944a, p. 145).

Similar to its predecessor, the Eight-Year Study, the Secondary School Study would begin with a simple question: “What is needed in order to produce steady gains in the development of high school curricula in Negro schools?” From the first gathering of participants in the spring of 1940 at Fisk University, the purpose of the Study would evolve into a method to ascertain the educational process “of the additional needs of Negro children in the social setting of American Life” (Heningburg, 1940, p. 2). Those black educators (and interested white educators) involved in the project did not assume that the curriculum of

# The Secondary School Study Purposes and Problems

## Purposes of the Study

- To discover the needs of the secondary-school child.
- To discover, and to take account of in the educative process, the additional needs of Negro children in the social setting of American life.
- To give each school an opportunity to study its own situation in the light of the basic purposes of education.
- To discover what is involved in democratic living.
- To find ways in which experiences may be shared.
- To devise ways of providing worthwhile experiences.
- What criteria should be used in the selection of teachers?
- How can the needs and interests of the pupils be met in particular subject-matter areas: A) organization, B) scope, C) individual differences, D) analyses of needs, E) evaluation, and F) remedial instruction?
- How can a functional health program be developed?
- How can better ways of using community resources in the school program be found?
- How can techniques of evaluation be improved?
- How can teachers be brought to agree on desirable pupil behavior?

## Problems to be Attacked by the Study

- How can we know when pupils have learned?
  - How can classroom procedures be made more democratic?
  - How can the administration of the school be made more democratic?
  - How can we break down the organization of the traditional school, in which each teacher acts as a separate entity?
  - How can we formulate a philosophy for a school and make it function?
  - To what extent should the general community participate in the formation of a school program, and how can the necessary participation be gained?
  - How can the academic subjects in school be taught in terms of the community?
  - How can the traditional high school be organized to relate its program to the life of the community?
  - How can the acquisition of desirable study habits be encouraged?
  - How can provision be made for the mastery of the technical processes?
  - What criteria should be used in determining the nature and the scope of the necessary subject matter to be included in an improved program of instruction?
  - What constitutes a good learning situation?
  - How can adequate teaching materials be secured?
  - How can adequate provision be made for individual differences throughout the school program?
  - What are the sources of teaching material?
  - How can the school aid in resolving conflicts between youth and the community?
- 
- (Robinson, 1944b, pp. 534-535)

white schools would offer guidance. At a 1942 Study conference, participants criticized the tendency of black educators to seek curricula implemented in white schools, maintaining that there was a feeling that “identical curriculum led to equal opportunity” (Committee on Redefinition, 1942, p. 14). Further, Robinson would invoke a 1940 *Journal of Negro Education* essay by a nationally recognized white curriculum scholar who criticized all (white and black) high school methods and the tendency for black educators “to take what the white-folks take” resulting in a “cheap type of superficial erudition, such as may be obtained from the limited verbal mastery of poorly understood husks of learning, robbed of all richness and crammed within the covers of cheap text books” (Douglass, 1940, p. 543). While Robinson asserted that no project had done so much for education during the past years than the Eight-Year Study, neither did he turn to the Progressive Education Association’s curriculum resource materials. Rather, he saw the Secondary School Study as a way for black educators to address “their problems together and to evaluate together the results of their experimentation” (Robinson, 1937b, p. 65). Cooperation and experimentation rather than mere adoption of materials—i.e., a best practices approach—proved, for Robinson and Study participants, to be a defining conception of progressive education and a fundamental perspective of the Study.

Fifty-six schools were nominated for the Study by state field representatives, and forty-five sites were visited. Ultimately, sixteen schools were selected as “member schools”—those institutions that were directly involved with on-site efforts to reconceive their curricular programs. A seventeenth site (Moultrie High School for Negro Youth) was added with the closing of Atlanta University Laboratory

School (Robinson’s school) in 1942, causing on occasion the total number of the participating programs to be listed officially as seventeen when only sixteen schools were engaged at any one time. A school’s selection to participate was based upon its faculty’s academic background and educational training and their willingness to engage in experimentation. Another factor was taken into account: the condition of the physical plant and whether the facilities were adequate for the school population. The Study’s staff also sought to include a representative cross-section of rural and urban and large as well as small settings from the eleven states that represented the Southern Association.

Witnessing the struggles of the Eight-Year Study, Robinson specifically chose not to conduct a follow-up research component of experimentally controlled groups of students, similar to that ill-conceived dimension of the PEA’s project. He recognized that many schools would be interested in participating in any project sponsored by the General Education Board, but membership did not necessarily mean involvement. Some schools wished to be included but would engage in modest experimentation; other schools would involve a small number of dedicated faculty with some non-supportive colleagues. Such conditions were fully documented among these types of experimental projects. Varying degrees of participation among the experimental sites prevented any reasonable framework for a controlled experiment based on student achievement, and the fundamental conception of “implementative studies,” which this series of GEB-funded projects would help to define, precluded any sensible impact study.

Secondary School Study documents abound with specific intents, goals, and objec-

tives; yet, these purposes were intentionally flexible and quite fluid. In fact, a working committee of staff, teachers, and principals met two years after the project was underway to redefine the study: "It was felt by many of those present that the purposes formulated by the principals of the member schools and others attending the first conference of the Study at Nashville were not sufficiently directive either to the member schools or to the central staff and the visiting consultants" (Committee on Redefinition, 1942, p. 1). Much attention focused on problems—those of the classroom teacher working with students, teachers working together, school educators working with the community, and school administrators working with the Secondary School Study staff—rather than pre-determined goals and far-removed objectives.

For this type of project, "problems" became part of the vernacular and served to focus conversations and activities and, from these discussions, broad goals were identified that would guide curricular and instructional planning. Further, while the Study provided resource persons to assist the educators at the participating sites, it was understood that solutions would arise from group discussion among the participants and not from so-called external experts. As noted at the 1942 Fisk Conference, "Goals or purposes formulated by persons other than those responsible for the achievement of these purposes tend to remain sterile verbalizations and may result in practices based neither upon understanding nor conviction" (Committee on Redefinition, 1942, p. 4). Perhaps no other belief was more important to the Study's staff and member school principals and teachers.

From this perspective, schools initiated and further conceived many common programs: assemblies as a way to build community

(Rocky Mount's Booker T. Washington High School, Magnolia High School), correlated core curriculum (Lincoln High School, Drewry Practice High School, Staley High School), civic engagement (Dudley High School, Moultrie High School, Staley High School), guidance-human relations (Grant High School), and philosophy as a community-building process (Columbia's Booker T. Washington High School, Huntington High School, Webster Davis Laboratory High School). These activities were imbedded in the specific problems of teachers as they sought to educate and prepare their students to enter an unjust world. This is to say that the Secondary School Study could not seek to overturn decades of social injustice, school inequity, and racial prejudice, or the questionable effects of standardized testing and Carnegie units. Robinson was well aware of the difficulties of initiating societal change and recognized that school faculty at participating sites could lose their positions for nothing more than merely maintaining membership in the NAACP. The form of struggle for civil rights and social justice could not be defined by Robinson and external staff but, rather, by the schools' teachers and community members and, as was the case at all sites, the methods of struggle were extant yet subtle. As the Study's central staff sought not to dictate curricular practices to the member schools, similarly, they knew that faculty would determine means for educational and cultural progress as defined on their terms and those of their community. As one consultant noted, "No teachers should be more experimental than they are ready to be, and those who have gone farthest in that direction should be ready to give help but not to force it, and at least as ready to accept criticism as to give it" (Willis, 1942b, p. 6).

Through the building of professional communities among the principals and teachers and thoughtful discussions among participants, educators at experimental sites would conceive and implement programs that would reconsider and redefine the high school curricula in black schools. While no school programs were officially sanctioned by the ACSSN, the orientation of the Secondary School Study was in accord with basic principles of 1930s progressive education. Rather than developing black high school curriculum and instruction packages, the project served as an invitation for educators to experiment with conceptions of education. The second phase of the Secondary School Study, from 1944 to 1946, represented the efforts of the central staff to expand dialogue to other affiliated schools (known as contact schools) and to invite them to initiate similar changes in their curricular and instructional methods.

### **Understanding the Secondary School Study**

THE INTENT OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT has been to discover extant progressive education practices in black schools of the 1940s, and the Secondary School Study provides a conceptual focus—a set of cases—for examination. These seventeen schools did not define black progressive education in this decade; they do, however, offer us an initial grouping of schools—designated during the period as being experimental—as a venue to begin researching this unexplored realm. Secondary school educators of this period who defined themselves as progressives are much different from today's caricatures of child-centered educators, scientific methodists, social meliorists, and administrative progressives (Rugg, 1936; Kliebard, 2004; Tyack, 1974). "Teaching the whole child" was a common

saying among teachers in this era but did not necessarily denote progressive ideology. Belief in basic principles of progressivism would guide many Study participants as they developed sophisticated and complex views of core curriculum and teacher-pupil planning.

It should be noted that the term "progressive education" was practical rather than precise and, thus, not as ideologically confining as today. To be a progressive allowed for a variety of beliefs as many educational leaders of the 1940s proclaimed their allegiance to self-defined ideals. For example, Ben Wood, who helped to establish the Educational Testing Service, identified himself as a progressive, acknowledging John Dewey as the most important person in his career (Downey, 1965). Few educators today, however, would agree with this self-assessment. The journal *Educational Method* published articles by leading progressives during the 1930s and 1940s, in keeping with its subtitle, "*A Journal of Progressive Public Schools*." Yet, this publication was sponsored by the Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction of the National Education Association, a group that would not be viewed as progressive by most contemporary educators. Teachers at Secondary School Study member schools did indeed draw upon specific progressive education beliefs: the well-known "project method" permeated the curriculum, the homeroom period was being introduced, and "attending to the interests of students" was being recognized at the secondary level. In essence, many of the participating teachers viewed themselves as progressives without the need to carry about a copy of *The Social Frontier*. The dominant motif of the Secondary School Study was not to promote progressivism but, rather, to engage in experimentation in a spirit of progressive, cooperative, and democratic discourse.

While the term “progressive” was being used in a variety of ways, one common and predictable occurrence was its ability to create mistrust, especially among white Southern educators. Fannie Phelps Adams, a teacher at Booker T. Washington High School in Columbia, South Carolina, during the Study, stated, “We talked about John Dewey but did not use the term ‘progressive education.’ We were progressives and put the theories into practice without having to say the ideas that would have caused suspicion. We just did it” (Phelps Adams, 2014). Alpha Hines Westbrook, a teacher at Staley High School during this same time, reconfirms this practice by stating, “Americus [Georgia] was highly segregated and any term that implied the idea of ‘progress’ was dangerous” (Westbrook, 2011). Visitors to the web exhibitions may be hard pressed to find specific references to progressive education literature among the comments of teachers and students; nonetheless, Robinson and Study resource persons saw, as readily apparent in the exhibitions, the high schools embodying and embracing various progressive education methods.

### **Understanding Progressive Education-Inspired Research and Curricular Practices**

A MORE MULTIFACETED UNDERSTANDING of the Secondary School Study arises not from aligning practices to a codified set of progressive beliefs but, rather, from recognizing the forms of school experimentation during this period—methods that have been overlooked or misinterpreted in the contemporary professional literature. These include implementative studies, laboratory schools, summer workshops, cooperative study, core curriculum, and teacher-pupil planning.

**Implementative Studies:** The Secondary School Study represents a much different conception of school experimentation from today’s value-added projects. Beginning with the Eight-Year Study, a series of implementative studies were staged with funding from the General Education Board. Unlike other research projects of the period—the “status study” (documenting current activities), the “deliberative study” (justifying specified educational change), and the pilot-demonstration (disseminating field-tested projects)—implementative studies tested no formal hypotheses and established no set of predefined outcomes (Havighurst and Rhind, 1940, p. 19). Such projects could be considered a form of heresy today, yet the GEB took pride in introducing this type of research—projects that were exploratory and sought to examine, interpret, and discuss data for the sole purpose of improving rather than validating educational practices. Implementative studies embraced a faith in experimentation similar to Robinson’s definition of progressive education. These programs did not address grandiose issues for societal reform or systemic change; rather, the outcomes would be solutions to practical concerns that teachers and administrators would confront in their idiosyncratic settings. Attention was given to whether specific solutions were *valid* for solving specific problems rather than whether “proven” predefined methods could be generalized to other locations. Without the burden of research reliability, these types of studies focused primarily on determining the validity of certain activities to resolve common classroom complications. Eight-Year Study staff did not dismiss scientific inquiry; rather they recognized school experimentation as a method not to prove outcomes but to explore

possibilities for educating youth (Kridel and Bullough, 2007). Perhaps the most important aspect of implementative studies was their ability to convey to their participants that research and experimentation should become a common activity within the act of teaching; in essence, classroom inquiry became a normal aspect of the school day.

**Laboratory Schools:** Secondary School Study member schools were conceived as sites where faculty were invited to experiment with curriculum and teaching, and all schools engaged in varying levels of innovation. In addition, a few were official campus laboratory schools while others were unofficial off-campus lab schools. Yet these designations have little correlation to levels of classroom investigation and, in their own way, such terms obscure the involvement at the participating sites. Historically, laboratory schools were not necessarily experimental, nor did they envision curricular innovation as their primary role (Williams, E., 1942). The purpose of most, if not all, laboratory schools (certainly from the perspective of college faculty) was not to engage in innovative ventures but, instead, to offer a convenient venue for the supervision of student teachers. “A school stressing student teaching, or even a school stressing observation and participation, may not provide a suitable atmosphere for theory development or research. Conversely, a school environment conducive to extensive theory development and research undertakings may not readily accommodate substantial numbers of student teachers, participants, or observers” (Van Til, 1969, p. 5). Educational practices were expected to be more conventional as a way to prepare pre-service teachers for traditional instructional roles.

Many campus elementary-secondary schools were established as an integral dimension of a normal school’s or department of education’s training program and, in keeping with the mission of teacher education, prepared teachers for standard classroom settings. This perspective is confirmed in period research of black public laboratory schools (Clem, 1949), and the Secondary School Study lab schools did not lead the project in experimentation and innovations. Similarly, the laboratory schools in the Eight-Year Study spanned the extremes with one identified by staff as a leading innovator and another viewed as a site that should have been dropped from the participating schools. This is all to say that designated laboratory programs were not necessarily experimental, and many of the most experimental sites in the Secondary School Study were not lab schools officially affiliated with a postsecondary institution.

**The Summer Workshop:** Today’s educators will be hard-pressed to ever fully appreciate the uniqueness and significance of the implementative study’s summer workshops. These programs were not similar to any type of professional development activity of recent decades. During the 1930s, Ralph Tyler, research director of the Eight-Year Study, devised a workshop format where teachers came together in the spirit of cooperation and discussed and examined *their* problems. “Such gatherings would not be an occasion to merely listen, nor would they be limited to a single weekend; solutions to large problems called for extended time, and the gatherings were planned for weeks of morning, afternoon, and evening activities. For Tyler, a workshop would be a place for teachers to *work*—to be totally immersed with the problems and issues of

schooling that concerned them” (Kridel and Bullough, 2007, p. 194).

This type of work could not occur during a university summer school class or weekend conference. Tyler’s conception of a workshop involved extended time—six weeks of total immersion—when participants would address professional issues as well as experience the feelings of a learner. “Workshops arose at a time when there was a growing recognition among educators of the fact that the formal classroom approach to teacher education was not adequate to the needs of many teachers and at a time when many institutions were experimenting with new approaches to teacher education” (Heaton, Camp, and Diederich, 1940, p. 15). The workshop served as an antidote to traditional pre-service and in-service teacher education programs where coursework was far removed from the real-life problems and issues of actual classroom experience.

The result was a series of summer programs offering teachers the time and flexibility to attend to their educational problems while also engaging in their own learning. The opportunity to come together and participate in professional development as well as general education activities proved quite powerful. The Secondary School Study organized three central workshops: the 1940 Atlanta Workshop, the 1941 Hampton Workshop, and the 1942 Durham Workshop. Each was six weeks in length, with a total participation of 200 principals and teachers representing the member schools along with a few college instructors. Participants “worked” on resolving their problems with the assistance of consultants. In addition, with GEB support, 124 member school faculty were awarded scholarships during the summers of 1943, 1944, and 1945 in the areas of social science, science education,

evaluation (of teaching), guidance, mathematics education, audio-visual education, English education, and reading. Workshops were held at the University of Chicago, Ohio State University, Vassar College, and New York University, where teachers and administrators studied with resource persons who had been active with the Eight-Year Study. Secondary School Study staff conducted a formal evaluation of the workshop program and found many positive outcomes, including increased professional reading, the development of leadership skills, and a renewed belief in educational democracy: “The workshops illustrated democratic living and thereby deepened the conviction among teachers that their own schools and classrooms can be operated to advantage on democratic principles” (Brown, W., 1945a, p. 52).

These extended sessions represented another atypical experimental setting where the teachers became students and, thus, became more sensitive to the delights and difficulties of learning. As described during the 1944 evaluation workshop at Ohio State University, “We needed frequent opportunity to review what we were doing; to see these activities in relation to our aims; to identify problems that confronted us; to see when and where we agreed and disagreed. . . . We had to have freedom ‘to gripe,’ to disagree, to suggest alternative goals, procedures, materials, and speakers. Moreover, we knew that unless there was some atmosphere of good fellowship, of fun, of a feeling of belonging and accomplishment, the Workshop would be to that extent less successful” (Raths, 1944, p. 1). The workshops established settings where trust was developed and true discourse—open exchange, arguments, agreements, disagreements, and insights for educational and societal change—could take place. Unfortunately, the demands for teacher certification during



the 1940s and beyond (based upon the importance of obtaining advanced degrees), the difficulties for teachers to free up six weeks of their time, the loss of summer income, and the need for foundation support to stage such lengthy workshops all served as deterrents for staging these types of implementative study workshops.

**Cooperative Study:** Gilbert Porter, principal at a Secondary School Study participating site, described a national, 1930s cooperative study movement where dialogue served to define the method for program development (Porter, 1952). As is the case with many of these educational terms, various practices would fall under the rubric of cooperative study. For some educators, cooperative study represented merely joint sponsorship of programs (Havighurst, 1941). For others, including Robinson, Porter, and various Study educators, “cooperation” became a professional way of life—a rudimentary form of “social dialogue”—that was seen as a method to transform educational policy, administration, and teaching.

Developed through 1930s and 1940s GEB-sponsored projects—the Eight-Year Study, the Southern Study, the Cooperative Study in General Education (a twenty-five-college project, directed by Ralph Tyler between 1939 and 1945), and the California and Michigan high school studies—cooperative studies maintained that expertise arose from extended open discussion and faith in experimentation. Similar to mid-twentieth century beliefs of community organizing, cooperative study staff believed “there was wisdom in the room”—that those who worked with problems were those who were best able to determine solutions. [2.] GEB staff member Flora M. Rhind underscored this point when noting

“that shared experiences deepen understanding of individual problems and bring a clearer vision of group as well as individual goals.” Solutions came not from conference lectures but from workshop dialogue among cooperative study participants who shared experiences that subsequently could lead to insights for others—namely, “cooperative association with the values of individual experimentation” (Rhind, ca. 1945, p. 1). The process repudiated the “expert consultant” or “distant professor” telling educators what to do. Responsibility for school improvement was site-specific and rested with administrators, teachers, and students who would be assisted by resource persons and by one another. Cooperative study coordinators planned activities and provided assistance and guidance . . . but not solutions.

While forgotten today as a form of professional development and systemic reform, GEB staff described the cooperative study as “an increasingly popular device for educational change” (Rhind, ca. 1945, p. 1). The process, however, was not just a matter of teachers coming together to listen to one another report their activities. The unit of work was, once again, conceived as “the problem” situated in real educational settings; thus, Robinson and member schools adopted cooperative study as an exploratory process not to develop “the” black high school curriculum or a model black secondary school that could be implemented throughout the South. Rather, discussions brought new perspectives and solutions to common classroom problems and introduced a sense of resourcefulness (and imagination) to what could be introduced into educational settings. The techniques of cooperation were well-defined, drawing upon carefully-crafted stages of mutual helpfulness, understanding, compromise, bargaining, leadership, and comradery (Courtis, 1938).

These programs were developed slowly and could not be implemented by decree or proclamation. Trust was a prerequisite for success and could not be assigned. A Secondary School Study consultant, after visiting Huntington High School, described the importance of trust among the teachers, gained only by visiting one another's classes and working together on common problems. The teachers' ability to give and take criticism and to be self-critical also proved most important. "The great danger and difficulty of the whole process comes from the insecurities, jealousies and personality conflicts that can come from such relationships unless people have enough poise, confidence and desire for improvement to take the bumps that come and enough personal security to give others the credit due them" (Willis, 1942b, p. 6). School improvement, as implemented through cooperative study, represented a different approach from today—one with trust, respect, and discourse—a human touch rather than an administrative checklist.

Those involved in cooperative studies adopted a strong belief in community and working for the common good: "Democratic cooperation demands unity in terms of common purposes, respect for individual differences, a belief that group planning and group action can result in achievements better than any single individual, no matter how able, can reach by himself. . . . All must participate in deliberations, all must work for the good of each, and each person must desire his own good only as it is achieved in the good of all" (Courtis, 1938, p. 350). This forgotten method for educational change served to define all aspects of the Secondary School Study and further integrated the project into the larger progressive legacy of "democracy as a way of life."

### **Core Curriculum and Teacher-Pupil Planning:**

Any project that would combine experimentation, implementative research, and cooperative study would necessitate a different conception of curriculum and instruction in the classroom. The Secondary School Study was no exception. Participating schools in the various cooperative studies balanced the expectations for a standardized curriculum with teacher-pupil planning and core curriculum. In the spirit of cooperative planning, they adopted the rudiments of curriculum development that drew upon the interests and needs of students, encouraging them to be actively engaged in the selection and configuration of their educational experiences. Study participants attended summer workshops conducted by Eight-Year Study Curriculum Associates Harold Alberty and H. Harry Giles, who was also involved in designing teacher-pupil planning methodology. Giles' primer, *Teacher-Pupil Planning*, and L. Thomas Hopkins' study, *Pupil-Teacher Learning*, were cited regularly within the Secondary School Study materials (Giles, 1941; Hopkins, 1939). Harold Alberty, who would have been instrumental in Robinson's 1937 and 1938 summer study and who served as doctoral advisor for both William H. Brown (1948), the assistant director and subsequent director of the Study, and Cortlandt Colson (1951) and Gilbert Porter (1952), two of the more active Study principals, had developed a structure of core curriculum for the Eight-Year Study schools. This framework helped define curricula for Secondary School Study schools.

Discussing core curriculum today is somewhat more difficult with the oddities and outrage caused by "the common core standards" initiative; however, during the 1940s this curricular configuration was more oriented toward the inner-relationship among content rather than today's emphasis upon

testing, standards, and the designation of endorsed facts. While many Secondary School Study programs formally practiced the conventional, separate subject design (traditional Carnegie units), other of the schools successfully developed correlation and fusion core programs, as described in Alberty's work (Alberty, 1947). A correlated curriculum, the more common type of program experimentation among the schools, continued to use the structure of standard subjects as faculty sequenced course topics to emphasize the interrelationships among the content. For example, at Lincoln High School, the English teacher would assign literature of a certain country while the home economics teacher would explore the preparation of foods from the same area. As students were designing clothing from a specific region, its culture would be studied in the history classes. At Grant High School, the teachers developed a correlated core focused on guidance: social studies teachers integrated vocational information into their classes; English teachers stressed personality growth; science teachers developed records for determining student needs.

A fused core curriculum was configured around broad themes rather than separate subjects as a way to structure the content. At Magnolia High School, the literature class moved toward a fused core as they examined the topics of transportation and crime. The sociology class maintained an active project method program where they conducted research on housing and health with their results used by the city of Vicksburg to file for a federal housing project. At Staley High School, one teacher described the use of a "problems of living" fusion core: "We taught more than what was in the books. Students had many questions about life at that time—there was

much more information needed than mere facts about life, food, and shelter" (Westbrook, 2011). At the Atlanta Laboratory School, William H. Brown, a science teacher before his role as project staff, developed a fused core in the area of photography, bringing together elements of chemistry, mathematics, general science, and aspects of vocational training.

Teacher-pupil planning displayed the project's commitment to democratic engagement with students, and this instructional methodology represented a common practice among the PEA cooperative studies. Methods were subtle without teachers abdicating their role and responsibility as instructional leaders. In fact, many demands were placed upon teachers in the preplanning phase of this methodology, including developing purposes, materials, presentation, and evaluation. Students would be engaged in the classroom phase as they and the teacher planned activities that sought to represent aspects of cooperation, creativity, individualization, and problem solving. Selection of content, by teachers and students, emerged from the constant reconciliation between students' interests and needs. Teachers were well aware of needs—what would be expected of these students either in the world of work or in further educational settings, and they involved students in determining topics and methods; however, they did not adopt simple progressive clichés of laissez-faire curricula. Rather, the use of teacher-pupil planning represented more of a form of motivation for learning. Students were engaged as active learners as they were adapting and changing the curriculum. Interestingly, teacher-pupil planning received "retroactive explanations" during the oral history interviews; interviewees recognized the process after the concept was initially described.

## **Funding Inequities among the General Education Board Studies**

FUNDING BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK schools was certainly not equitable during this period, and neither were the General Education Board's Grant in Aid allocations between the white and black school cooperative studies. During the life of the project, the Secondary School Study received approximately \$75,000 in GEB support, the equivalent of approximately \$1,125,000 in 2015 dollars [3.] (General Education Board, 1946). The Southern Study received three times this amount with approximately \$230,000 allocated during the life of the project (Havighurst, 1941, p. 332; Wraga, 2013). Another factor, however, must be taken into account when attempting to understand the funding discrepancies: the source of General Education Board funds. The Southern Study and the Secondary School Study were supported by the "Southern Education program" within the GEB. In contrast, the Eight-Year Study, Robinson's inspiration, was funded through GEB's General Education program (begun in 1933 to improve high school and junior college levels). GEB program officers for these two divisions brought different conceptions of educational change. Staff of the GEB Southern Education program held the Southern Study leaders in high regard while internal correspondence confirms that Robinson was not well received by these same staff members (Favrot, 1939; McCuiston, 1939; Rhind, 1943). Further, he was not fully embraced by GEB Southern field representatives as well as certain ACSSN leaders. Funding was allocated by merit but certainly guided by personal relationships, and Robinson's relationship with Southern Education program staff would have been a deterrent for the Secondary School Study's funding.

The project was also the victim of bad timing. While the General Education Board did not officially close until the mid-1960s, "the beginning of the end" for these types of curriculum development projects occurred with the Board's December 1943 resolution to dissolve. When the Secondary School Study was just beginning its second stage (the dissemination phase with "contact schools"), foundation support for cooperative studies was being eliminated. The Eight-Year Study was completed by this time (although the anticipated closing of the GEB's General Education program proved catastrophic for the funding of the Progressive Education Association), and the other cooperative studies were completing their final stages. The Secondary School Study was supported officially through the 1946-1947 school year. To complicate matters even further, unfortunately, the Secondary School Study had another rival for GEB funds within its own organization. Robinson was receiving support for work at the secondary school level while, simultaneously, a college-level project, the ACSSN's Cooperative Negro College Study, was also receiving GEB support. The projects did not have a good working relationship. In 1944, the GEB would cease its funding of the Cooperative Negro College Study, maintaining that the project had become "too opportunistic" and that "no well-planned study was under way" (Mann, 1944).

Brown and Robinson's "summary" report, *Serving Negro Schools: A Report on the Secondary School Study—Its Purposes, Working Techniques and Findings*, was in fact a plea for more funding rather than the formal presentation of the findings. In the final chapter, "A Proposed Next Step" the authors stated that "never before have Negro schools been in better position, professionally, to take effective steps toward the establishment of

more useful school experiences for Negro youth. Indeed, the extent and quality of human resources now present in Negro schools can be a powerful influence for progress, once these resource individuals are fully activated and their services coordinated" (Brown and Robinson, 1946, p. 73). Rather than presenting a series of conclusions or an approved high school course of study from the research project (especially since the authors clearly state in the report that what needs to be done "was not difficult to answer"), Secondary School Study staff called for the funding of a regional coordinating agency for black schools, furthering their recognized need of cooperative study. While Brown and Robinson specifically stated "the fact that the General Education Board was interested in financing an effort to explore ways and means for servicing [black secondary] schools," no further funds were allocated (Brown and Robinson, 1946, p. 79).

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In 1945, Robinson had left the project to accept the principalship at Carver High School in Phoenix. Far from abandoning the cause for curricular reform at the secondary school level, Robinson viewed the Phoenix school district as a fruitful and supportive setting to experiment with the many practices that he had observed in the Secondary School Study (Grigsby, 2010). He served as superintendent until 1954 with the desegregation of the city's educational system. The former assistant director, William H. Brown, completed the project as director and then accepted a position as director of the Bureau of Educational Research at North Carolina Central College, where he would later serve as a professor of education and, for a brief period, as interim

president. The Secondary School Study officially ended in 1946, the Progressive Education Association closed in 1955, the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes dissolved in 1964, and the General Education Board would officially close in 1965 (Cozart, 1967; Fosdick, 1962). Yet, Melanie Carter, a leading scholar of ACSSN, maintains that the effect of the Secondary School Study was profound in the manner in which it introduced teachers "to a new level of professional development support from which they and their students benefited greatly" (Carter, 1996, p. 140). The project was over; however, a generation of black high school "progressives" continued their experimental work in various classroom settings throughout the Southeast and the nation.

#### NOTES

1. The Eight-Year Study (also known as the Thirty School Study) was an experimental project conducted between 1930 and 1942 by the Progressive Education Association, where thirty high schools redesigned their curriculum while initiating innovative practices in student testing, program assessment, student guidance, curriculum design, and staff development. Seeking to address the needs of non-college-bound students while also providing better coordination between high schools and colleges for those students who continued their postsecondary education, the PEA initiated in 1930 the first of three Eight-Year Study commissions, the Commission on the Relation of School and College (the Aikin Commission). The purpose of the commission was to foster relationships between schools and colleges that would permit experimentation with the secondary school curriculum and address how the high school could serve youth more effectively. As the Aikin Commission worked with school and college staff, the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum (the Thayer Commission) was formed in 1932 to develop curriculum materials for the participating schools. The Thayer Commission recognized that further study of youth needed to be undertaken and, within the auspices of this PEA commission, the Study of Adolescents was conducted. A third PEA commission, the Commission on Human Relations (the Keliher Commission) formed in 1935 and prepared social science-related curriculum materials. Important outcomes of the Eight-Year Study included developing more sophisticated student tests and forms of assessment, innovative adolescent study techniques, and novel programs of curriculum design, instruction, teacher education, and staff development. The Eight-Year Study proved that many different forms of secondary curricular design could ensure college success and that the high school need not be chained to a traditional college-preparatory curriculum. In fact, students from the most experimental, non-nonstandard schools earned markedly higher academic achievement rates than their traditional school counterparts.

2. I thank Bill Ayers, as well as Alan Wieder who is completing a biography of Studs Terkel, for reminding me of this very important point and connection to the Secondary School Study.

3. Specific allocations are difficult to determine since some project support took the form of scholarships for participating teachers to attend summer workshops. Certain Secondary School Study documentation suggests

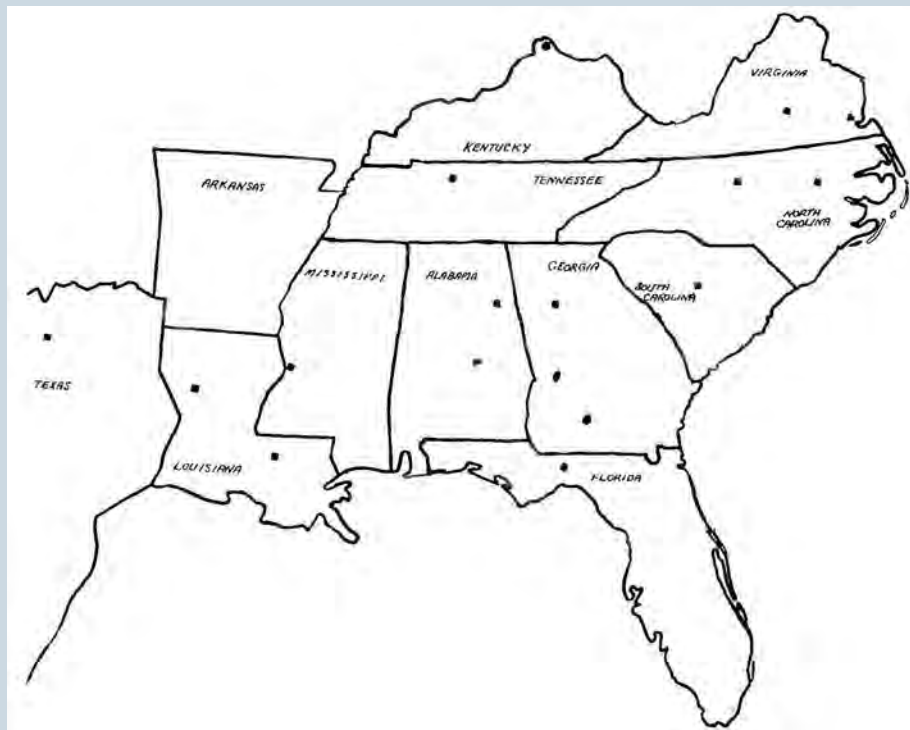
that allocations may have totaled \$127,000 (General Education Board, 1943). Also, other foundations as well as the U.S. government (the Field Foundation, Rosenwald Fund, and Office of Education, for example) provided support to the Study with GEB's blessing, influencing and thereby diminishing their own contributions. 1964 correspondence from the GEB states that \$83,006 was allocated to the Secondary School Study (General Education Board, 1964).



## Secondary School Study Vignettes

These vignettes are not meant to provide a comprehensive description of the schools' curricular programs and activities. Rather, each account serves as an invitation to visit the Museum of Education's web exhibitions where many more statements about the schools appear. The portrayals in this publication feature historical photographs of students, teachers, and buildings. These images, along with other historical and contemporary photos, appear in the web exhibitions.

In addition, this catalog includes one contemporary photograph of each Secondary School Study student and teacher who was interviewed for this project. I greatly appreciate the willingness and commitment of those individuals who took time to attend on-site oral history interview sessions and talk about the strengths of their schools and the issues of living in the segregated South.



Locations of Secondary School Study member schools (from *Serving Negro Schools* by William H. Brown and William A. Robinson, 1946).

# Atlanta University Laboratory School

ATLANTA, GEORGIA



1940s Laboratory School high school students

OPENED IN SEPTEMBER 1930, the Atlanta University Laboratory School merged the preparatory programs of Spelman College, Morehouse College, and Atlanta University. The elementary grades were taught at Oglethorpe School, founded in 1904, on the Atlanta University campus, and the secondary school was housed at Giles Hall on the Spelman College campus. The “Lab School” would serve as a site of student teaching for Atlanta University’s Department of Education, even though W. E. B. Du Bois, in May 1939, would complain that little teacher training was done and that it suffered from too few teachers and insufficient funding (Du Bois, 1939). This criticism may be due to the traditional tensions between an experimental school and a laboratory-student teaching school. Laboratory High School was

more college-oriented than other black secondary schools, and the socioeconomic and educational status of the families of its students was not representative of the general public (Freeman, 1942; Smith, W., 1942). In essence, those Atlanta University students who engaged in student teaching at this school were not working with the general population, nor would they have been following traditional curricula in use at other black secondary schools. The high school would close in 1942, thus ending its involvement with the Secondary School Study; the elementary school continued serving as a laboratory setting for the university.

Thirteen secondary school teachers worked directly with 200 students, grades 7–12. William A. Robinson served as principal from 1931 through 1940 (while also directing

the Study during his final year as principal). Research on this school has been abridged for this project since Laboratory High School no longer continued in the Secondary School Study after its closing; however, if any school in the United States warrants a full-length institutional history, this would be the one (due to the innovativeness of the educational program rather than the often cited fact that Martin Luther King Jr. attended the secondary school from 1940 until its closing or that distinguished artist Hale Woodruff served on its faculty). Accounts suggest that the Lab School flourished within a progressive education tradition on equal grounds with the more experimental schools of the Eight-Year Study. "The students have a large measure of responsibility for their classroom work. In many courses the students choose the topics to be studied and help to plan class projects. In a number of classes each student may proceed in his study according to his own plans" (Bimson, et al., 1940, p. 186).



Giles Hall

Laboratory High School graduate William A. Robinson Jr. described the practice of non-grading at the school and a curriculum reflecting a social-problems approach (an Alberty Type 4 core) with substantial independent study at a high academic level, a point noted as well by the art teacher, J. Eugene Grigsby (Robinson Jr., 2012; Grigsby,

2010). Governance of the school was determined through cooperation. In 1940, the Lab School staff was described as having met weekly during the past ten years, and "the experiments in curriculum and method carried on in this school have been the products and thought and planning of the staff, rather than of one or a few persons" (Bimson, et al., 1940, p. 351).

The science faculty distinguished itself at the national level. William H. Brown, who would lead the Secondary School Study after Robinson left the project, was the chemistry and physics teacher and would prepare science source materials that were distributed nationally. His curriculum was quite expansive; for example, in a fused core chemistry class students would explore photography and darkroom procedures (Brown, W., 1945b; Grigsby, 2010). Perhaps most intriguing is a 1941 article coauthored by Beulah Baley, the biology teacher, and Robinson entitled "Teaching the Beginning of New Life," describing a realistic example of teacher-pupil planning for a problems-based biology course. Shifting from a "Morrison unit" curriculum, Baley and Robinson described classes where "pupil participation in the choice and planning of the units increased to the extent that finally the entire course was planned with their help, and subjects began to be studied which either were not broadly treated or were touched only slightly or not at all in traditional high school biology courses built on textbooks" (Baley and Robinson, 1941, p. 30). The article featured an innovative "new life" biology unit, addressing issues of coeducation groupings without the problems of a sex education course and leading directly into the subject of heredity that, clearly, would have become the subsequent student-planned unit.

*I think we learn to take responsibilities here. Each student realizes that he is going to school for himself, and that if he is going to get an education, he will have to do it. One thing this school tries to teach us is cooperation. We learn how to discuss in our classes and we also learn how to plan work together. When we get out of school into life, we will have to be able to plan our own affairs. So while we are in school we ought to learn to plan for ourselves what we are going to do and how and why.*

—A male student from Laboratory High School  
(Bimson, et al., 1940, p. 186)

*I had always been accustomed to doing what the teacher assigned me to do, but when I came here I had to learn to take my own responsibilities. I didn't like this method at first, but now I have come to like it very much. I find that I have to please myself instead of pleasing the teacher. There is no one to tell me that I must do anything. After two or three weeks here, I found I was learning to plan my own work and to make better use of my time.*

—A female student from the Laboratory High School  
(Bimson, et al., 1940, p. 186)

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### Leadership during the Secondary School Study:

W. A. Robinson, Principal, 1931-1940  
Hattie E. Feger, Principal to 1940  
H. C. Hamilton, Principal to 1941

### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

A general description of the Atlanta University Laboratory High School

Oral history interviews were conducted between 2010 and 2012. With special thanks to J. Eugene Grigsby and William A. Robinson Jr. for providing important source materials for this exhibition, and with great appreciation to Michael Robinson and William A. Robinson III for their assistance with this project. Archival materials from the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, the Emory University Archives, and the State of Georgia Archives and History Department were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

W. A. Robinson (1890-1972)



Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



J. Eugene Grigsby; W. A. Robinson Jr.



# Booker T. Washington High School

ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA



"We are giving our students a large share in the school organization, the object being to make them feel a real responsibility for the school. On all committees for the year we have more students than teachers, the teachers acting simply as directors or consultants. Only one committee is composed entirely of teachers—the guidance committee. Students selected their own representatives. It is most stimulating to sit with a group of students when they know they can talk with complete freedom, and the judgment they exercise has been amazing to some of our staff" (Pope, 1942, p. 3).

WITH 600 STUDENTS IN GRADES 8-11 and a faculty of seventeen teachers (including a full time librarian), Booker T. Washington High School represented a rural-town high school in the Secondary School Study. Guided by Principal O. R. Pope, the school faculty developed core curricula and established free reading and "nature of proof" (mathematics) programs into school activities. The significance of student responsibility for social dialogue was one specific theme that ran through all academic programs. The school, with its extensive final report, *High School Was Like*

*This*, must be seen as one of the more active participants in the project (Booker T. Washington High School faculty, 1946). "Booker T." was accredited by the Southern Association and became an institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes in 1935.

The Booker T. Washington High School building was constructed in 1927 and served the community until its closing in 1969. The structure is currently the home of the Opportunities Industrialization Center, an affiliate of a national non-profit organization that



**Above:** Booker T. Washington High School

**Right:** O. R. Pope (1876–1973)

**Below:** Book jacket of O. R. Pope's 1967 memoir



provides comprehensive employment, training, business and health services for local communities.

Principal Oliver R. Pope was graduated from Bennett College and furthered his education at Teachers College and the University of Chicago. He worked in the Rocky Mount schools from 1902 to 1949, serving as principal for 37 years. Pope was elected president of the North Carolina Teachers Association in the mid-1930s, and the O. R. Pope Elementary School in Rocky Mount is named in his honor.

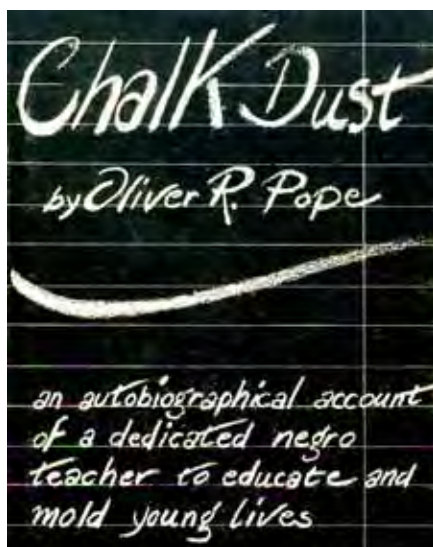
In his 1967 memoir, *Chalk Dust*, Pope describes the selection process for Booker T. Washington High School's invitation to join the Secondary School Study: "The participat-

ing schools in the Secondary School Study were selected upon the same basis as the famous Thirty School Study [the Eight-Year Study] prior to this, and, like it, the study was underwritten by the General Education Board. For weeks, I had watched the selection of the schools, hoping that our school would be

one of the sixteen.

Then one morning, my almost dead hope came leaping to life. A telephone call and a special delivery letter a few hours later asked me to see the superintendent about accepting the invitation. . . . I almost tripped my way to Mr. Banner's office [the superintendent's office]. His brusque reply shocked me. 'I don't think much of that study. It seems to be an offshoot of progressive education. And above all,' he said, 'I think you've tampered with the course of study too much already, and that our new twelve-year program of studies is adequate for any further ventures you'd like to make. Pope, give me one good reason,' he added challengingly, 'why your school should participate. Just one.'

"'To be chosen as one of sixteen from hundreds of schools throughout the south,' I replied evenly, 'is an honor. And it's difficult to believe that the General Education Board would underwrite a questionable project. Also the invitation honors you, Mr. Banner. You have made the invitation possible because of your liberal attitude. But your judgment in this matter is good enough for me.' His objections disappeared so quickly that I suddenly felt they had not been real anyway" (Pope, 1967, pp. 203–204). (Ironically, Pope added that the teachers were "strangely silent" when asked





### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

Booker T. Washington High School Building

Principal O. R. Pope

Booker T. Washington High School Teachers

Cooperative Planning and Student Growth

Building Community

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

Curator's Statement

whether they wished to participate in the project, and their approval was done "lackadaisically.")

One goal of teachers at Booker T. Washington High School was to unify mathematics. "[Harold] Fawcett and his students have proposed a scheme by which the mathematics experiences provided for learners in all elementary, high school, and college grades might be unified. The math teachers in Booker T. Washington believe that this idea is sound and have set out to discover how they can promote the growth of students using these concepts as bases for work in all classes. We do not expect to break down immediately the long-established subject matter courses existing in the school. Yet, we are committed to the idea of examining our courses in order to discover the range of opportunities provided for students, and to get and use the proposed concepts. At the same time we want to discover how to convince students that these concepts can

be valuable keys to mathematics" (Booker T. Washington High School faculty, 1946, p. 56).

During the Secondary School Study, Booker T. students took significant leadership in the composing and staging of their graduation activities by preparing dramatizations. The first of these full-length theatrical productions was entitled *Thirty-five Years of Progress* followed by *The Weight of Evidence* where students discussed the growth of the school. Another commencement program was entitled *Youth Tells Its Story* (an allusion to the 1938 American Youth Commission Report), and the 1946 commencement's theme, *High School Was Like This*, would become the title of the faculty's Secondary School Study report (Booker T. Washington High School faculty, 1946, p. 19). Commencement dramatizations engaged the entire community in the life of the school and served as a capstone experience for the graduating students and the educational community.



### Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project

**Top row, left to right:**

Henry Barnes; Lenora Bradley; Otis Cooper; Margaret Cotton

**Second row:**

Guion C. Davis; Mary W. Dawson; Helen Mercer Dixon; Maggie L. Gilliam

**Third row:**

Catherine Hines; Robert Hines; John H. Perry; Mary Perry

**Left:** Delores Battle Powell

The Museum of Education applauds the efforts of the Booker T. Washington High School Alumni Association who, in 1997, purchased the Belk-Tyler Building in downtown Rocky Mount and developed the Association's Resource Center, including an extensive museum collection of materials recognizing the achievements of alumni.

Oral history interviews were conducted in October 2008. With special thanks to

Reuben C. Blackwell IV and Clara Knight of the Opportunities Industrialization Center and to Genevieve Lancaster of the Booker T. Washington High School Alumni Association. Archival materials from the Booker T. Washington High School Alumni Association Resource Center were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

# Booker T. Washington High School

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL represented an urban high school in the Secondary School Study with forty-five teachers serving approximately 1,200 pupils in grades 7-11. J. A. Simmons served as principal from 1932 to 1945 and as president of Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes during the 1937-1938 school year. Simmons was held in high regard by GEB and Study staff, who featured his school's philosophy of education in their published materials. Booker T. Washington High School was an original institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes, entering the organization as an accredited high school in 1934.

**Above:** Booker T. Washington High School teachers who attended the 1941 Hampton Workshop: John H. Whiteman, R. M. Johnson, Carrie Belle Hoover, Evelyn M. Craft, A. E. Washington, and Luther L. Wideman (Columbia teachers, 1941, p. 17).

**Right:** Fannie Phelps Adams Classroom

Booker T. Washington High School was founded in 1916 and functioned as a 1-12 school until its closing in 1974. University of South Carolina purchased the school land in 1974 and demolished all of the buildings except the Booker T. Washington auditorium building. Within this structure, University of South Carolina and the B. T. Washington High School Foundation have created the Fannie Phelps Adams Classroom.



*Mr. Simmons stressed the idea of “brothers under the skin.” He brought us together as one, and we worked for a common good. He believed that every child (and teacher) had an opportunity to learn and to grow and he made all of us feel that we all could amount to something. Mr. Simmons gave us courage and caused everyone to believe that they could achieve.*

—Fannie Phelps Adams, a teacher during the Secondary School Study



A graduate of Fisk University and teacher at Avery Institute in Charleston, James Andrew Simmons, described as the “brilliant and militant head” of Booker T. Washington High School, came to Columbia from Charleston after, at a race relations forum, his comments questioning the segregation of city street cars upset Charleston educators. Simmons resigned and subsequently accepted the principalship at Booker. Yet, stemming from research for his master’s thesis at Teachers College, Simmons would again upset the educational establishment, this time in Columbia, by helping to initiate a lawsuit for the equalization of salaries for white and black teachers (Simmons, 1936; McKaine, 1946, p. 9; Drago, 2006; Hoffman, 1959).

In 1945, Simmons received a Rosenwald Fellowship to develop an interracial human relations program for high school and adult students, leaving South Carolina and enrolling at Teachers College where he would complete his 1949 dissertation, “Adult Education for Race Relations,” under the guidance of George Counts and John Childs (Simmons, 1949). Simmons continued his career as director of a child welfare agency for black youth outside of New York City.

**Above:** Fannie Phelps Adams; J. Andrew Simmons (1902–1966)

**Left:** Booker T. Washington High School



All participating schools devoted considerable time to develop a working philosophy of education. While no statement served to exemplify the basic beliefs of the Secondary School Study, Booker's philosophy of education illustrated the intent of the process.

"We at Booker T. Washington High School believe that education is growth—growth in knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, and appreciations; that it should contribute to the development of an integrated personality; that it should make for intelligent accepted behavior; that it should enable each pupil to develop his maximum ability to play his part in whatever area of activity he finds himself; that it should help each pupil to do better those things that he is likely to do. We believe further that education in America should be education for the democratic way of life; that pedagogically, integration describes teaching procedures which relate varieties of subject matter to problem solving situations; that there should be constant evaluation of our school practices in the light of current problems and our expressed purposes.

"It will be our general policy to check constantly our practices against this philosophy and the generally accepted purposes of education. Specifically we hope during the year (1) to help pupils see clearer the direction of their education by cooperative (pupil and teacher) purposing and planning (2) to de-emphasize subjects as ends in themselves and to reveal them as means of solving problems, personality development, etc. and (3) to encourage the extension of evaluation more definitely into the personality area and to have boys and girls increasingly enter all phases of evaluation. We think of the areas in the school not in terms of subject groups, but rather in terms of the various provisions made for guid-



Stonewall Richburg

ing our pupils. The work of the classroom, the homeroom, the clubs, the committees, and other activities will contribute to those cooperative purposes" (Simmons, 1942, pp. 1-2).

Stonewall Richburg, a teacher who came to Booker in 1946, described a common practice in the area of human relations: discussion about individual students. "Groups of teachers would come together and we would focus our discussion on an individual student, asking what we could do whenever this child comes into our classes. English, science, vocational, social studies teachers would come together in groups and would exchange experiences that we had with this student and with others. We would discuss what we did and what we could have done. We were learning from one another and we were learning about the students and about teaching." Secondary School Study teachers attended professional development sessions with Caroline Zachry who staged these types of discussions regularly

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



**Left to right:** Fannie Phelps Adams; Matthew J. Perry Jr.; Stonewall Richburg

during the Eight-Year Study in what came to be known as the Zachry Seminars. The intent was primarily not to analyze students' motives and behaviors but, rather, to allow teachers to empathize with children and to imagine ways of educating and relating to one another and to themselves. These types of sessions served as a source for the development of human relations education.

Oral history interviews were conducted between 2008 and 2015. With special thanks to Bobby Donaldson and Anthony Edwards of the University of South Carolina and Fannie Phelps Adams. Archival materials from the B. T. Washington High School Foundation and The South Caroliniana Library and the Museum of Education of the University of South Carolina were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

### **Web Exhibition "Rooms"**

Booker T. Washington High School Building

Principal J. Andrew Simmons

Booker T. Washington High School  
Philosophy

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

Curator's Statement

# D. Webster Davis Laboratory School

ETTRICK, VIRGINIA



"Definite changes have taken place in the relationship between teachers and pupils, the trend being in the direction of democratic leadership on the part of teachers. Such leadership has resulted in more satisfying experiences for more pupils. In the subject areas teachers are becoming more skillful in exploring problem situations and areas of interest with pupils, rather than for pupils. The program at D. W. Davis High School illustrates this type of exploration" (Brown, W., 1942a, p. 54).

D. WEBSTER DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL served as a laboratory training school for Virginia State College and was located on its campus. With a high school enrollment of over 250 students, six full-time teachers and fifteen part-time teachers from the college oversaw the vocational and academic high school curricula. Virginia State College students, known as cadet teachers, also provided instruction for the secondary school students. D. Webster Davis was known for its efforts to develop a correlated core program that included a free



D. Webster Davis High School



C. M. Colson (1905-1968)

reading program. The school was invited to participate in the Secondary School Study before receiving Southern Association accreditation; one assumes that the school's affiliation with Virginia State College was a determining factor in its selection. Accreditation was conferred in 1942 and, thus, the school became a member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes. D. Webster Davis School graduated its last class in 1948 with the opening of a Chesterfield County consolidated secondary school, Carver High School. The Davis building is now used as a residence hall for Virginia State University students.

"[D. Webster Davis is] exploring the possibilities of recognizing and exploiting the natural relationships between the various subject-areas by means of some type of core program. Any statement from the staff of the Study relative to the validity of any one of these widely different core approaches would be premature. A program which is valid for one school is not necessarily valid for other schools. . . . All of the approaches seem to be made from situations involving important

needs of pupils possessing recognizable relationships from the point of view of subject matter" (Brown, W., 1942a, pp. 54-55).

Cortlandt Matthew Colson served as principal of D. Webster Davis Laboratory School, working closely with his sister, Edna Meade Colson, a professor and the director of the College's Department of Education. He completed his dissertation, "Appraisal of Cadet Teaching at Virginia State College," at Ohio State University in 1951.

Audrey L. Woods Brooks, acting principal in 1943, served as faculty at the 1944 Hampton Workshop and was a founder, owner, and operator of Colbrook Motel in Chester, a center for civil rights activity from 1946 to 1983.

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#### Leadership during the Secondary School Study:

C. M. Colson, Principal 1939-1942  
A. W. Brooks, Acting Principal 1943  
James Nicholas, Principal 1944-

"The enthusiasm of the teachers and practice teachers in this school as well as their clearly defined concerns in the area of evaluation gives evidence of considerable growth in the last few years. . . . Mrs. Brooks discussed plans for establishing a more consistent program for practice teaching throughout the school based on the problems which beginning teachers face in their attempts to bring about growth in pupils. We felt that the program ought to indicate how a practice teacher could discover and use a variety of effective techniques in stimulating pupils to achieve definite growth which seems important and worthwhile to both teacher and pupil. Mrs. Brooks agreed to experiment with such a program and to share the results of this experimentation with the whole staff" (Brown, W., 1942b, p. 2).

D. Webster Davis represented a laboratory school in the conventional sense—namely, a site for the training of student teachers; however, the school drew from the more experimental traditions of progressive edu-



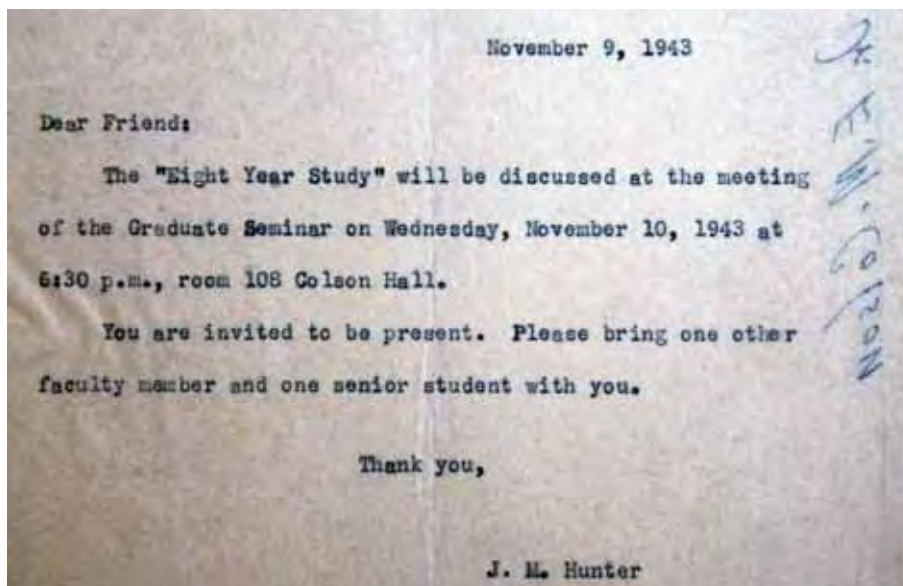
Audrey Brooks (1914–2002)

**Below:** A campus announcement to attend a session to discuss the findings of the Eight-Year Study

**Opposite:**  
Class of 1944

cation. Faculty were directly linked to the experimentation of the PEA's Eight-Year Study, and the school library included many PEA publications.

The D. Webster Davis campus was arranged so that its buildings would comprise an elementary-secondary configuration. The original building, the Campus Training School, was constructed in 1920 and included



### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

Davis High School—Virginia State College Community

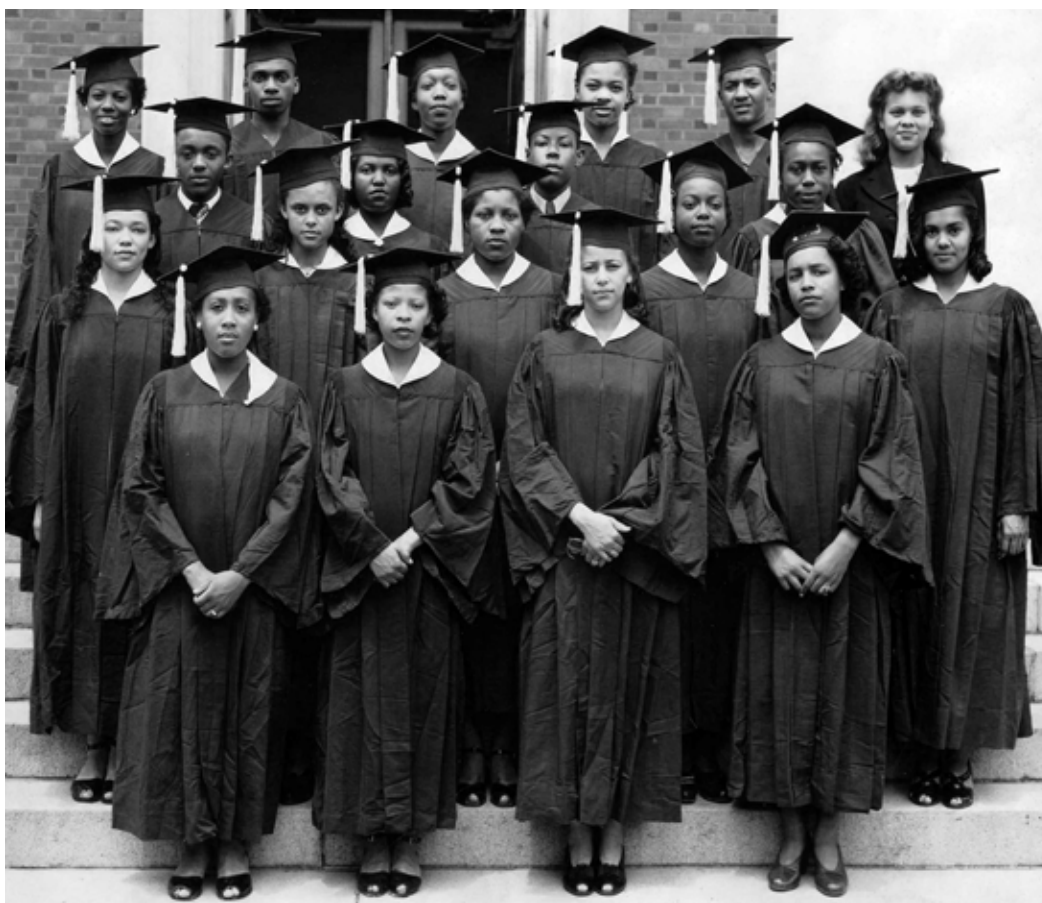
Educational Leadership and the Secondary School Study

Teacher Development and Teacher Training

Curriculum Experimentation

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

Curator's Statement



grades 1–7. This structure was renamed in 1939 as the D. Webster Davis Laboratory High School, with a second building built in 1940 that served as the Matoaca Laboratory Elementary School. Coupled with the physical proximity of the building, the high school staff included college faculty, and some secondary school students attended college courses. In many respects the laboratory school setting represented an elementary-through-college configuration offering insights into students' educational experiences that transcended grade levels.

*Our classes were standard subjects taught in unique ways. Activities and projects unified the curriculum. In chemistry class, we studied photography and developed a darkroom that*

*brought all of the sciences together. In English class, we were always writing stories and plays, composing songs. Debate was an important activity, too, that unified the subjects. I remember that we were debating social issues—the importance of organized labor and unions—and other controversial topics.*

—Dorothy T. Burhanan, a student during the Secondary School Study

*“The study has done more than any other single thing to set the entire staff thinking about and working on common problems. Success is not always counted in terms of the end product, but may be weighed in terms of the attitudes built up toward things and procedures which, in time, may result in desired outcomes” (Colson, 1942, 7).*



### Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project

#### Top row:

Isabel Berry; Dorothy T. Burhanan; Clarence A. Butcher;  
Claudia V. Goode Jennings

#### Second row:

Viola Bouldin Maniego; Laureta V. Matthews;  
Marion E. Vaughan; Mattie Wilkerson

**Below:** Class of 1941; Class of 1942

Oral history interviews were conducted in November 2008. With special thanks to Lucious Edwards of Virginia State University, and with great appreciation to Dorothy T. Burhanan, Laureta Matthews, and Mattie Wilkerson for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Archival materials from Virginia State University Archives were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).



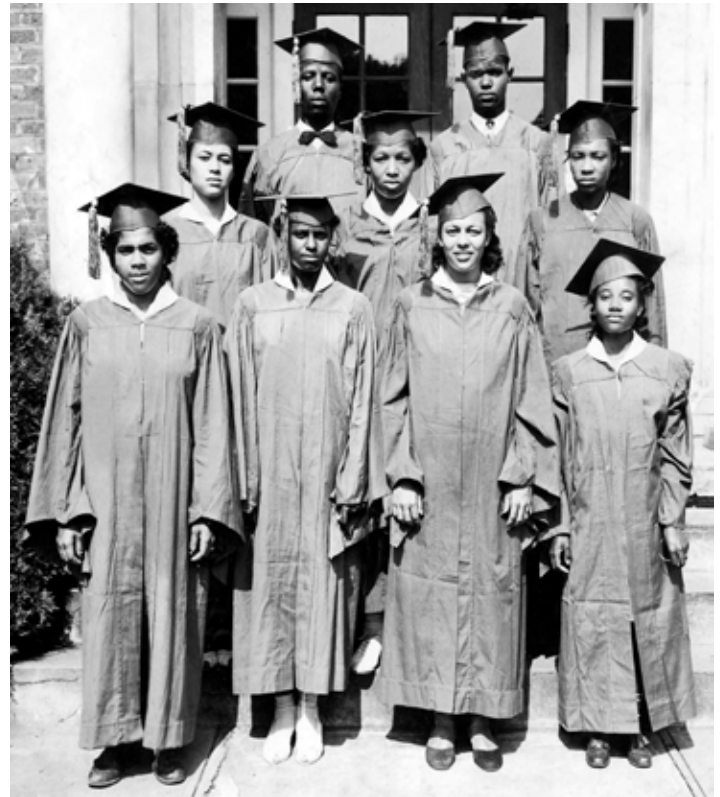
# Drewry Practice High School

TALLADEGA, ALABAMA



DREWRY HIGH SCHOOL SERVED as a training site for teacher education students at Talladega College. While the school displayed aspects of an experimental program, another reason for inclusion in the Secondary School Study evolved from the college's participation in the ongoing Cooperative Study in General Education (1938–1947), funded by the General Education Board and sponsored by the American Council on Education (Zayed, forthcoming). The Cooperative Study represented another implementative research project, involving twenty-two colleges; Talladega College was the only black school among the original participants.

Drewry Practice School (junior high grades 7–9 and senior high grades 10–12) maintained a teaching staff of twelve teachers and a full-time librarian for over one hundred students. Drewry administrators were quite proud of the cooperative effort on the part of teachers and pupils to establish a school library and to review and select books. The high school received regional accreditation in 1934 and was an original institutional member of



the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes.

Drewry Hall was constructed in 1932 and served as the high school building until its closing in 1948, due officially to fiscal matters; however, Drewry and Doermann stated in *Stand and Prosper: Black Colleges and Their Students* that Drewry High School's presence served as a deterrent for the town of Talladega to accept responsibility for providing public high school education. Drewry's closure led to the opening of a black public secondary school (Drewry and Doermann, 2001, p. 149). The Drewry High School building still stands on the campus of Talladega College.



Above: W. D. Gay, principal, received an M.A. at Teachers College with further study at Ohio State University and the University of Chicago.



Right: Eula Cokely

Below right:  
*The Mirror*, 1944-45

Talladega College, founded in 1867 by the American Missionary Association, embraced a mission of racial equality. The college's secondary school sought "to develop the habit of using intelligence and tolerance rather than emotion in judging racial, political and religious groups other than his own," and its publications noted the significance of democracy while also underscoring the importance of academic training (Gay, 1942, p. 5). Since Talladega College was an integrated institution, administrators saw the significance of maintaining an interracial elementary and secondary school. This led to some tensions. As noted in the Study's final report, *Serving Negro Schools*, "there still exists a wide rift between the college and the community—and Drewry High School is a part of the college. There is suspicion and distrust on the one hand and indifference on the other" (Brown and Robinson, 1946, pp. 25-26).

Drewry faculty maintained records of pupil growth (a "criterion-referenced" orientation) with an emphasis upon understanding the meaning of democracy through student participation. The curricula was college

preparatory with "academically oriented" vocational courses intended to provide "opportunities for the acquiring of information, interest and skills which will enable pupils to live effectively; now and throughout their lives" (Drewry High School, 1943, p. 1). A dimension of the teachers' experimental work was maintaining records of "school growth": Drewry kept "a running log of its [i.e., the school's] growth, record of modifications made from year

to year in courses including social studies, science and mathematics. The records indicate changes made in content, in organization and in methods used in these courses. General school purposes are being examined by the faculty in an effort to determine the extent to





### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

Drewry Practice High School  
Building

Principal W. D. Gay

School Planning and the  
Secondary School Study

Pedagogical Activism and  
Social Justice

Curator's Statement

which these or other purposes actually function in the school" (Gay, ca. 1943, p. 9).

*The faculty were concerned about the total development of the students—the academic and personal dimensions of becoming an adult. While the faculty maintained high standards for the students, they also prized creativity. The Mirror was a major outlet for creative writing and reporting by the students.*

—Eula Cokely, a student teacher during the time of the Secondary School Study

To foster a sense of cooperation and as a form of teacher-pupil planning, Drewry High School faculty initiated Youth Day: "Youth Day was suggested by a tenth grade student. One day Mrs. Harris requested her English class to write short essays and among the suggested topics was 'An Experience I Should Like To See Tried in My School.' Henrietta Thomas took as her topic 'Youth Day—An Experiment in Practical Democracy.' This topic interested the faculty to such an extent that they agreed to let the students try this experiment. The students greeted the approval of the faculty with enthusiasm. New teachers, together

with a new principal and secretary were elected; and on March 6th, the new faculty [the students] assumed its duties. Those who were present at Drewry on Youth Day will agree that the experiment was conducted successfully. Our new faculty had an entirely new and different experience and plunged whole-heartedly into its tasks. It gave them an opportunity to manifest qualities of leadership and demonstrated their ability to shoulder responsibility" (Drewry Mirror, 1947, p. 1).

"After about two years of concentrated study of better tools for evaluation we have done some helpful experimentation in this area which has focused our attention upon our objectives. Our greatest hopes do not lie in accomplishments but in the fact that all of us are dissatisfied with our present status and are milling about seeking leads that seem to offer at least tentative solutions for our pertinent problems. Smug complacency is becoming a sign of incompetence around Drewry. Our ideas as to what we want to do have been less vague than how to do" (Gay, 1941, p. 1).



**Participants in the Museum of Education's  
Secondary School Study Project**

Left to right: Eula Cokely; Arthur R. Lane; Mary Lane

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**SUGGESTED READING:**

Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann,  
*Stand and Prosper: Black Colleges and Their  
Students* (Princeton: Princeton University  
Press, 2001).

Oral history interviews were conducted  
in May 2010. With special thanks to Juliette  
S. Smith of Talladega College and Turner C.  
Battle, and with great appreciation to Eula  
Cokely and Mary Lane for providing important  
source materials for this exhibition. Archival  
materials from the Talladega College  
Archives in Savery Library were used in this  
research. Catalog material was extracted from  
[www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html)  
and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).



Members of the  
Greensboro Four  
(left to right): Dudley's  
Franklin McCain and  
Joseph McNeil at the  
Student Nonviolent  
Coordinating  
Committee fiftieth  
anniversary, Raleigh,  
Spring 2010

# Dudley High School

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA



Dudley High School; Dudley High School teachers, 1940

*The story of Dudley is a story of Dr. Tarpley.*

—William Skelton, a student and a teacher during the Secondary School Study

FOUNDED IN 1929, Dudley High School was desegregated in 1971 and continues to serve as a secondary school for the city of Greensboro. Dudley High School represented one of the urban school settings in the Secondary School Study with over 800 students from the city of Greensboro in grades 8-11 and a staff of twenty-nine teachers. The school distinguished itself with its experimental use of audio-visual aids, and techniques were explored during the Study for measuring pupil growth, including attitude, appreciation, habits, and skills. The school's principal, John Tarpley, held a unique role in the town, as often noted by alumni, where he commanded substantial power within both the white and black communities. Dudley High School was

accredited in 1934 as an original institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes.

Of all the participating sites, Dudley High suggests the strongest level of social agency and local political involvement with what could be seen as a direct link to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The Greensboro Four (North Carolina A&T State University students who popularized non-violent, sit-in protests) included "the Dudley Three," three non-Secondary School Study graduates of Dudley High School: Ezell Blair Jr. (Jibreel Khazan), David Richmond, and Franklin McCain.

Legendary John Allen Tarpley served as principal of Dudley High School from 1932-1965. Described by Dudley alumni as a "big Texan," he graduated from Wiley College, receiving a master's degree from the University of Michigan with additional graduate study at Ohio State University.



J. A. Tarpley (1902–1992)

Tarpley's presentation, "Articulating the Work of the College and Secondary School," at the 1939 meeting of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes introduced the importance of developing a "cooperative plan," in keeping with the "cooperative study" orientation that would define the Secondary School Study as a way to articulate the curricular relationship between high schools and colleges (Tarpley, 1939).

*The Dudley teachers were never in jeopardy in terms of their political beliefs. Jobs were never in danger, and many of the teachers worked during the elections as poll watchers and clerks. This was encouraged by Dr. Tarpley. He was politically minded and allowed us to work for civil rights.*

—William Skelton, a student and a teacher during the Secondary School Study

"When Tarpley approached the Superintendent to seek improvements, he always brought two plans—one for full equalization that he knew would be turned down, and a second that would meet many of his needs even as it appeared to be a compromise in the eyes of his white superiors" (Chafe, 1980, p. 19).

In 1942, Dr. Tarpley submitted the following description that later appeared in the *Secondary School Study News Bulletin*.

"Dudley High Examines Curriculum: The entire staff of Dudley High is concerned with two professional problems. 1) Attempting to make a more careful evaluation of our curriculum with specific reference to our school philosophy. 2) Attempting to develop plans and procedures for making wider and more effective use of our audio-visual aid facilities" (Tarpley, 1942, pp. 4–5).

William H. Brown, associate director of the Secondary School Study, described an experimental core group of teachers at Dudley High School who were engaged in curriculum development as a form of teacher cooperation, "such as a science teacher working with an English teacher to improve the reading and writing in a given class, or conscious efforts on the part of several teachers in the school to explore with pupils the number concepts or number relationships in courses other than mathematics courses" (Brown, W., 1942a, p. 55).

*The teachers would exchange outlines and would know what topics could be coordinated. Students were receiving knowledge in more than one direction and, because of the connections, the curriculum became more meaningful for them. We all planned together while developing our curriculum units and teaching plans. If an English teacher gave a writing assignment, the topic would be integrated with historical themes, and my assignments in history were graded by an English teacher. The physical education teachers and music teachers were involved, too; they coordinated their topics with history. We all worked together.*

—Ida Jenkins, a teacher during the Secondary School Study



### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

The Dudley High School Building

Educational Leader:

John A. Tarpley

Curricular Experimentation

Pedagogical Activism and Civil Rights

Curator's Statement



Vance Chavis with students

Teacher cooperation extended to a program offering support during World War II in addition to students' regular coursework. "The library has set up an active war information center. Diversified occupations courses have been stepped up to meet war-time needs. The physical and social sciences are correlated for a cooperative attack on wartime problems of pupils and their parents. The music and home economics departments are very active in the effort. The faculty has developed long-term plans for further modifications" (Tarpley, ca. 1943, p. 12).

Dudley High School also established a school-wide health program led by Vance Chavis. "The promotion of healthful living is a time-honored objective in practically every school. Schools approach this objective through a wide variety of different activities but it is unusual to find a school which can furnish definite and organized evidences which indicate the extent to which its health

activities result in improved pupil and community health" (Brown, W., ca. 1943, p. 13). Chavis was awarded a General Education Board Fellowship for 1946-1947 to study public health education.

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Oral history interviews were conducted in July 2007. With special thanks to Gloria Pitts of North Carolina A&T State University, Andre' D. Vann of North Carolina Central University, and Brenda Dalton James of the Dudley High School Alumni Association. Archival materials from the James E. Shepard Memorial Library University Archives of North Carolina Central University and University Archives at the F. D. Bluford Library of North Carolina A&T State University were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



**Top row, left to right:**  
Bernice Clark Brown; Arthur M. Cole;  
Almetha Clark Gilbert

**Second row:**  
George M. Hampton; Ida F. Jenkins;  
Mary Katherine Williamson Jones

**Third row:**  
James H. Kesler; Lois Clark Millings;  
Carrie Harris Outlaw

**Left:**  
William Skelton;  
John and Helen Smith

# Huntington High School

NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA



HUNTINGTON HIGH SCHOOL was one of the leading black high schools in Virginia due, in part, to the stature of its principal, L. F. Palmer. A four-year public high school during the Secondary School Study, Huntington High maintained a teaching faculty of twenty-one for 640 students. Of great pride was the school library, considered one of the finest in the state. The facility housed more than 3,500 books and subscribed to over thirty-five magazines and six daily newspapers (Lucas, 1999, p. 64). The school was an original member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes, receiving regional accreditation in 1934.

Located in the industrial center of Hampton Roads, Huntington represented a city school in the Study, with faculty developing a strong general education program for its students. "Implementing a functioning democracy," conceiving a core curriculum, and designing evaluation forms to ascertain and document student growth became goals for the school during this time. Faculty had hoped to develop a core program to extend throughout all curricular areas; however, Palmer became embroiled in political-racial tensions with Hampton Roads business leaders leading to his dismissal. In a 1988 memoir, Palmer's daughter writes, "I know losing Huntington



### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

Huntington High School Building

Educational Leadership:

Principal Palmer

Curricular Experimentation

The Firing of L. F. Palmer

Curator's Statement



Above:  
Class of 1945;  
L. F. Palmer  
(1888-1950);  
Huntington High  
School

hastened father's death. Although he was immediately employed by Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) and although he worked without bitterness to help build an outstanding teacher training program there, father was deeply wounded. He once told me that losing Huntington was almost like losing one of his own children" (Palmer Smith, 1988, pp. 62-63). Curricular experimentation became secondary as the school healed and accepted its new principal.

The black high school in Newport News was named for Collis Potter Huntington, a railroad industrialist who maintained what was then the largest privately owned shipyard in the country. The high school building was constructed in 1936 and expanded in 1943 with

vocational education additions. Since 1981, the original Huntington High School building has served as a middle school.

"Huntington High School aims to provide, for its pupils, opportunities for pertinent experiences which will develop and enrich their lives and prepare them for war and post-war living. A committee, composed of social studies and language-arts teachers, has worked out a tentative program by which they expect to promote the aim expressed by the school. The committee has attempted to establish continuity in this program by arranging specific objectives and generalizations to be explored in each year of the high school. A second committee, composed of science teachers, has worked out a similar plan for the reorganization of science to meet wartime objectives" (Palmer, ca. 1943a, p. 12).

Lutrelle Fleming Palmer, who served as Huntington's first principal from 1920 to 1943, is described as soft-spoken, gentle, and patient, easily winning the respect, even reverence, of the students. Palmer received undergraduate degrees from Wilberforce University and the University of Michigan, a master's degree from Hampton Institute, and an honorary doctorate from Virginia Union University.

He taught at Wilberforce University, Atlanta University, Virginia State College and, after his principalship at Huntington High School, at Hampton Institute, where he would develop an innovative teacher education program.

Palmer served as executive secretary of the Virginia State Teachers Association from 1926 to 1944, an organization that he guided into a teachers union and active voice for civil rights and equalization of teachers' salaries through informal collective bargaining. The Virginia State Teachers Association would grow to over 4,000 members and include over ninety-five percent of the black teachers in the state. He would also be elected vice president of the American Teachers Association, formerly the National Association of Colored Teachers, which would later affiliate with the National Education Association. As president of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes during the 1939-1940 academic year, Palmer would exert more influence on the Secondary School Study than other participating schools' principals. He was in regular contact with William A. Robinson as they organized and planned the workshops for the participating school faculty.

"Huntington High School was a community-centered school. The success of the high school was due largely to the strong bond between school and community. Professor Palmer strengthened these ties. He aggressively pursued this relationship by taking advantage of all available community resources, encouraging and nurturing the spirit of cooperation and good will. This unique relationship was reflected in many tangible ways by businesses that supported the school. In conversation, citizens proudly referred to Huntington High School as 'our high school'" (Lucas, 2010).



Hattie Thomas Lucas, a student during the Secondary School Study; W. H. Robinson (d. 1990)

Huntington's William Hannibal Robinson was one of the more important classroom teachers in the Secondary School Study and helped other educators attend to state and national curricular trends. W. H. Robinson, not to be confused with Study director William A. Robinson, developed classroom materials as part of the Virginia Curriculum (a historic development project guided by Hollis Caswell) and served as Study staff at the Atlanta University meeting in October 1941. Completing a doctorate at New York University in 1954, Robinson continued his career as a professor at Hampton University.

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Oral history interviews were conducted in October 2008. With special thanks to Donna Davis and Sandra Johnson of the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center, Donzella Maupin of Hampton University, Anita Jennings of the Pearl Bailey Library, and Cleveland Mayo, and with great appreciation to Freddie B. Allen and Alice Rainey for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Archival materials from Hampton University Archives and the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



### Top row, left to right:

Freddie B. Allen; Daniel Bacchus;  
Ernestine Brown Bunn; Inettie B. Edwards

### Second row:

Lillian Lovett; Hattie Thomas Lucas;  
Howard F. Manly; Bessie G. Phillips Owens

### Third row:

Willie R. Ponton; Arthur Larry Price;  
Alice Rainey; Mildred R. Wilson

### SUGGESTED READING:

Hattie Thomas Lucas, *Huntington High School:  
Symbol of Community Hope and Unity 1920-1971*  
(Yorktown, VA: Publishing Connections, 1999).

# I. M. Terrell High School

FORT WORTH, TEXAS



Photos courtesy of  
Fort Worth Public  
Library Archives



TERRELL HIGH SCHOOL, representing a city school site, enrolled over 900 students in grades 9-11 with a faculty of twenty-six teachers during the time of the Secondary School Study. The school building, opened in 1938, was applauded as a modern twenty-six-room structure with a spacious campus whose extensive facilities allowed for studies in both academic and vocational education. Teachers sought to develop an integrated core program based on personal and social problems, and special efforts were taken to initiate pupil and teacher participation that led to student growth

and professional development of teachers. Faculty also experimented with pupil-teacher planning. Terrell High School was an original institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes, receiving regional accreditation in 1934.

In 1882, public education for black students was organized in Fort Worth with Isaiah Milligan Terrell (1859-1931) serving as one of the first teachers and, subsequently, appointed superintendent for black education. Beginning in 1936, a structure on East 18th Street was converted to the high school. The Works Progress Administration funded an addition to the building in 1937, and the facility opened in 1938. In 1973, the I. M. Terrell High School closed due to school desegregation and, in 1998, reopened as the I. M. Terrell Elementary School. We applaud the efforts of I. M. Terrell alumni for the establishment of the I. M. Terrell Alumni Center and the role of Norma Johnson, who



Hazel Harvey Peace (1903–2008) with student; Principal L. M. Johnson, who served as principal of Terrell High School from 1921 to 1945, was a graduate of Fisk University with additional study at the University of Chicago and the University of Kansas.



The I. M. Terrell Alumni Center

was instrumental in the reopening of the Terrell building as an elementary school.

Along with Principal Johnson, Hazel Harvey Peace, a guidance and English teacher, filled an important role for Terrell High School—that of a “tribal elder.” As mentioned by one student, Mrs. Peace “ran” the school, providing strength and guidance for its educational culture. With an emphasis on the cooperative expression of ideals and the role of collective intelligence in the process of social change, such leadership is defined not by title or organizational power but by insight and thoughtfulness. Hazel Harvey Peace served in this capacity similar to the role of Margaret Willis at the Ohio State University Laboratory School. Peace attended the 1942 Institute on Personality Development at Vassar College, where she studied guidance with Caroline Zachry of the Eight-Year Study staff and would serve as a staff consultant herself for the Secondary School Study.

*Mrs. Peace ran that school. Professor Johnson was the scholar and principal, and Mrs. Peace was the disciplinarian, quite petite but with an iron will. She never raised her voice. All she had to do was to say “young ladies” or “young men,” and we all stopped. But we were never frightened of her. She always had our best interests in mind.*

—Opal Lee, a student during the time of the Secondary School Study

“In 1942, Terrell High School staff identified the following goals for its work in the Secondary School Study: 1) To make guidance more effective. 2) To increase pupil and teacher participation in administration and all curricula and extra-curricular activities through staff meetings and the school council. 3) To encourage ‘in-service growth’ of teachers through study in group meetings and by visitation. 4) To make use of the course in Personal and Social Problems as the ‘core’ of our program” (Johnson, L., 1942, p. 4).



LaBerta Phillips (1900–1996)

LaBerta Phillips' and Hazel Harvey Peace's efforts to address "personal and social concerns" exemplified the school's curriculum. "Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. Peace were doing a fine job of attacking personal and social problems with two groups of children. The technique involved the use of English and social studies material in exploring the personal and social concerns of these children. These two teachers seemed exceptionally sensitive to the problems of children and had established rapport which encouraged the pupils to discuss their problems frankly" (Johnson, L., 1942, p. 4).

One dimension of curricular planning that permeated the Secondary School Study was the effort to correlate the traditional subjects, i.e., to draw out connections among the individual subjects as they were taught in their respective classes. The content was decided

through a combination of pupil-teacher planning and teachers' analysis of students' needs and interests.

*Groups of students from Mrs. Peace's classes in collaboration with Mrs. Phillip's classes offered subject material suitable and pertinent for the school magazine, Terrell Life. These students were enrolled in both English and Journalism and often researched and developed the material for the entire issue of the school journal. In the journalism classes, the students were reading and learning about newspapers in other cities. The library was a rich resource; we received subscriptions to other papers from outside the state. Journalism was a very important aspect of the curriculum and brought the library into the center of the academic program.*

—Adelene L. James, a student during the time of the Secondary School Study

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Oral history interviews were conducted in April 2009. With special thanks to Tom Kellam of the Fort Worth Public Library, James Mallard, and Beverly Washington, and with great appreciation to Opal Lee, Robert L. O'Neal, and Margie Majors for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Archival materials from the Fort Worth Public Library Archives were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

I. M. Terrell High School Building  
L. M. Johnson and Hazel Harvey Peace  
Curricular Experimentation  
Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice  
Terrell Alumni Association's Center  
Curator's Statement

#### Top row, left to right:

Reby Cary; Marjorie Crenshaw;  
Lillian Hemphill; Adelene James

#### Second row:

Opal Lee; Margie Majors; Robert L. O'Neal; Robert Starr

#### Third row:

Jerome L. Thomas; Annie Marie Webb;  
Joseph Webb; Loyce S. Whitted

# Lincoln High School

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA



Lincoln High School faculty: Front row, l-r: M. L. Bryant; H. M. Adams; G. P. Anderson. Back row, l-r: J. H. Abner; G. L. Porter; R. F. Nims

LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL attracted students from both the town and rural areas. As a combined elementary and six-year high school, Lincoln enrolled over 450 secondary school students with a teaching staff of nineteen high school teachers during the time of the Secondary School Study. The program of study was primarily college preparatory, and social, economic, health, and recreational activities became the curricular focus for faculty during the 1940s.

The school's statement of beliefs during the Secondary School Study read, "We do not encourage youngsters to be hateful or violent when they find some injustices, and we do not expect little children to do anything yet about some of the matters which worry those of us

who are older. But we want them to practice responsible living every day and to think about the world around them, so they can face life with courage and with ideas" (Porter, 1952, p. 107).

Lincoln was closely affiliated with Florida A&M College, serving as a student teacher practice school even though a separate laboratory school was officially connected with the college. In fact, Florida A&M College's own high school had received regional accreditation in 1935, well before Lincoln, and was already a member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes. The respect of the GEB staff for Lincoln's principal, G. L. Porter, certainly influenced the selection of the school for the Study. Lincoln



Lincoln High School



The Lincoln Room



G. L. Porter (1909–1995)

received Southern Association accreditation and membership in the ACSSN in 1942.

The West Brevard brick building, named Lincoln High School, was built in 1929 and, during the 1940s, consisted of the secondary school, an agriculture shop, and the elementary school. Closed in 1967, the high school building was remodeled during 1974 and, in 1975, opened as the Lincoln Neighborhood Service Center providing educational, medical, cultural, and social services for the community. The facility houses a Lincoln High School alumni center, known as the Lincoln Room, with a substantial collection of archival materials.

Lincoln High School was actively engaged in experimentation, guided by its gifted principal, Gilbert Lawrence Porter, who had been selected as a GEB fellow. Porter, born in Baldwin City, Kansas, served as principal of the Lincoln High School from 1938 to 1954. A graduate of Talladega College, he taught in Sarasota, Florida, as a science teacher before moving into administration. After his tenure as principal of Lincoln High School, Porter

accepted the full-time executive secretary position of the Florida State Teachers Association where he fought for the civil rights, equal salaries, and retirement benefits for black teachers.

Viewed as one of the more progressive principals in the Study, G. L. Porter completed a doctorate at Ohio State University with staff from the Eight-Year Study. He guided Lincoln faculty in the development of a correlated core curriculum. Along with many other of the participating schools, the library took special importance at Lincoln (with the librarian as a member of the instructional faculty) and was central to the educational program. In addition, Lincoln School faculty emphasized “free reading” activities (Unified Functional Reading Program) and teacher-pupil planning and developed a process for the comprehensive evaluation of school activities. The faculty was one of three schools who prepared a final report, *The Evolution of Susan Prim*, describing their activities during the project (Lincoln High and Elementary School faculty, 1944).



Gladys W. Anderson

## Web Exhibition “Rooms”

Lincoln High School Building

Principal G. L. Porter

Teachers and Curriculum Development

School Planning and the Secondary School Study

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

Curator’s Statement

*Our teachers would talk to us about what we read, and “the keeper of books,” Gladys W. Anderson, our librarian, handled those books like they were her babies. The library was an integral part of the school and of the curriculum. English teachers would set a time for us—elementary and secondary students—to go to the library. It was exciting for us, especially elementary children, to go to the library, to be around all of these materials, and to choose what we wanted to read. There were high school students who would read to younger students. It was a special place. Of course, there were many homes that didn’t have any books or magazines.*

—Lucille C. Alexander, a student during the Secondary School Study

*The teachers worked together as they were developing a core curriculum for Lincoln High School. Our subjects really represented broad themes when we wrote term papers and we could choose the topics. I remember writing about “the family” and then writing about my family. The teachers would come to learn about us through our papers and comments.*

—Lessie Sanford, a student during the Secondary School Study

*The curriculum was all connected. When we were studying a particular country in social studies, we would be reading literature from and*

*about that nation in English class. And in home economics class, we would be preparing food from that country. The teachers brought together the curriculum and brought us together as well.*

—Irene Thompson Perry, a student during the Secondary School Study

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The Museum of Education applauds the efforts of W. Mack Rush, the Historic Lincoln High School community, and the Lincoln Neighborhood Service Center for the establishment of The Lincoln Room.

Oral history interviews were conducted in May 2013. With special thanks to W. Mack Rush of The Lincoln Room, Patti Wallace of the Lincoln Neighborhood Service Center, Robert Schwartz of Florida State University, and Elizabeth Dawson of Florida A&M University, and with great appreciation to Lorraine Footman Barnes, Hazel M. Brown, and Augustus Colson for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Archival materials from The Lincoln Room and the Southeastern Regional Black Archives Research Center and Museum of Florida A&M University were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

**Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project**



**Top row, left to right:**

Lucille C. Alexander; Lorraine Footman Barnes;  
Hazel M. Brown; Lucille Brown

**Second row:**

Augustus Colson; Willie Deas; Anne Floyd Denefield;  
Irene Thompson Perry

**Third row:**

Charles Rollins; Lessie Sanford

# Magnolia Avenue High School

VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI



MAGNOLIA AVENUE HIGH SCHOOL, the sole black secondary school in Vicksburg, enrolled approximately 300 students with a staff of twelve teachers. Representing a town school in the project, the curricular program balanced strong academic-college preparatory classes with a vocational course of study: math and the sciences, social studies (including

economics and sociology), the humanities (including black history, civics and problems of democracy), and vocational arts. The black community raised funds to support educational activities, equipping the science room, music room, orchestra, and business department, and Principal J. G. H. Bowman was instrumental in purchasing land adjacent to the school in order to provide a playground for students.

The school was known for its activity-project method program (including activist projects stemming from studies in sociology and community health programs). Each Friday, an assembly was staged for all classes above the third grade: "Assembly programs are presented cooperatively by the classes in both the elementary and high school departments. These programs have been both informative and entertaining. . . . A dramatization presented by the second year class in history brought out very vividly the contrast between the



Left to right:  
J. G. H. Bowman  
(1874-1944)

Katie M.  
Washington,  
principal beginning  
in 1944

J. R. Buck Jr.

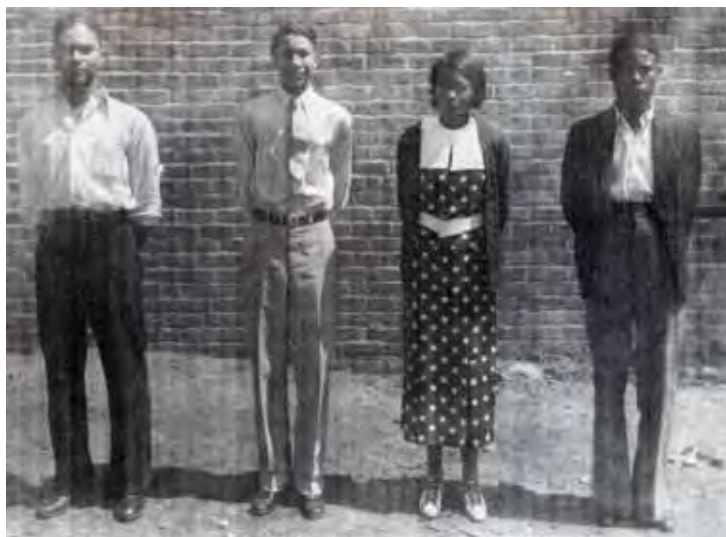
customs and dress of prehistoric man and men of modern times. The Third year English class presented a forum on the question: Should eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds be drafted in preference to older men? The question was finally opened to the entire assembly. The sewing class presented a dramatization on cotton. The sociology class presented a program which focused attention on some difficulties which people of foreign descent encounter after reaching America" (Bowman, ca. 1943, p. 8).

J. G. H. Bowman, who served as principal at "Old Magnolia" and Magnolia Avenue schools from 1906 to 1944, took advanced coursework at Fisk University, Atlanta University, and the University of Chicago. Magnolia Avenue High School was renamed Bowman High School during the 1945-1946 school year in memory of and after the death of its beloved principal. Bowman High School closed in 1959 with the opening of Temple High School. The building is currently vacant.

Principal Katie M. Washington, a participant in the 1940 Atlanta Workshop, taught a sociology class whose "activity project" sought to obtain funding for a federal housing project. "A community activity of [Washington's] sociology class was largely responsible for an attempt last year on the part of representative citizens to secure a federal housing project for Vicksburg. This year the sociology class, studying *Direct Ways to Build up a*

*Healthy, Intelligent, and Morally Strong Community*, chose as one of its objectives 'to get first-hand information about diseases which prevent the development of healthy bodies.' The study finally led to a desire to know more about venereal diseases—the causes, dangers, controls, prevalence among Negroes, and to what extent they may be inherited, etc. They consulted standard references, read health pamphlets, and talked with adults about their projects" (Bowman, 1942, p. 5).

"With the view toward making the study of English more functional and less traditional, in the eleventh grade classes no books of literature were purchased this year as in former years. Instead, the students and teacher attempted to make a study of certain modern problems. To do so, the students contributed small sums to purchase books that might be used for such a study to supplement those in the library. These books, others borrowed from the library, and the texts in literature used in past years were placed in the classroom so that ample references might be close at hand. The subjects chosen for study during the year were *Transportation*, *The Negro*, *Crime*. Some of the books purchased for these studies were Anna Lindberg's *North to the Orient*, Benjamin Brawley's *The Negro Genius*, Victor Page's *ABC of Aviation* and many others" (Bowman, 1942, pp. 8-9).



## Web Exhibition "Rooms"

Magnolia Avenue High School Building

Magnolia Avenue Teachers and their Work

Cooperative Planning and Student Growth

Building Community and the School  
Assembly

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

Curator's Statement

Magnolia Avenue High School teachers, left to right:  
Clinton McGuire, Philip Williams, Hazel V. Connor,  
Bernard Dennis

"Mr. J. R. Buck, one of our teachers of the social sciences, formulated a tentative program for several of his classes. The central point was a plan to interest the children in working cooperatively with the teacher and with each other in securing information about subjects of interest to them. To put it simply, it was a planned attempt to depart as far as might seem advisable at the present time from the teaching of abstract subject matter from some author's text book, and to launch out as far as might seem safe in the direction of having children select topics in which they are interested and gather information about these topics from all available sources. Mr. Buck reports that the following procedure was carried out in each of his classes:

"The children selected their own units of work, based on interest, current importance, and supposed ability of the class to carry through the cooperative enterprise. They decided to work in groups which they themselves formed, each group assuming responsibility for a definite portion of the group enterprise. After the units were selected and

the groups formed as indicated above, the students were asked to discuss. . . . What educational benefits do you hope to derive from this unit? What contribution can a study of this unit make toward your immediate or ultimate well-being? What particular weakness of yours do you think can be strengthened by a study of this unit?" (Bowman, 1942, p. 1).

The faculty, in its belief in the importance of determining the interests and needs of students, engaged in child study, guided by their regular reading of the PEA's *Progressive Education* and other PEA publications (Bowman, 1942). With an interest in pupil-teacher planning in social studies, the faculty prepared a massive educational philosophy statement which, alas, has been lost. Nonetheless, Magnolia Avenue High School faculty seemed to be one of the most engaged schools for curricular experimentation and the development of a fused core curriculum.

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



Oral history interviews were conducted in November 2008. With special thanks to Cheryl Kariuki of Alcorn State University and Thelma Brown Rush, and with great appreciation to Dorinda Robinson, Allene Gayles, and Jeanette Jordan for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/ssss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/ssss).

### **Top row, left to right:**

Frank Crump Jr.; Orelia Peterson Crump;  
Allene Gayle; Jeanette Jordan

### **Second row:**

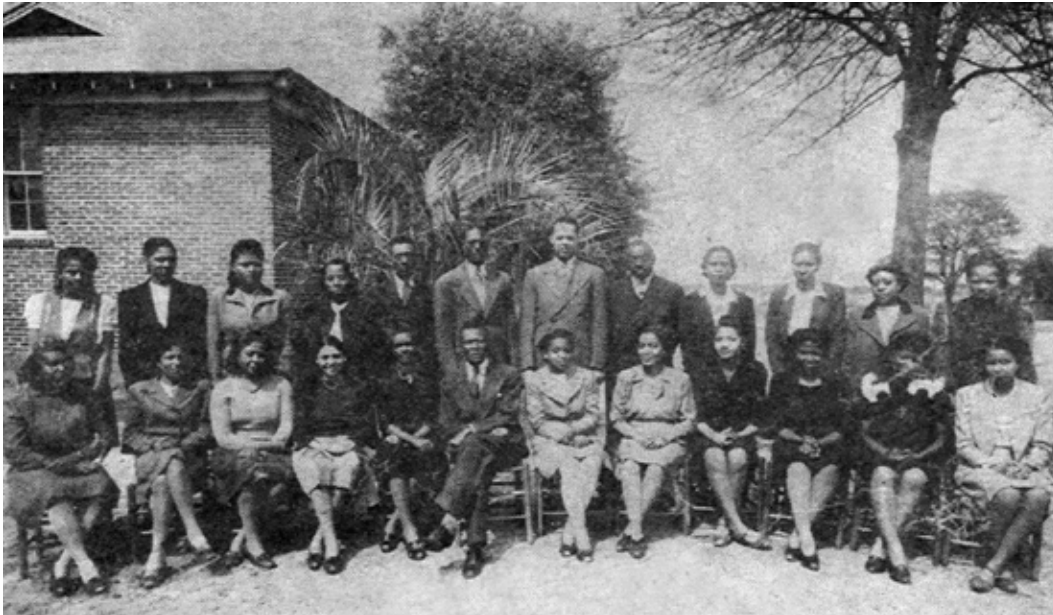
Carrie Reynolds; Thelma Rush;  
Alyce Shields; Edgar E. Smith

### **Third row:**

Julia Washington Smith;  
Louise Murray Stewart;  
Frances Pearline Williams

# Moultrie High School for Negro Youth

MOULTRIE, GEORGIA



MOULTRIE HIGH SCHOOL FOR NEGRO Youth was added to the list of participating sites in 1942 after the closing of Atlanta University Laboratory School and its withdrawal from the project. During the 1940s, Moultrie, located in Southwest Georgia, was primarily an agricultural community. While the setting represented a rural-town school, the teachers were closely aligned with Albany State College, although Moultrie did not serve as an off-campus laboratory school student-teaching site and Albany State maintained an official laboratory school. Moultrie High, with its extensive 1946 final report, *Miss Parker: The New Teacher*, was one of the more active participants in the project, an interpretation confirmed by Cynthia Gibson Hardy's research where she referred to the school as one of the more experimental programs (Moultrie High



and Elementary School faculty, 1946; Gibson Hardy, 1977).

The Moultrie school was a combination elementary and secondary school with grades 1–11 and, during the Secondary School Study, maintained an enrollment of 800 students with most of the twenty faculty engaged in some form of program development. The



W. H. Dennis  
(1911–1965)



secondary school faculty consisted of eight full-time teachers for a high school enrollment of 165 students. One possible reason for the selection of this school was that Moultrie High School (for white youth) was participating in the GEB-funded cooperative research project, the Southern Study. Moultrie High School for Negro Youth received accreditation in 1942 while becoming an institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes. The Moultrie High School building is thought to have been completed in 1938. In the 1950s, the school's name was changed to William Bryant High School and, with the desegregation of schools in 1965, the structure served as a middle school. The building no longer stands, and the site serves as the home for the Frank Ryce Community Center.

Principal William H. Dennis received an A.B. from Morehouse College, a master's degree from Atlanta University, and a doctorate from Teachers College. Dennis left Moultrie in 1946 to become a professor of education at Albany State College, where he would later become president, serving from 1953 to 1965. Dennis is described as a

farsighted and taciturn principal and a dedicated, conscientious, hardworking man who maintained his belief in the importance of "interest in the student" at Albany State. While his presidency was defined by Albany State's expansion, he preferred to describe his success as the focus on the student and on student affairs (Ramsey, 1973, p. 252). The emergence of the Albany (civil rights) Movement during the early 1960s would prove difficult for Dennis' presidency at Albany State.

*As students, we did not know the relationship between the segregated school system and the black and white teachers. We knew that our books were always hand me downs from the white school. Sometimes the pages were missing. We always got seconds. But we were proud of that because whatever we got, we made good use of it. And that is where the teacher became so important because whatever we didn't have, they would help us.*

—Otis Baker, a student during the time of the Secondary School Study



### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

Moultrie High School Building

Principal W. H. Dennis

Cooperative Planning and  
Student Growth

Building Community

Curator's Statement

During the course of the Secondary School Study, Moultrie faculty lengthened the high school course period from forty-five to sixty minutes in what was an early form of block scheduling, conducted extra-curricular activities in an activities period during the school day, and developed a curriculum based on social problems (e.g., community housing or health) as determined by teachers and students (Moultrie High and Elementary School faculty, 1946, p. 20).

Faculty also developed an experimental form of cumulative record: "Manila folders, one for each pupil in each class, hold evidences of pupil progress. After certain periods of time, the information in these folders is summarized and recorded on the cumulative record sheets. Pupils participate, to some extent, in the interpretation of the data" (Dennis, ca. 1943, p. 10).

The Moultrie faculty's final 1946 report described their thoughts about the experimental process: "We see our school as a cooperative venture involving administrators, teachers, pupils, and parents, all working together in order to make life richer for all

those concerned. The success of this process of working together, we feel, is regulated by the extent to which certain important working relationships are present in what we do. . . . We don't try to teach lessons from books on relationships or have pupils recite lessons about desirable relationships. We try to make the relationships operate as pupils and teachers plan together, as pupils make reports or solve a problem in mathematics, as parent and teacher discuss the progress of a child or of work on some important community problems and as the faculty plans to carry out responsibilities in connection with the development of the program of the school—in fact, we try, as well as we know how, to cause the relationships, which we have set up as desirable, to operate in everything that we do. To us, discovering how to do, is just as important as knowing what to do. Knowing what to do does not always ensure a rich learning experience but knowing how leads to a program of action. We have known for a long time what to do about some things. For instance—'Learn to do by doing.' We even know why. We have read lots of the books which told us these

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



Left to right: Otis Baker; Ira Thompson IV; George Walker

things. But how to do! We had to explore that for ourselves and, once we got seriously started, it was exciting" (Moultrie High and Elementary School faculty, 1946, pp. 11-12).

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Oral history interviews were conducted in December 2009. With special thanks to LaVerne McLaughlin and Shabreda Ray of Albany State University, La Shay James of

the Frank Ryce Community Center, and Dale Williams of the City of Moultrie, and with great appreciation to Otis Baker and George Walker for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Archival materials from University Archives, James Pendergrast Memorial Library of Albany State University were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).



# Natchitoches Parish Training School

NATCHITOCHES, LOUISIANA



THIS RURAL-TOWN SCHOOL in Northwestern Louisiana enrolled over 800 elementary and high school students with a teaching staff of twenty-three and served as the only four-year secondary school in the parish. Natchitoches, with a population during this time of 7,500 residents, is the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. School administrators were quite proud of their efforts to establish "a functioning democracy" in their school. Guided by Principal F. M. Richardson, the secondary school teachers sought to develop a comprehensive reading program, an integrated core curriculum with an instructional focus on social growth, and a cooperatively planned health program. Natchitoches Parish Training School became an institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes in 1946.

The Parish Training School building was constructed in 1925 with funding from the Rosenwald Fund. In 1938, an elementary school building was added to the school site to constitute four modern frame buildings. The program of study included grades 1-11 with the 12th grade representing the introductory year of a teacher education training program at Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute (now Grambling State University).

In 1952, Natchitoches Parish Training School was renamed Central High School and, in 1969, the secondary school students were moved to a new building at a different location. In 1970, Central High School and Natchitoches High School were combined to form Natchitoches Central High School. The original site of Natchitoches Parish Training School now serves as the Ben Johnson Audi-



Natchitoches Parish Training School



The Lincoln Institute, Natchitoches Parish Training School, and Central High School Archives

torium and houses memorabilia of The Lincoln Institute, Natchitoches Parish Training School, and Central High School Archives. In 2014, the LNC Foundation dedicated a monument on the site of the schools.

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### Leadership during the Secondary School Study:

Gaddis Hall, Principal to 1940  
F. M. Richardson, Principal 1941

*Mr. Richardson recognized the times and once said that he knew the difficulties of teaching social studies to black students knowing that they did not have full rights. It was quite frustrating. Yet, in spite of the difficult and unequal conditions, there was great pride in our school.*

—Alma Loftin Johnson, a student during the Secondary School Study

Frederick M. Richardson, a graduate of Southern University, elicited feelings of kindness and respect among teachers and students.

*Mr. Richardson attended New York University and worked with those who were guided by the writings of John Dewey. When he became principal of the high school, he would work with faculty and ask how would we take care of the needs of these children and how do we send these children out into the world. That was his focus when he talked to the faculty. I didn't see this as a student, but when I became a teacher and worked with some of the same individuals who taught me, I then began to see this: how students would have to address society and confront the world.*

—J. D. Dupree, a student during the Study and later a teacher under Mr. Richardson

In "Report of Two Years of Activity of the Secondary School Study," appearing in *The Journal of Negro Education*, Natchitoches Parish Training School was specifically



V. M. Lathon

mentioned as one of six schools exploring the reconfiguration of “the various subject areas by means of some type of core program” (Brown, W., 1942a, p. 55). Core programs often reconciled distinctions between academic and vocational education with classes becoming more academically oriented and serving all youth, regardless of their career plans. Arthur Welch, a student during the Secondary School Study, recalled, “The shop experiences that I had offered an easy transition for me to go from woodworking to metal work. My mechanical drafting and blueprint reading served as the foundation that started me in engineering. The results of the training that I received in high school took me through college and led me to a career at Rockwell and to collaborate with NASA. But we were not being trained for just a job; we were being trained for life.”

“Teachers are not only helping children to meet their academic needs in a more realistic way, but are also actively concerned with the personal problems and with the social growth of children. Some examples of this kind of concern will be found in practically all of the schools, but unusually convincing examples are evident in . . . Natchitoches Parish Training School” (Brown, W., 1942a, pp. 53-54).

*Mr. Lathon would explain to us just because our skin color was different did not mean that we had to be different. We had the ability to become anything we wanted to become. He told us that we would only feel inferior of our own accord. No one could make us feel inferior but us; that stayed with me a long time.*

—Sarah Redden William LaCaze, a student during the Secondary School Study

The Museum of Education applauds the efforts of the Natchitoches community for the establishment of The Lincoln Institute, Natchitoches Parish Training School, and Central High School Archives.

Oral history interviews were conducted in October 2008. With special thanks to Mary Lynn Wernett and Annette Merrell of the Watson Memorial Library, Dayna Lee of the Louisiana Regional Folklife Program at Northwestern State University, Alma Loftin Johnson, and Edward Ward Jr. Archival materials from the LNC School Archives and the Watson Memorial Library of Northwestern State University were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



### Top row, left to right:

Lusetta Anthony;  
Grace T. Baptiste;  
Pearline Baptiste;  
Geneva B. Barrow

### Second row:

Alma C. Braxton; J. D. Dupree;  
Alma Loftin Johnson;  
Sarah R. W. LaCaze

### Third row:

Pearl H. Payne;  
Dorothy J. Presley; LeRoy Wafter;  
Marcella Walter

**Fourth row:** Arthur Welch

### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

The Natchitoches Parish Training School Building

Curricular Experimentation

Educational Leader: Principal F. M. Richardson

Natchitoches Parish Training School as Community

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

The LNC School Archives

Curator's Statement

# Pearl High School

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



DURING THE 1940S, the population of Nashville was approximately 160,000, with forty percent being African American. Of the fourteen black schools, including eight elementary and five junior high, Pearl High School served as the sole secondary school for the city, enrolling over 1,100 students in grades 10-12 with a faculty of thirty-six teachers. The curriculum was primarily a traditional academic course of study for college and non-college bound, and Secondary School Study planning focused on students' oral and written composition, health and safety needs, and American citizenship. Pearl High School was an institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes beginning in 1941 with its accreditation.

The Pearl School opened in 1883 as the first public school for blacks in Nashville, the "Athens of the South," and the first Southern

city to institute a public school system. During the Secondary School Study, Pearl High School was situated in the North Nashville neighborhood, just blocks from Fisk University. Pearl High School was closely affiliated with Fisk University and provided a venue for practice teaching.

McKissack and McKissack, the nation's first black architectural firm, designed the 1937 Pearl High School building. Considered at the time the finest school for blacks in the South, the building's art deco design included terrazzo floors at the entry level. A Public Works Administration construction project, the school was viewed by some as a reward for black voters' support since the African American community of Nashville shifted its political allegiance to the Democrats at the national level. "President Roosevelt and the Democratic party rewarded black Nashvillians



J. A. Galloway (who began his career as a mathematics teacher at Pearl High School in 1920) was the principal of Washington Junior High before accepting the role of principal at Pearl High School in 1937.

for their support with . . . a huge new Pearl High School” (Lovett, 1999, p. 232). Included in the school facility was one of the largest auditoriums available to the African American community in Nashville. This performance venue enriched the extra-curricular offerings of the school and further established Pearl High School as a center of cultural activity for the black community. A vocational building was added in 1945.

During the Secondary School Study, Pearl teachers were adapting their instructional methods in order to become more conscious of “pupil needs, individual teacher weaknesses, pupil growth, and professional cooperation” (Galloway, 1942, p. 3).

*Time was set aside for the core program. In order to learn history, you must have a good understanding of English. Students and teachers started the day in homerooms—the rooms where we lived. Before lunch, I would focus on a class theme, for example “going my way.” We taught whatever we thought was good for the students. I attended workshops where we would develop our own materials; we could not rely upon our [second-hand] books.*

—Novella Bass, a 1927 graduate who began teaching English at Pearl High School in 1950

During Pearl High School’s participation in the Secondary School Study, teachers stressed four broad areas of student needs serving to unify the academic and vocational subjects: oral and written composition, health, safety, and citizenship. An excerpt from a 1942 visitor’s report describes activities at the school: “Miss Rosalin Sumlin was continuing the cooperative effort in English and social studies which she began last year and had given more study to in the Hampton workshop. . . . She requested a visit from Mr. Wunsch [Study Staff member] and with the English teachers to help them examine the value of their projects and from Mr. Brown of the Study Staff to work with them in techniques for evaluating the success of their work on achieving their purposes. All English teachers with whom I talked assured me that they would like to sit down with Mr. Wunsch and examine the value of their present practices and plan for increasing the value of English experiences in the school” (Galloway, 1942, pp. 3-4).

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ONE OF THE MANY UNFORTUNATE aftermaths of school desegregation throughout the American South was the renaming of schools. Often, a white school building or a new structure served as the desegregated secondary school, and black schools were closed or turned into middle schools. There are few instances when an historic black high school’s name was retained as the sole designation for the secondary school. Pearl High School was no exception and, upon federal desegregation orders, the students were moved to a new location—a newly built facility—where they joined the population of a traditional white school, forming the Pearl-



Alice D. Epperson

Cohn Comprehensive High School. The 1936 Pearl building, closing in 1983, later reopened as the Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet School in 1986. The historical legacy of Pearl High School was implicitly if not explicitly dismissed. School officials even considered sandblasting the name—Pearl High School—from the façade of the building.

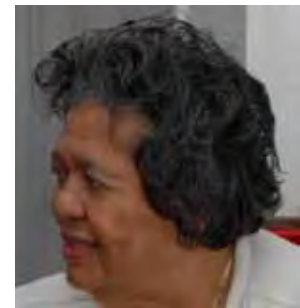
In 2001, a community movement was initiated by the Pearl High Committee of Alumni and Friends to restore the name Pearl High School to this historic building. Presented by Alice D. Epperson, a petition to rename the school created highly contentious discussions. Pearl High School's alumni were so strong in their resolve to restore their school's name that Metropolitan (Nashville) Public School Board officials were willing to remove the Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet School designation and rename the building to historic Pearl High School.

In recognition of an era of mean-spirited renaming of desegregated schools and the common elimination of the legacy of black schools, Epperson of the Pearl High Heritage Classes Foundation Inc. spoke against this recommendation. In a personal statement,

she noted, "Pearl High graduates have children and grandchildren who had graduated from the MLK Jr. Magnet School. In my opinion, if we changed the name back to Pearl, we would be doing to our own children and grandchildren the same thing that had been done to us—leaving them without a school legacy. That was unacceptable. We were bigger than that. We knew the power and significance of a community and one's love for their school. I could not do this to my child—to take away their school identity and dignity—and I could not do this to any other child." On few occasions in the history of school desegregation has a wronged black school community displayed such poise and thoughtfulness. The Metropolitan Public School Board subsequently approved the renaming of the school; however, the building was retitled Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet at Pearl High School. The building currently houses the Pearl High School Alumni Association Museum.

The Museum of Education applauds the efforts of the Pearl High School Alumni Association for the establishment of Pearl High School Alumni Association Museum.

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



### Top row, left to right:

Novella Bass; Callisto Bell; Melvin Black; Dorothy Gupton

### Second row:

Walter H. Fisher Sr.; Elizabeth Martin; Justine Pincham;  
Melvin Ridley

### Third row:

Lillian Thomas; Ella Thompson

Oral history interviews were conducted in June 2007 and April 2010. With special thanks to Christyne Douglas of Fisk University, and Ann Guess, Ted Lenox, and Alice D. Epperson of the Pearl High School Alumni Museum. Archival materials from the Pearl High School Alumni Museum, Special Collections and Archives of Fisk University, and the Tennessee State Library and Archives were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/ss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/ss).

### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

The Pearl High School Building

Curricular Experimentation

Pearl as Family and Community

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

Renaming Pearl High School

The Pearl High School Alumni Association

The Pearl High Alumni Museum

Curator's Statement

# Southern University A&M College Demonstration School

SCOTLANDVILLE, LOUISIANA



THE DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL, located on the campus of Southern University (in the Baton Rouge metropolitan area), served as a practice-teaching school for Southern University students. The school enrolled 300 students in grades 1-11 with a faculty of thirteen teachers. The high school enrollment consisted of approximately 150 students, with eight full-time secondary school teachers augmented by college teachers and practice teachers on a part-time basis. In the view

of Eight-Year Study consultants, curricular development at the Demonstration School was among the most innovative of the participating sites. The school was known for its core curriculum, and administrators were quite proud of their efforts in establishing "a functioning democracy" and developing a school-wide testing program. The Demonstration School was an institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes beginning in 1937.



Alice Almira Boley (1890–1968); Southern University Demonstration School

The school was founded in 1922 as the Southern University Model Training School and changed in the 1930s to the Demonstration School. At a later date, Southern University Laboratory School became the official designation. Currently, the Southern Laboratory School District includes a pre-K-12 brick-and-mortar structure on Southern University's campus and a K-12 virtual school for the students of Louisiana.

The Secondary School Study was establishing new roles for educational administrators and leaders. Democratic ideals served to define the experimental efforts of schools. The principal provided direction and instilled confidence while fostering flexibility and extending authority among the staff. Articulating and achieving such a balance of strong leadership with diffused authority proved challenging but was clearly a goal for the Demonstration School staff as teachers accepted administrative tasks and administrators continued to conceive of themselves as teachers. In fact, Southern University President F. G. Clark describes the experiment in democratic administration when Principal Gray left the school in 1942.

"Shortly before Mr. Gray left us, the Demonstration School faculty came to this office and presented to me a number of matters to which my attention should be directed. . . I said to them, 'you are going to have an opportunity to really show how interested you are in meeting these issues for we are not having a principal for the remainder of the year. We are going to let the faculty of the Demonstration School operate the school.' The next day, Dean Cade and I went to the Demonstration School and met with the whole faculty, allowing them to suggest the type of administrative organization that they would like to have. After a long period of free discussion I suggested that we use parliamentary procedure in order to become definite. The result of such procedure is the decision that the entire faculty of the Demonstration School will establish all of the policies for the institution. . . . It is difficult to imagine a more democratically chosen and functioning group" (Clark, 1942).

School experimentation was quite difficult and, as Demonstration School teachers and Study staff realized, many factors could deter curriculum development and implementation. A visit by Margaret Willis, Secondary School Study social studies consultant, to the Demonstration School brings out a novel dimension of school experimentation.



Class of 1944

"Southern University and the Demonstration School should be trying constantly to bring the best in national curriculum theory and practice into the schools of Louisiana. The school, then, should not be afraid of being experimental in its relationship to other schools in the state, though it should be thoughtful and evolutionary in modifying its practices. I had the feeling that the hesitation over new methods was due to the fact that most of the people whom I met and talked with were too modest about the possibilities in themselves and in the situation. Realistic examination of the tasks confronting education is the basis for an intelligent attack upon those problems, and out of the experience of attacking them successfully comes confidence. The faculty needs that kind of confidence; it can do brilliant work if it finds its security in the exercise of intelligence instead of in the perpetuation of tradition" (Willis, 1942a, p. 4).



Willis noted the important core curriculum work underway in other grades: "One of the best pieces of English teaching I have observed in a long time took place in the sixth grade as Miss Patty taught a geography lesson. The seventh grade core has enlisted the personal interests and responsibility of the children to such an extent that they are constantly busy without the teacher needing to tell them what to do next. In all grades students show responsibility for the care of the building and grounds. The student council and the school paper both seem to be carried largely by student initiative" (Willis, 1942a, p. 5).

*The free reading program was not merely a matter of reciting the plot from what we read. Students were asked and expected to truly engage with the material and to interpret what we were reading. And there was a sense of flexibility for our selections. We were encouraged to explore literature based upon our interests and needs.*

—Audrey Nabors-Jackson, a student during the Secondary School Study

### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

The Southern Demonstration School Community  
Teacher Development and Teacher Training  
Curricular Experimentation  
Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice  
Curator's Statement

### Leadership during the Secondary School Study:

W. H. Gray, Principal to 1942  
A. A. Boley, Principal 1942

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



### Top row, left to right:

Lena Armstead; John B. Cade;  
Dorothy Lee Early Davis;  
Gloria Murray Handy

### Second row:

Sedonia C. Johnson;  
Julia Bradford Moore;  
Audrey Nabors-Jackson;  
Lee Ethel Gray Patty

### Third row:

Huel D. Perkins

Oral history interviews were conducted in November 2008. With special thanks to Chaundra Carroccio of the Scotlandville Branch Library, Angela V. Proctor of Southern University and A&M College, and Sedonia C. Johnson, and with great appreciation to Audrey Nabors-Jackson for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Archival materials from the John B. Cade Library Archives of Southern University and A&M College were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

# Staley High School

AMERICUS, GEORGIA



*We did not use the term “progressive education.” We did not have to—we lived it every day. We provided education for the mind, the body, and the soul and attended to the needs of the whole child—personal interests but also community needs.*

—Alpha Hines Westbrook, a teacher during the time of the Secondary School Study

1944 Staley High School faculty, l-r: L. Miles, B. Gates, D. Apple, L. R. Purdy, M. Blount, T. Walker, E. Lash

SELECTED AS ONE OF THE TWO ORIGINAL sites from Georgia, Staley High could be considered one of the more innovative, rural-town schools in the Secondary School Study, even with constantly changing leadership during the project. The twelve-room brick building, built in 1936 as a Public Works Administration project, served as a center for the black community in Americus with its auditorium

and library open to the general public. During the time of the Study, the high school enrolled 275 students, with a staff of principal and seven teachers. A separate primary school for grades 1–7 enrolled approximately 875 pupils, with a staff of twenty-five teachers. Staley High School included students from both the city of Americus and the surrounding rural area. The curricula consisted of four ninety-



J. C. Reese; Staley High School



minute core periods with time set aside for homeroom and an activity period. Americus, located in Southwest Georgia, is the county seat

and commercial center of Sumter County, and the town's population during this period was approximately 10,000, with fifty percent of this number being African American.

While Staley High School was selected for the Secondary School Study during E. J. Granberry's tenure, Principal J. C. Reese seems to have been the inspiration for the experimental project even with his departure in 1944 to accept an administrative position in the Waycross, GA schools. Staley faculty considered withdrawing from the experimental project shortly after their entry; however, Reese's appointment, along with Dorothy Apple's and Roselyn Purdy's participation, seemed to provide the stability for them to continue the curricular venture. The *Tri-County News* reports that "under his [Reese's] regime a progressive philosophy of education was emphasized, many physical improvements were made and a fine spirit of interrelationship between the school and community were brought into the city" (*Tri-County News*, 1942, p. 8).

During the time of the Study, the Georgia State Department of Education was encouraging schools to develop an integrated type of program based on seven persistent problems of living. Staley High faculty planned an integrated core curriculum where science attended to the persistent problems of health and, at the eighth grade level, sample units were developed on three specific "persistent problems": health, citizenship, and earning a living.

*There was student-pupil planning in the progressive tradition. Staley teachers adapted the formal curriculum due to the fact that they veered in order to meet the needs of the child. General health was a good example (and TB was feared). Teachers would begin addressing issues of health when they saw social problems.*

—Addie Rose Owens, a student during the Secondary School Study

#### Leadership during the Secondary School Study:

E. J. Granberry, Principal 1937-1940  
G. L. Edwards, Principal 1940-1941  
J. C. Reese, Principal 1942-1944  
E. W. Lash, Principal 1944-1946  
Daniel T. Grant, Principal 1946-1951



Leroy Williams

*We used a Problems of Living curriculum and taught more than what was in the books. Students had many questions about life at that time—there was much more information needed than mere facts about life, food, and shelter.*

—Alpha Hines Westbrook, a Staley High School teacher during the time of the Secondary School Study

“Recently W. A. Robinson, director of the Secondary School Study, came to Americus and after looking carefully into the work at Staley [High School] made the following statement: ‘The assembly was one of the most substantial proofs that changes are coming quite surely in the work of the school. The occasion was Negro History week and the entire assembly was planned and presented by the pupils. The music showed a growing taste and discrimination, the dancing showed an interest in a new form of group expression, the costuming was effective, the dramatizations were faithfully characterized and in every way this assembly showed enormous growth of the pupils of the school in important social traits. Much seemed to me to have happened to the body of the school since one year and a half ago when I first visited the school’” (*Tri-County News*, 1942, p. 8).

*I taught the Constitution of the United States; that was my focus as I began realizing how significant the 14th Amendment would become for gaining civil rights. The Citizenship clause was important, but the Equal Protection Clause was crucial—that was the one that I taught. And I believe it caused students to begin questioning their civil rights. I couldn’t say too much. I could only listen knowing that they were right. I was concerned about my job. Teachers could only do so much outside of the classroom and only so much inside the classroom.*

—Leroy Williams, a Staley High School teacher during the time of the Secondary School Study

### Web Exhibition “Rooms”

A. S. Staley High School Building

Staley High School Principals

Teachers and the Strength of Community

Curricular Experimentation

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

Reunion Reflections of Staley High School

Curator’s Statement

Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project





**Opposite, top row, left to right:**

Christine B. Abrams; Dorothy Apple; Harriet Broughton; Beulah M. Carter

**Second row:**

Gladys B. Clark; Joseph Crumbley Sr.; Andrew Daniel; Theotis Ray Daniels

**Third row:**

Tiny M. Seay Davis; Morris Dozier Sr.; Vernelle Harris Hall; Minnie D. Haynes

**Fourth row:**

Robert Hollis; Ruby Jean Howard; Bessie M. Jones; Freddie Jones

**Fifth row:**

La Daisy Sharpe King; Charles Mathis; Dorothy A. Mills; Ernestine V. Moore

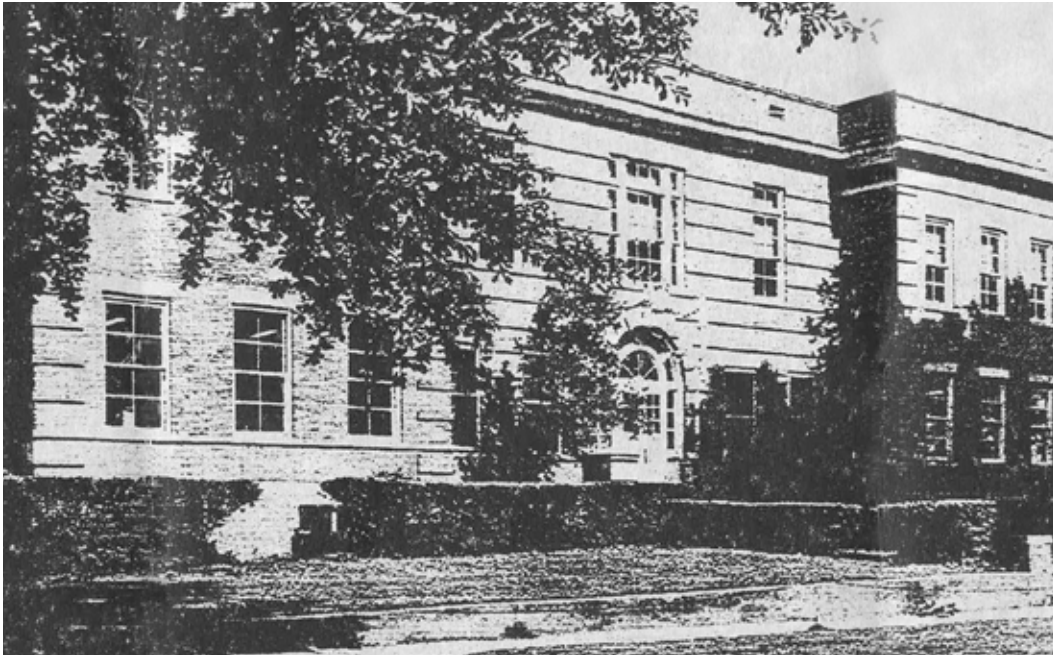
**Above:**

Charles E. Moss; Addie Rose Owens; N. Carolyn Thompson; Gradene Watson;  
Alpha H. Westbrook; Leroy Williams

Oral history interviews were conducted in September 2007, spring 2011, and spring 2012. With special thanks to N. Carolyn Thompson, Anne M. Isbell of the Lake Blackshear Regional Library, George Glover and Eloise R. Paschal, and with great appreciation to Morris Dozier Sr. for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Archival materials from the Lake Blackshear Regional Library were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

# State Teachers College Laboratory School

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA



THE LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOL, founded in 1920, was located on the campus of the Alabama State Teachers College in Tullibody Hall, along with the college's John W. Beverly Science Hall, music conservatory, and gymnasium. During the Secondary School Study, 300 students in grades K-12 were enrolled, with over 150 students attending the secondary school, grades 8-12. Since "Lab High" was receiving public funds as well as support from Alabama State College, admission to the school was open, i.e., nonselective. This led to a more diverse student population of abilities and interests (Dunn, 1946). The high school faculty included eight full-time teachers and nine part-time teachers from the college. Lab High, whose slogan during this time was, "Study the growth and beauty of nature—plants and animals for individual development," served primarily as a site

for the observation of classes by preservice teachers, with occasions for practice teaching (Hardy, 1943). Most student teaching placements were located off campus.

Laboratory High School was an original institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes, entering the organization as an accredited high school in 1934. While faculty were seeking to further their core program during the Study, in accord with the Alabama State Department of Education's 1939 *Planning the Core Curriculum in the Secondary School*, the school also maintained a strong traditional college-preparatory orientation (Alabama Curriculum Development Program, 1939). In 1969, Lab High closed as part of a reorganization of Alabama State College to university status. The Laboratory High School building of the 1940s, Tullibody Hall, no longer stands.



Theodore A. Love

J. Garrick Hardy



Theodore A. Love, who worked during the formative stages of the Study, would participate in the 1941 Mathematics Workshop in General Education at the University of Chicago. Love continued at Alabama State College and completed a dissertation, "The Relation of Achievement in Mathematics to Certain Abilities in Problem-Solving," at New York University in 1951 with student data from Alabama State. He would move on to Tennessee State University as a professor of mathematics.

J. Garrick Hardy, who completed a doctorate at the University of Wisconsin in 1946, would leave the principalship of Lab High to serve as dean of the junior college at Alabama State.

#### Leadership during the Secondary School Study:

T. A. Love, Principal to 1942

J. Garrick Hardy, Principal in 1942

J. R. Sheeler, Principal 1943-1946

While the Alabama Core Curriculum focused on interests, problems, and needs of students in relation to home, school, and the community, the core offered great flexibility and did not require the labeling of activities unlike other state department core programs of this era. This permitted the Lab High faculty to determine goals in a broader context.

State Teachers College Laboratory High School Goals for 1941-1942: "More emphasis upon democratic thinking and democratic training. Greater emphasis upon student planning in course offerings. More comprehensive development of student talent and cultivation of a deeper sense of responsibility. Some training in student government. More intelligent cooperation between instructors, pupils and library services. More opportunity for the use of specialists in core courses. The continued development within the pupil of traits of honesty, critical-mindedness, self-control, social sensitivity, and freedom from prejudices. Increased desire and more practice in the techniques of attacking life problems. . . . The development of respect for individual opinions and differences. The scientific evaluation of opinions and materials before the formulation of a conclusion" (Love, 1942, p. 7).

"If I am to teach a child—not teach book information, I make the following assumptions: I should attempt to find out as much as I possibly can about each child, his home, his parents, his friends, his behavior in other activities as well as in my class, and in his community. . . . I should allow for maximum freedom in thought and expression so long as these do not interfere with the best interests of the group. I should be unprejudiced, unbiased, and willing to see all sides of my question and be able to present them" (Hardy, 1943).

*Faustine Dunn used a free reading format. Material was not assigned; students chose what they wished to read and were truly engaged. We also did not stress memorizing rules. We learned how to use the ideas and acted them out. There were many oral presentations as students learned to share what they knew and learned how to communicate.*

—Sadie Penn, a 1937 Lab High graduate who would return to teach at the school



Faustine Dunn, an English, social studies, and guidance teacher; A. C. Henry



*By the mid-1940s when I began teaching at Lab High, the curriculum was arranged into separate subjects. Core curriculum had its day before my time there. The setting was very professional and the high school teachers did not feel any different from the college professors.*

—A. C. Henry, a cadet teacher in 1937 and teacher at Lab High during the Secondary School Study

## Web Exhibition "Rooms"

Laboratory High School Building  
Cooperative Planning and Student Growth  
Building Community, Pedagogical  
Activism and Social Justice  
Curator's Statement

### SUGGESTED READING:

Sharon Gay Pierson, *Laboratory of Learning: HBCU Laboratory Schools and Alabama State College Lab High in the Era of Jim Crow* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

Oral history interviews were conducted in September 2007. With special thanks to Mary Jo Smiley, and with great appreciation to A. C. Henry and Faye Henry for providing important source materials for this exhibition. Archival materials from Archives and Special Collections of Alabama State University and the Alabama Department of Archives and History were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

**Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project**



**Left to right:** A. C. Henry; Sadie Penn; Mary Jo Smiley



# William Grant High School

COVINGTON, KENTUCKY



H. R. Merry  
(1885-1965)

who were actively engaged in documenting student growth, and they drew upon student cumulative records, interest inventories, and personality rating assessments that addressed personal, social, and academic topics. The themes of guidance were correlated to course-

DURING THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDY, Grant High School teachers focused on developing a human relations program that attended to social, educational, health, personal and academic problems. Guidance was the responsibility of all classroom teachers

work with industrial arts teachers providing vocational information in their courses, English teachers wanting to develop personality and character growth through homeroom, and social studies teachers incorporating racial issues in their subject fields.



Enrollment for the entire K-12 elementary-secondary school, the Lincoln-Grant School, numbered 475 students with a faculty of thirty teachers. The secondary school, Grant High School (named for William L. Grant, a local politician), enrolled 135 students with a teaching faculty of eleven and served as the sole secondary school for the city of Covington (part of the Cincinnati metropolitan area) as well as for all black students in a three county area, in essence, a large portion of Northern Kentucky. Established in 1886, the school board constructed a three-story building with auditorium, cafeteria, gymnasium, and forty-five rooms in 1932. The high school was an original institutional member of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes, receiving accreditation in 1934. Grant High School closed in 1976 with the desegregation of Covington public schools. The building is currently vacant; however, in 2013 the Covington City Commission approved renovations for the structure to serve as a residential educational facility.

Henry R. Merry served as acting principal of Lincoln-Grant School from 1923 to 1924 and in 1926 became the permanent principal until

his retirement in 1955. A graduate of Fisk University, with additional study at the University of Cincinnati and the University of Wisconsin, Merry served as president of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes during the 1941-1942 academic year.

“Henry R. Merry was a self-identified ‘colored man,’ whom many people assumed to be white upon first seeing him. . . . In a different community, where his racial origins were unknown, he probably could have ‘passed,’ and lived successfully as a ‘white’ man. However, Mr. Merry chose to live as a ‘colored’ man in Covington. . . . A mixed racial heritage would allow Mr. Merry to ‘work both sides of the street’ between white and black people effectively. . . . Mr. Merry is reported to have wittily used his ability to ‘pass’ to facilitate practical matters for his black teachers and students” (Walton, 2010, pp. 136-137).

*When I now go to Covington and look at the school building, the first thought that comes of mind is the great injustices of racial segregation. This was nationwide and affected us in negative ways. We could never understand why we were penalized because of a system that we thought was only in the South. But, clearly, racism affected the entire United States, and segregation was universal. We recognized this fact but never accepted the injustices.*

—George W. Bunyan, a student during the Secondary School Study



William N. Jackson (above left) was viewed among Study staff as “the science teacher with greatest clarity of purpose” among black educators in the South. He attended the University of Chicago evaluation workshop and served as staff for the Secondary School Study’s Durham Workshop (Rhind, 1943). Center: W. H. Hargraves; Right: Sayde Bunyan Dean

In March 1943, Grant High School staged a Cooperative Planning for School Development Conference oriented for the faculty at Lincoln-Grant School and area educators. The conference was based upon the Secondary School Study’s ongoing quest to examine school philosophy in relation to guidance, school development, and pupil growth, and the gathering sought “to reveal the nature of these directive purposes and the extent to which they were affecting the life in the school” (Grant, 1943, p. 4). New ideas and concepts were introduced; however, the consultants did not arrive to solve problems or to tell Lincoln-Grant staff what to do. The conference was organized so that there was a “mutual sharing of experiences between consultants and teachers in a way that would bring facts to bear on the phases of school development which seemed important to the teachers in Lincoln-Grant. No one felt that this function was to develop the school. This, they agreed, was the function of the faculty of the school” (Grant, 1943, p. 8).

“The science teachers are making an intensive analysis of pupil needs in reading accompanied by exploration of classroom technique for promoting greater adequacy in reading for information in science. Teachers of science and geometry use individual pupil folders to collect a variety of information concerning the growth of individual pupils. The information is used by teachers and pupils as one basis for deciding on important next steps for individual pupils and for the class as a group. Some of the general categories of information are acquisition of factual information, work and planning skills, reading for science information and certain thinking abilities” (Grant, 1943, pp. 3, 10).

*We recognized that we would enter a segregated society, but Mr. Hargraves’ class prepared us to go out into the world and face the problems of the day so that we would not be timid or afraid. He helped us figure out our beliefs and let us know that we could succeed (often before we recognized what we could do).*

—Sayde Bunyan Dean, a student during the Secondary School Study

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



**Top, left to right:**  
George W. Bunyan;  
Sayde Bunyan Dean;  
Marguerite Bunyan Giles

**Right:**  
Marian A. Harper;  
Charles Houston

Oral history interviews were conducted in November 2011. With special thanks to Scott L. Gampfer of the Cincinnati Museum Center, Elaine Kuhn of the Kenton County Public Library, Lois Hamill of Northern Kentucky University, Lincoln-Grant School archivist Theodore H. H. Harris, and Lincoln-Grant School historian Joseph M. Walton. Archival materials from the Cincinnati Historical Society Library, Kenton County Public Library, the Mary Northington African American Heritage Collection, W. Frank Steely Library Special Collections and University Archives of Northern Kentucky University, and Cincinnati History Library and Archives were used in this research. Catalog material was extracted from [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/ssr](http://www.museumofeducation.info/ssr).

### Web Exhibition "Rooms"

Grant High School Building

Principal H. R. Merry

Teachers and Curriculum Development

School Planning and the Secondary  
School Study

Pedagogical Activism and Social Justice

Curator's Statement

### SUGGESTED READING:

Joseph M. Walton, *The Life and Legacy of Lincoln-Grant School, Covington, Kentucky, 1866-1976*, Milford, OH: Little Miami Publishing, 2010).



# Reconciling Conceptions of Progressive Education in 1940s Black High Schools

ANYONE WHO VISITS THE SECONDARY School Study web exhibitions and reads the abridged school accounts in this catalog may be somewhat perplexed attempting to understand the concept of progressive education and how current impressions of progressivism relate to practices in these historic schools. They will not be alone as contemporary educators search for defining characteristics of this term, a quest that has been far from successful and has typically resulted in simple slogans. The label “progressive” is as focused and precise as the label “Democrat” or the term “democracy”; however, while cultural historians do not seem to assume that during the 1930s and 1940s Democrats maintained a near-singular perspective on politics or that the term “democracy” was viewed by politicians in a uniform way, contemporary educators continue to assert monolithic definitions and dichotomies of progressive education that encompass many decades of school practice.

We have seen that William A. Robinson viewed the terms “progressive” and “experimental” as near synonymous and allowed educators, in practice and within the context of their school settings, great freedom in their beliefs, maintaining a faith that through extensive discourse and cooperation educators would come upon a common conception of progressive education and “democracy as a way of life.” His perspective was similar to that of Eugene Smith, the first president of the Progressive Education Association, who maintained that “truly progressive” education must

continually be tested by two questions: “Does it keep itself fitted to present day requirements, changing as necessary with changing living conditions and changing needs? Does it keep apace with investigation and discovery in the educational field?” (Smith, E. R., 1924, p. 5). With progressive education’s seemingly shapeless ideology to some (e.g., Robinson, Smith, and others) or, in contrast, its rigid principles and creeds (e.g., Carleton Washburne, William H. Kilpatrick, and others), and with today’s narrow “progressive canon” (seemingly consisting of writings by John Dewey, Kilpatrick, George Counts, and Harold Rugg) that determines contemporary impressions of the term, one must still ask why these black high schools are considered “progressive” when standardized tests were given, when facts were taught, and when many principals and teachers were quite stern and, at times, engaged in corporal punishment.

This Secondary School Study research seeks to expand our current understandings of progressive education that, in actuality, have been guided if not defined by Lawrence Cremin in *The Transformation of the School* and subsequently codified by contemporary educational scholars (Cremin, 1961). The intent of this project is not to lessen the preciseness of any definition but to bring greater breadth of understanding to a term that has been defined by multiple conceptions throughout the decades. Cremin warned against formulating any capsule definition of progressive

education, maintaining that no common description existed nor could exist due, in part, to the character of the movement that necessitated diversity and differences. In fact, at the 1938 annual meeting of the PEA, a committee reported on its efforts to define the term and, while a statement was produced, nearly the entire group objected, explaining that progressive education is not a definition but “a spirit” (Committee on the Function of Science in General Education, 1938).

One crucial issue stems from whether a conception of progressive education arises from historical fiat or whether the term represents a distinctive ideology; i.e., whether progressives are defined as those educators who lived through the Progressive Era, or whether progressive educators are defined by a set of beliefs. Cremin, for example, situated the movement as an outgrowth of America’s Progressive Era. From this perspective, progressive education comes to fruition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even before the formation of the Progressive Education Association in 1919. In terms of ideology, during the early years of the PEA, its leaders conceived of progressive education much differently from those guiding the organization during the 1930s and 1940s. The presidency of the PEA was first extended not to John Dewey but, rather, to the emeritus president of Harvard University, Charles Eliot, who declined the formal position and accepted an honorary role. Needless to say, Dewey and Eliot maintained much different ideological perspectives toward education.

To complicate matters further, other organizations during the 1930s and 1940s were actively engaged in what could be construed as progressive education, thereby extending the term from the writings of Kilpatrick, Counts, and Rugg. The American Council on

Education initiated many progressive education projects, and William A. Robinson’s public progressive education dénouement—his 1940 article in the journal *Progressive Education*, entitled “A New Era for Negro Schools”—displayed on its cover page a black educator reading not from Counts’ or Dewey’s books but, instead, from the American Association of School Administrators’ publication, *Youth Education Today* (Robinson, 1940a). If any point can be made from this cacophony of descriptions and conceptions, it is that the quest to formulate the absolute definition of progressive education should be set aside and, rather, contemporary educators should begin searching for understanding the uses of the term—its diversity and differences—rather than simplifying and codifying (and passing judgment on) its meaning. [1.]

The Secondary School Study is, in fact, aligned to the progressive education movement by “the company that it kept”: those educators directly involved in PEA Commissions and Eight-Year Study workshops—Harold Alberty, H. Harry Giles, Alice Keliher, V. T. Thayer, Caroline Zachry, Hilda Taba, Robert Wunsch, Margaret Willis, Lou LaBrant. These professors and teachers worked extensively with faculty and staff at member schools and brought a view of progressive education that valued certain practices from the Eight-Year Study, the defining project of the PEA that was cited regularly among Secondary School Study materials. Further, these resource persons represent a distinctive perspective of progressive education for the secondary school and one different from that voiced by Kilpatrick, Counts, Rugg, Ellwood Cubberley, William Wirt, Marietta Johnson, Caroline Pratt, and Margaret Naumburg, and implemented at Frances Parker’s school in Quincy, Massachusetts, Dewey’s school at

the University of Chicago, the Gary schools, Lincoln School, Winnetka schools, and the Dalton School—namely, the “usual suspects” whose writings and methods have helped to define the contemporary usage of the term.

Alberty, Giles, Keliher, et al., along with William A. Robinson and William H. Brown, worked within one of the many strands of progressive education from the 1930s and 1940s, one that Robert Bullough and I tried, unsuccessfully alas, to name as “Eight-Year Study progressivism.” This perspective embraced “*trust* in the ability of teachers and school administrators to reason through complex issues towards sensible and worthy conclusions; *belief* in democracy as a guiding social ideal, a basis for a community of investigation and endeavor; and *faith* in thoughtful inquiry, including school experimentation, to create ways of making education more life-enhancing for students and teachers” and adopted a distinctive view of curriculum (correlated and fused core curriculum), instruction (teacher-pupil planning), evaluation (assessment for interests and needs), and professional development (teacher workshops) (Kridel and Bullough, 2007, p. 12). Not all Secondary School Study member school faculty maintained these same beliefs; most of those participants who were fully engaged in the project did hold such values and practices, yet some others did not.

This is where our understanding of progressivism leaves the professional literature and enters the reality of school practice. Certainly, some of the “nonparticipating” teachers at the sites reproduced racial, social, caste, and gender roles within the black community in very unprogressive education ways, and they did so willingly. Other teachers viewed progressive ideology as misguided; in fact, one participating school’s final report took aspects

of this point of view and prepared a “coming of age” narrative in support of progressivism, of an educator who had previously believed in traditional education. Such are the variations and complications of beliefs and ideologies of any large, field-based educational project. Groups of faculty within these participating schools sought to experiment, conceive, and implement general progressive education practices in specific settings yet not necessarily according to grand proclamations voiced in the writings of Kilpatrick or Counts. [2.]

Guided by these Eight-Year Study progressives, the schools forged their own curricular materials that did indeed include standardized testing; yet, the intent and format of evaluation was different. These educators viewed evaluation as a process by which the values of a school community were articulated. In essence, “e - valuating”—the drawing out of values—was conceived as first and foremost a philosophical rather than a technical activity. Tests became a way to identify the values of a school and to gather information about students and about the effectiveness of curricular-instructional methods. This is not to say that assessment was not used to guide students into vocations—to track children—by some of the teachers and administrators. Similarly, this is not to suggest that the standardized test results were not used to justify the accreditation of black schools—indeed they were as the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes continued its struggle to display the quality of education in black schools in contrast to the inequity in their funding. Assessment served these goals; yet, evaluation also sought to *generate* information to determine student and school growth and permit teachers and students to examine the act of learning, to discuss the importance of knowledge, and to learn more

about the changing beliefs of students rather than, common today, as a way to privilege or humiliate children.

In addition, the teachers believed in the importance of “traditional” content as well as the significance of “teaching the whole child.” The Secondary School Study staff did not see a conflict between these goals. Contemporary criticisms of progressive education, still guided by the writings of Arthur Bestor and others, include accounts of poorly educated students who were allowed to study whatever they wished as their teachers looked on with compassion and unconditional acceptance. In contrast, Eight-Year Study progressives were scholars, teachers, and classroom researchers, and they sought to instill a love for knowledge and learning in their students. The motto for their professional development programs was

“Being with adventurous company,” and curiosity guided their careers in writing, teaching, learning, and researching at the high school and college and university levels. Those active teachers at Secondary School Study member schools also stressed the importance of knowledge—pride in being educated—and their students discussed many examples of memorizing poetry, composing stories set in the past, and reading classic literature. Encyclopedic knowledge was certainly honored as were students’ interests and needs.

Many of the schools’ participating faculty forged a common vision of 1940s progressivism as an outgrowth of the Eight-Year Study, and they embedded these ideas within the context of Jim Crow education—embracing cooperation and the importance of community while also recognizing hypocrisy and social



injustice. Within this context was a common and seemingly unprogressive type of teacher whose sternness fostered respect with a certain degree of fear, a description that contradicts the contemporary images of progressive teachers and their feeling about “the romantic, innocent child.” After hearing many accounts of stern teachers and principals who simultaneously embodied strictness and caring within the context of progressive education, I noticed a “tough kindness,” a personal attribute rather than instructional methodology that was forged from a social vision of civil rights and social justice.

*Our teachers were tough but also “oh so gentle.” They were tough in the sense that they wanted to draw out all that they thought we had, all of our potential. But they knew there was a limit AND they knew when to stop pushing.*

—Edgar E. Smith, a student during the Secondary School Study (2008a)

The secondary school students from the 1940s—my contemporary interviewees—commonly described the stern educator as a high school principal who demanded discipline and respect from students and a no-nonsense, austere classroom teacher who displayed a kindness-of-her-heart strictness. Alpha Hines Westbrook, a member of the teaching faculty at Staley High School during the Study, termed her principal as “a disciplinarian, but he also had a good understanding of young people. Any punishment was always educational. He sought to engage and instruct students at all times” (Westbrook, 2011). This proved to be a similar theme among the respondents and, in fact, seems common in the folklore of many principals—white and black—of the early to mid-twentieth century: stern but understanding (or, always stern

and sometimes understanding). An alumna of Dudley High School talked of her principal: “‘Big John’ Tarpley, as he was affectionately known, was a big man and a big personality with a commanding presence. Dr. Tarpley was the school. He was very strict and had no tolerance for anything other than students doing their best. He set the rules, and we accepted that. Not everyone liked those rules, but we respected him” (James, 2007). Another Dudley student who would later become a teacher at the high school continues with the portrayal of the frightening-but-fair principal, “Dr. Tarpley treated teachers and students fairly. He didn’t coddle or threaten us (although we knew that he could blow the roof off, but he controlled it). He recognized that we knew our jobs and we did them . . . and we enjoyed doing the work. Dr. Tarpley asked teachers for only that which was fair and did not ask for any more, knowing that he would get less from us. He didn’t play games, and we didn’t play games. We stood behind him as teachers, and he stood behind us” (Skelton, 2007).

While black principals of this period were acting as “double agents” (Gilmore, 2008) and playing their Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde game of civil rights with the local school officials and community leaders (Siddle Walker, 2009), these educators were also living a similar dichotomy with students as they balanced their demeanors of harshness with kindness. The D. Webster Davis High School principal, C. M. Colson, was described by a student as “a wonderfully nice and kind man. He could be stern but not in a harsh way; at that time, principals expected discipline but got along well with the students. He displayed his love and care for the children” (Berry, 2008). Similar comments were made of those few female high school principals in the Secondary School

Study who, clearly, were required to exhibit signs of strength as a way to establish their authority, not as much with the students who were quite familiar with matriarchal discipline but, rather, with the male school and city administrators. “Miss Boley [of the Southern Lab School] was straight and strict; there were rules and when she walked in, we hushed. She had the full backing of the parents, and we had to walk the line!” (Cade, 2008). At Magnolia High School, an alumna stated, “While it may have been rare at that time to have a female [high school] principal, Katie M. Washington kept order. She didn’t have any trouble keeping the school focused on learning and maintaining discipline” (Williams, F., 2008).

Countless comments were made about those teachers who displayed this tough kindness. Such statements are not unique to black schools, yet the student-teacher interviewees conveyed a sense of motive for this sternness: teachers were well aware of what their students would confront after their schooling and saw the role of disciplinarian as a way to prepare them for future injustices. The teachers were instilling a dignified deportment in preparation for the many racial humiliations that students were enduring and that they would inevitably face. While contemporary accounts may criticize the respectability politics and accommodationist stance of educators from this era, these teachers, from students’ accounts, conveyed a sincere concern for the well-being and welfare of their students and recognized the crucial role of teachers as agents for cultural and racial change (and they did indeed engage in acts of micro-defiance, as portrayed within the schools’ web exhibitions).

Among the member schools, perhaps an exemplar of tough kindness was Hazel Harvey

Peace at I. M. Terrell High School. “All of the teachers were guided by Mrs. Peace because she commanded such great respect. She was hard core . . . and meant business. Mrs. Peace didn’t spare the rod” (O’Neal, 2009). “Mrs. Peace was small and petite and very strict, but we all admired and respected her. Her favorite words were ‘young people.’ When she said that, we all became quiet! We were ready to listen” (Mallard, 2009). Once again, such remarks are not uncommon during this era at both white and black schools, and students, with some exceptions, took pride in this combination of strictness and kindness from their teachers. Albeit, certain interviewees’ comments may have bordered on hyperbole (certainly the accounts of fierceness) and were uttered as a way to underscore the success of “surviving” the harshness and receiving the teachers’ affection. This was a generation of students who lived through an era of corporal punishment and seemed to enjoy telling tales and anecdotes of those previous times; yet, any discussion or account of the stern educator would always resolve with an epilogue describing kindness and caring.

Recognition of students’ interests, a semblance of teacher-pupil planning, and the importance of educating the whole child would all blend together to bring a general orientation of progressive education in these classrooms as guided by Robinson and Brown and their Secondary School Study consultants. One student mentioned, “The teachers truly cared about us. If I didn’t have my work completed, I would meet with Mrs. Mabel Lenhardt at her house and would stay and work on my assignments. She would feed me just to make certain that I was cared for. The teachers did what they had to do” (Davis, G., 2008). And, as noted by a Vicksburg alumna, “What Magnolia Avenue

teachers taught us was not just academic work; they taught us about everyday life and what had been happening to us as black people. Mr. Buck, especially, talked to us in the civics class about how the democratic process should work and what it meant to be in a real democracy. He described how he grew up, and the sacrifices his family made for him. Mr. Buck was helping us understand what our families were doing for us, and he was ensuring—insisting—that we take the opportunity to learn and to make something of ourselves” (Rush, 2008). These remarks reflect characteristics of what today would be called “warm demanders,” a type of disciplinarian teacher calling for “active demandingness” and inspired from a more psychological perspective of learning styles and instructional methodologies (Kleinfeld, 1975, p. 335; Bondy and Ross, 2008).

Secondary School Study teachers displayed similar characteristics of active demandingness; however, their methods took on a slightly different perspective within the context of 1940s progressive education. This historical trait of tough kindness was defined not (necessarily) from psychological insights but, rather, from how teachers conceived their classrooms and schools—i.e., their role was not defined by an instructional methodology but, rather, from a larger conception of school in society (Kridel, 2015). Their social vision, in part defined by the racism they confronted daily, proved to unify their thoughts for education—for curriculum and instruction, evaluation, and teacher-pupil relations. In essence, the teachers’ intellectual acumen, respect for disciplined study, caring, and recognition of social injustices—in contrast to unconditional acceptance of the student and unbridled child-centeredness—served to forge a conception of social needs,

justice, civil rights, and community engagement. The importance of developing a social vision (a fundamental construct of progressive education) and a school philosophy (the first individual task of each of the participating sites) offers insights into the Secondary School Study practices while also inviting today’s educators to revisit one of the many interesting and, alas, overlooked educational debates of American progressive education during the mid-twentieth century: the conception of needs.



## Reconsidering Progressive Education within the Secondary School Study

THE COMMON “EITHER/OR” DICHOTOMY of child-centered and society-centered progressive education did not resonate among educators in the Secondary School Study to the degree that it dominates historical accounts of progressivism today. Arising from period materials and comments during the interviews, the concern for black progressive educators during the 1930s and 1940s remained the tension between focusing on students’ interests versus the loss of student discipline. At the 1938 ACSSN meeting, Hilda Taba addressed this point directly by describing common misconceptions about progressive methods, with one being the controversy of interest versus discipline. Taba maintained that there was a widely held belief among (black) educators that all learning that was motivated by the genuine interest of students was viewed as superficial. In contrast, she described educators who believed that discipline and only “so-called hard learning” would develop mental discipline of students and foster a sense of hard work and effort. In her keynote session, she disputed this commonly held view and asserted that progressive education proved that “the greater the student interest, the greater effort on the part of the student.” Taba continued by maintaining that when students were engaged in planning their own tasks, “the quantity and the quality of work is above what the teacher could have expected of them” (Taba, 1938, p. 92). Clearly, she was confirming a point, believed among black teachers if not all educators, that the fear of focusing on the interests of the child—the seeming intent of progressive education—would lead to the sacrifice of discipline and hard work.

Secondary School Study period reports and interview sessions confirm that the teachers’ prevailing conceptions of progressive education, certainly at these black high schools, were neither child-centered nor society-centered; in essence, these constructs are meaningless. Those black secondary school teachers who were child-centered would not have permitted the curriculum to revolve exclusively around the interests of the child, as this definition has become viewed. Such a position would have been seen as being too self-indulgent for the student and too irresponsible for the teacher who believed in the importance of knowledge, student interests, discipline, and hard work. The mantras of “learning by doing” and “the whole child” were noted, and teachers were well aware of the interests of children; however, they were even more aware of what the children *needed* in order to survive during the Jim Crow era. Interviewees’ comments confirmed that “student needs” were defined as traits to cope with discrimination and inequity rather than as a form of discipline and hard work.

George Counts’ challenge to members of the PEA to embrace indoctrination as an avenue for social change—the society-centered position—also seems rather meaningless when social injustice was so readily apparent in black communities—then and now (Counts, 1932). The issue was not whether schools should be agents of change but, rather, what methods would be most successful. Raymond Smock, in discussing Booker T. Washington’s subtle activism, asks, “Is it possible to make social and political progress without open conflict?” (2009, p. 136). Such a question would have resonated much more strongly with these black teachers than any “dare the schools”

rhetoric. For principals at Dudley, Columbia's Booker T. Washington, and Huntington high schools, direct and open confrontation guided their efforts (leading to the dismissal of the principal at Huntington); the more nuanced approach, similar to that enacted by leaders at Pearl, Lincoln, and Grant high schools, represented another method where opportunities and conditions for students improved slowly.

### **A Different Definition of Progressive Education: The Conception of Needs**

RATHER THAN ATTEMPTING TO FORCE Secondary School Study schools into present-day caricatures of progressive education, the defining conception of their experimental efforts emerged from the Eight-Year Study's development of social-personal needs and the conception of school in society. Instead of focusing on students' interests or on societal change as a way to develop an educational program, student "needs" were forged together as having individual and social components. The Eight-Year Study staff developed four areas of adolescent needs as a way to guide the curriculum: personal living, immediate personal-social relationships, social-civic relationships, and economic relationships (Committee on the Function of Science in General Education, 1938). [3.] These themes served as a foundation for member schools' curriculum development and did not arise from students' interests or teachers' gestures of social agency; rather, the four areas of student needs became personal and social in character. Examples—broad and specific—are commonplace throughout the curricula at these schools. Thus, instruction for "personal living" was merged in relation to students finding an appropriate (social as well as voca-

tional) role in their communities—all termed "social living." Efforts to build "social-civic relationships" included, for example at Magnolia High School, a program about the customs of prehistoric and modern times and a sociology/Negro history class that included a project focusing on difficulties—discrimination—which "people of foreign descent encounter after reaching America. They illustrated certain religious and social customs among Chinese, Syrians, Jews and Italians" (Bowman, ca. 1943, p. 8). These meta-curricular themes represent personal-social needs through the correlation of students' interests and teachers' articulation of student needs.

Reconfiguring the educational program around the needs of students was not simple, and personal-social needs proved quite controversial during the 1930s and 1940s among members of the Progressive Education Association. Difficulties arose when considering how the needs of the student and the larger community would be determined. Would this occur independent of the "voice" (or interests) of students, or by some preconceived significance of certain values or societal or psychological structure? These issues created tension and, while some progressives criticized the unpredictable nature of allowing the curriculum to revolve around the interests of students, similar concerns were expressed about "needs": were these "real" needs or merely the desires and whims of students? The Eight-Year Study staff reconceived the act of determining student needs as a way to establish a common vision for the school (and, implicitly, for society) and as a method to generate discourse as a way to bring together a community.

The unique role of black high schools afforded a clearer "instructional method" for the teachers—one of tough kindness and

caring as they engaged in the identification of student needs. Needs were not viewed as students' wishes and desires; rather, they were grounded in the acquisition of knowledge. These teachers maintained great concern about the well-being of their students and held general and common beliefs about what the adolescents—as a group and individually—must know in order to be successful in an unfair world. One student from Vicksburg, Mississippi, mentioned “the interaction between student and teacher was so important. Teachers did not just lecture; they pushed us to interact with them and to come to understand the knowledge. Recitation was still important, however; I recall reciting Milton sonnets. But what was most important was the interaction between the student, the teacher, and the content” (Smith, E. E., 2008b). Interests and needs merged as themes of personal living and relationships developed and were addressed in the school setting. Interestingly, this was often accomplished at the various schools through special activities and events.

All-school gatherings were commonplace at many of the participating sites and served as a venue for teachers and students to come together in both personal and social ways. One student from Dudley High School said, “The teachers allowed us to feel comfortable with ideas. If there was something we did not understand, we always felt free to stop by and talk to a teacher. They allowed us to feel free to think through ideas. We were never afraid to ask them for help. There was a togetherness among teachers and students. And much of this was instilled by [the principal's] school conventions—‘family gatherings’—where we would come together for a fireside chat and talk and explore ideas” (Brown, B., 2007). Such school gatherings, assemblies, and dramatizations were common. Educators

brought students together under their jurisdiction and permitted learners to have great choice in what they wished to discuss and present; however, content was also decided by a strong sense of student needs and bound by what the faculty recognized as significant.

Another important educational setting that addressed student needs, being both individual and social, was “homeroom.” We forget that this first period of the day was considered a remarkable invention during the 1920s and 1930s, with formal research devoted to documenting the best use of this time to merge the academic and the personal interests and needs of students (rather than what is today a moment for announcements and attendance-taking). A Staley High School student noted the academic orientation of this learning period where the teacher could display unabridged caring: “Homeroom was important and quite innovative for that time. The homeroom teachers would go beyond the curriculum and would focus on us. They stressed academics at Staley, but homeroom was where teachers talked to us about what was important . . . to us—our social needs and personal problems. The teacher was there to help us become better school citizens. There was much talk about school citizenship during my years there. Cultural events were discussed and feelings were described. We would even have homeroom programs where some would recite poetry and others would display their musical talents. Current events would be examined in homeroom; World War II was an unnerving time. The homeroom teacher was our guide” (Thompson, 2007). This is not to suggest that teachers followed any interest or whim of students, nor did they view the time as a form of student therapy. Topics emerged from a “community in the making”: homeroom.

Tough kindness defined the focus of this period as teachers balanced interest and needs and were given time to build personal relationships with students. As another Staley High School student mentioned, “The teachers really cared about the students, and the faculty conducted themselves in such a dignified manner. They encouraged us to get a good education and to be respectful of ourselves and of others. I carried that with me for the rest of my life. The teachers so strongly believed in the importance of a good education, I suspect, because they felt the South would not always be segregated. They knew there was going to be change, and that influenced the way they taught us” (Hollis, 2007). Perhaps this view was commonplace among many black teachers in the South during the 1940s. There certainly were educators of this period who displayed sternness and stressed the importance of discipline and, of course, others coupled sternness with kindness. From contemporary interviews, a more sophisticated conception of this classroom demeanor can be suggested within the context of the Secondary School Study—namely, this notion of tough kindness and a type of progressive educator who simultaneously attended to interests but also considered the social-personal needs of students who were living during the Jim Crow era.

*The community displayed a dignity and respect for all people. The teachers led the way; they were imparting and modeling this important point. We did not feel as if anyone was above or below. The sense of community incorporated all of us and everyone was in some way involved. The community was built on dedication and respect.*

—Minnie D. Haynes, a student during the Secondary School Study (2007)

The selection of oral history excerpts for any educational project serves to determine the nature of the conversation and, thus, in this case a conception of progressive education in these black schools. I can be questioned about my impressions and those particular views that have been voiced by the interviewees. My “sample” population was primarily self-selected and, clearly, while there were criticisms of teachers, those who participated in this project came with a positive view of their high school and educational experience. From conversations with former teachers and students at seventeen school sites, I have compiled data that, of course, becomes interpreted impressions. Were these participating teachers card-carrying progressive educators? No. Did they engage in progressive education activities that were guided by participants from the PEA’s defining experimental project, the Eight-Year Study? Yes. Is there so much more research that needs to be undertaken to better understand and comprehend classroom practices in black schools during the Jim Crow era? Most certainly. Yet, how we place these school activities in relation to period instructional methods and curricular programs will become crucial. Research must not become a matter of merely matching oral history statements with predefined terms and concepts from the past.

This project recognizes different conceptions of progressive education during the twentieth century and seeks to introduce the complexities of school practice (inherent in large field-based projects). William A. Robinson, William H. Brown, Fannie Phelps Adams, John Allen Tarpley, Ida F. Jenkins, G. L. Porter, Katie M. Washington, Novella Bass, Alpha H. Westbrook, and Lutrelle Fleming Palmer are just some of the many

Secondary School Study educators who clearly fall within a conception of progressivism. Neither exclusively child-centered nor society-centered, neither solely administrative progressives nor pedagogical progressives, they were indeed progressive educators. Similarly, this project recognizes that not all laboratory schools were “progressive” and that not all school philosophies remain static: a school does not necessarily “perpetuate” a progressive education moniker through the decades, due to either changing staff or to evolving conceptions of progressive education. Thus, the Southern Study’s Parker High School in Greenville, South Carolina may have at one time been “the mill school miracle” of progressive schools; yet, its later practices would not have compared to the experimental planning of the Secondary School Study’s Magnolia High School. Perhaps someday contemporary educators will be able to recognize and articulate varying perspectives of progressive education, introduce these conceptions as a part of their research rather than perpetuating simple slogans and dichotomies and, similar to distinguishing different positions among politicians from the same party, understand dissimilar conceptions of progressive education among progressives from the past and present.

#### NOTES

1. It is my hope that someday scholars will recognize authors’ different perspectives and realize that reading an article about the impact of progressive education by Jeffrey Mirel (2003) or Jeanne Chall (2000) is similar to reading an essay about Barack Obama by George Will—interesting but also quite ideological.
2. Some teachers did not seem to embrace the fundamentals of “democracy as a way of life” in the classroom, as so noted in the professional literature, and oral history interviews included discussions of suspected discrimination by black teachers toward dark-skinned students. The intent of this research project was not to engage in progressive education hyperbole or to suggest that these schools were utopian settings. The schools were real, and teachers attempted to forge a common vision of education from different and contradicting beliefs. Not all educators overcame their biases.
3. Please note that the use of the term “needs” is in no way connected to the later-twentieth century “needs-based curricula,” a much different and limited approach to evaluation, assessment, and curriculum development.

# Reconsidering Human Relations and 1940s Black Youth Studies

*Homeroom was a special time for us to come together. This was an important part of the structure of the day and was taken very seriously. We were able to discuss with an adult and with each other general issues around education and about living in modern times. While homeroom may seem trite or commonplace today, the period was an integral part of our education.*

—Edgar E. Smith, a student during the Secondary School Study (2008c)

*The present organization of the southern high school establishes the homeroom as the key administrative unit for guidance. . . . The subject matter for homeroom programs should be determined cooperatively by the teacher and pupils.*

—Esmeralda R. Hawkins in *Thinking About Counseling in High Schools and Colleges*  
from the Secondary School Study Guidance Workshop (1945, p. 21)

ONE OF THE CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS OF this research project has been to understand the most basic purposes of the Secondary School Study—namely, participants’ efforts “to discover the needs of the secondary-school child [and] . . . the additional needs of Negro children in the social setting of American life” (Robinson, 1944b, p. 534). How this was accomplished varied from setting to setting and proved fundamental to the individual schools’ philosophies of education. There were no checklists or approved methods for determining needs, and period documents remain quite general as educators drew upon their experiences, beliefs, judgments, workshop programs, and professional literature. We do know that teachers saw themselves as engaged in guidance and counseling as well as instruction, and homeroom proved to be the time for them to step outside of their purely pedagogical roles and attend to problems of youth—i.e., what they felt the black adolescent “needed” to survive in an unjust society. William A. Robinson, in GEB correspondence, even underscored the point that teachers’ interest

in guidance focused on personality rather than vocation (Robinson, 1943). The intent was not providing job advice or vocational counseling. Guidance was viewed as the responsibility of the teacher and embedded in the normal activities of instruction. Teachers sought to become a trusted person in the student’s life. Many of these 1940s educators were turning to the professional literature of the period to help them understand the nature of adolescence and to better assist their students in their efforts to cope with racism and prejudice in many different forms. Today’s educators would draw important insights from the field of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy to address these topics. The Secondary School Study teachers, however, drew from the predecessors of these areas in what was termed general “human relations,” an interdisciplinary field whose boundaries were fluid and definitions are now often overlooked.

Documenting the intent of the Secondary School Study teachers becomes quite difficult as oral history accounts, spoken seventy years later, included few references to published

sources and, of course, students were unaware of when their social-personal needs were being discussed. Yet, through “the company they kept”—i.e., those resource staff persons who worked with the Study teachers—we can assume that certain topics, themes, and perspectives were introduced into workshop conversations and site visits at the member schools. The research orientations for addressing the needs of 1940s black youth are quite complex, and historic terms—multicultural education, intercultural education, human relations, intergroup education—are as precise as the concepts “progressive education” and “democracy.” In fact, an intergroup education handbook even refers to the terms “as being interchangeable but not synonyms” (Cook and Cook, 1954, p. ix). While any quest for clear delineations will be futile, there is much to explore within the late 1930s and 1940s professional literature, especially since general human relations topics guided the curricular programs of the Study’s participating sites and seemed to have influenced the field of counseling. A generation of black guidance counselors, drawing from the areas of human relations and group dynamics, would join the struggle in the American South during the 1960s and 1970s to help black youth and teachers enter desegregated public school systems.

I have described this research project as an act of archival agency for the Secondary School Study communities. This essay serves as a passionate plea to educational researchers for further historical scholarship into the nature of the black adolescent of the 1930s and 1940s and those period classroom practices that sought to bring greater understanding—for students and teachers—to societal inequities, racial tensions, and the personal-social needs of black youth. There are many areas to explore and much published literature has gone unread. While work has been conducted in the area of intercultural education, this research project seeks to bring attention to human relations, intergroup education, and period black adolescent research—the American Youth Commission’s Studies of Negro Youth. Today’s educational scholarship seems to have narrowed its focus on the historical traditions of progressive education as defined by the writings of Dewey, Kilpatrick, Counts, and Rugg; multicultural education as defined by the work of Rachel Davis DuBois’ on intercultural education; black education according to publications of Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Carter G. Woodson; and Jim Crow education as situated and interpreted in a “waiting for *Brown*” mode. I hope this brief essay serves to intrigue educational researchers to examine further the 1930s and 1940s human relations projects, intergroup education, and sociological-psychoanalytic black youth studies that may offer so much to our understanding of the experiences of teachers and students and the nature of intraracial and interracial relations during this period.

“The experiences through which large numbers of people go in facing personally unmerited discriminations and antagonisms are often devastating to personality because of wish frustrations [i.e., the inability to fulfill fundamental wishes] and undesirable compensations which often result. These psychological by-products of unfortunate situations in the community cannot be entirely removed by the schools; but schools can do much to provide opportunities for the satisfaction of the basic wishes within the framework of their own social worlds. In the experiments on which the present study is founded, many such opportunities were found to help students of disliked minorities to overcome specific personality maladjustments” (Davis DuBois, 1945, p. 108).

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From the Bureau for Intercultural  
Education Publication Series:  
*Probing Our Prejudices by Hortense  
Powdermaker*

“Prejudice also threatens the full development of the personality of the person holding it. The amount of energy that any one person has is not unlimited. If much of his energy goes into hating Negroes or Mexicans, Chinese or Jews or other groups, there is not much left for other activities. Hate is likely to be destructive and narrowing. Love is expansive and creative. The prejudiced person is apt to become small and mean, always putting up a fight against his kindlier and more co-operative impulses. That side of his nature, the co-operative side which can see something good in all peoples and which wants to help them, is thwarted. If this process goes on continuously over a long period of time, the person may become mean and unfriendly not only toward the people against whom he is prejudiced, but toward other people as well. His whole nature becomes thwarted and

all his human relationships are affected. His whole life narrows" (Powdermaker, 1944, p. 47).

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**From the Progressive Education Association's Commission on Human Relations: *Life and Growth* by Alice Keliher**

"Can we change, can we break down resistance, can we gradually wipe out prejudices built on error and superstition? We can if we will make a genuine effort and if enough of us will act together in making the effort. For in acting together we will feel the security we must have in order to be tolerant of the needs of others. Such an effort is essential to a democracy. We profess in America our belief in democracy. Have we stopped to analyze what that belief in democracy means when it is translated into what we must believe and do about our relations with people? Do we realize that belief in democracy means recognition of the equality of human needs? All have the same basic needs. The very preservation of democracy depends on finding ways to meet these needs for all. Do we realize that democracy means a belief in the capacity for social sensitivity and in the intelligence of all people, in the ability of each man to think and act on this thinking, regardless of color, creed, and origins? There are some who say that for this very reason democracy cannot work. These are the people who would like to hold on, contrary to the findings of research, to the belief in cultural and intellectual superiority of one group over another. Out of this belief dictatorships, monarchies, and feudal systems are built. A society that maintains such a belief cannot be a true democracy" (Keliher, 1938, pp. 217-218).

## **Human Relations-Oriented Projects**

**Bureau of Intercultural Education:** The history of multiculturalism devotes great attention to intercultural education due, in part, to the hagiographic autobiography by Rachel Davis DuBois which seems to have led to her ordination as patron saint of the movement (Davis DuBois, 1984). While her fieldwork was certainly original, Davis DuBois' writings were related to well-established period conceptions of interracial and cultural relations, developed during the 1920s by the Rockefeller Foundation Social Science Research Council whose research provided structure for many types of human relations projects in education. Davis DuBois, when affiliating with the Progressive Education Association in the 1930s, noted that she originated the term "intercultural education" only because she could not use "human relations, since another PEA commission had just been formed with this same title" (Davis DuBois, 1984, p. 76). In fact, Davis DuBois' intercultural activities were situated within the area of human relations which sought to confront prejudice and to improve self-esteem for ethnic and racial groups of students. However, her orientation and approach were much different from the PEA's Commission on Human Relations whose school materials and practices were adopted by William A. Robinson and the Secondary School Study.

Davis DuBois' Service Bureau on Intercultural Education, a short-lived PEA committee supported in part by the General Education Board, would become an independent organization and confront many of the issues that currently pervade today's discussions of multiculturalism, cultural syncretism, and cosmopolitanism. Disputes pertaining to cultural integration and pluralism, essentialism, assimilation, and social unity created great dissension among Bureau staff as they developed curricular materials—books, resource units, radio programs—for students, teachers, and social workers. Intercultural education practitioners viewed their programs as a way to combat overt acts of ethnic, racial, and religious prejudice, and their aim (as articulated at the 1945 Montclair Conference) was "to invent a way of letting as many cultures in the world as can come in contact with each other and contribute to the possibilities for individual and group living" (Dix, 1945, p. 19). The Bureau provided in-service teacher education, professional development conferences, curricular materials for schools and civic groups, and an extensive publication series of books and pamphlets for students and teachers, and served as an active national clearing house for schools and individuals who were concerned about racial and ethnic diversity. Bureau documents appear within Secondary School Study activities, and teachers were said to have drawn upon their publications, including Powdermaker's *Probing Our Prejudices* (1944) and Van Til and colleagues'

*Democracy Demands It: A Resource Unit for Intercultural Education in the High School* (1950; Van Til, 2002). The Bureau, “dissolving” in the late 1940s, continued to publish into the 1950s, and its programs and personnel overlapped with intergroup education and human relations as interest in intercultural education never fully waned.

**Commission on Human Relations:** The PEA Commission on Human Relations (the Keliher Commission), one of the three commissions that comprised the Eight-Year Study, also received funding from the General Education Board and was assigned the task of developing curricular materials from the legendary 1934 Hanover Seminar. This conference, organized by GEB staff member Lawrence K. Frank, helped to develop a “culture and personality” theory in the social sciences. Keliher Commission publications would enter the libraries of member schools as the development of black adolescents’ personality became a major interest for those Study teachers who were ascertaining personal-social needs. Caroline Zachry, who worked with both the Keliher Commission and the Eight-Year Study’s Thayer Commission (the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum) served as a consultant for the Secondary School Study and would have assumed a leading role in William A. Robinson’s educational activities at the 1938 Sarah Lawrence Workshop, since that specific workshop focused on human relations. She would later conduct a summer workshop for Secondary School Study teachers. Other Study resource staff who were directly involved with the Eight-Year Study’s human relations programs included Alice Keliher, V. T. Thayer, Robert Wunsch (president of Black Mountain College), and H. Harry Giles. Keliher and Giles would establish New York University’s Center for Human Relations Study whose activities and programs continued into the 1960s and provided training for Secondary School Study teachers who would become guidance counselors in the 1960s and 1970s (Phelps Adams, 2013).

Human relations education, as conceived by Zachry and Keliher, arose from a psychoanalytical and sociological approach to construct personal-social needs as a way for students to better understand themselves within the context of their culture and society. Societal issues were discussed in relation to their effect upon the individual psyche in what became known as a psychocultural perspective. Absent were the issues related to cultural integrationism and pluralism that Davis DuBois and staff were addressing. Both groups examined topics related to improving the self-esteem of youth: for Davis DuBois’ Bureau, the effort was more oriented toward presenting information about ethnic and racial groups (a “fairs and festivals” approach) and for Keliher’s Commission the focus was more upon the nature of adolescence from a personal and social-psychoanalytic perspective.

**From the Progressive Education Association’s Commission on the Secondary School Curriculum: *Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence* by Caroline B. Zachry**

“Somewhere between childhood and adulthood, the boy or girl in the secondary school cannot be thought of as having attained any given rung on a ladder leading toward adult social adjustment. There is, of course, no such ladder, since in growing up he does not usually move forward in steady progress. Only if his development over a span of years be reviewed may he, as a whole personality, be seen to progress. He is not necessarily to be expected, therefore, as a young person to exhibit attitudes approaching in any given measure those that may be satisfying to and acceptable in an adult. Healthy adjustments in his immediate situation as an adolescent do, however, help him to develop in ways that lead to adjustments appropriate to adulthood. The school’s task in guiding him toward social maturity is therefore to help him to such present adaptations. The life of the person of any age is a process of continuous adjusting, but in the transition from childhood to adulthood the individual is confronted with the necessity to make certain profound adjustments in emotion and conduct that are basic to all later adaptations and readaptations. During these years he is striving to reintegrate a changing personality on shifting ground” (Zachry, 1940, pp. 12-13).

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**From the American Council on Education’s Center for Intergroup Education: *Diagnosing Human Relations Needs* by Hilda Taba, E. H. Brady, J. T. Robinson, and W. E. Vickery**

“Social needs are not self-evident. Many needs in group relations elude diagnosis, unless they can be scrutinized with the help of adequate tools and techniques. There were no ready tested procedures on which to depend for getting appropriate data. A large part of the experimental program under the auspices

of the Center [for Intergroup Education] was devoted to developing a variety of tools for studying children, their reactions to human relations values, and their cultural backgrounds. Some of these tools were either designed or adapted for unique requirements of certain schools and communities. Others grew out of problems common to many schools" (Taba, et al, 1951, pp. 2-3).

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**From the American Council on Education's Center for Intergroup Education: *College Programs in Intergroup Relations* by Mozell C. Hill and Albert N. Whiting**

**From Atlanta University:**

"The role of color in intragroup relations has long been a point of interest to students of race problems. In the present study of friendship choices among 101 Negro male and female undergraduates, the color factor was given special attention. In general, the inquiry centered on the extent to which individuals selected as 'best friends' the kinds of persons who reflected their own physical characteristics and social backgrounds. The instrument used in the study was an adaptation of the College Study AS-38 [an Intergroup Relations Sociometric Test], a 37-item questionnaire divisible into five parts: the sociophysical self, self-esteem, cultural conditioning, the social-psychological self, and the self in relation to friends and to things. Respondents were asked to rate themselves, and then to rate their one best friend, on a 9-point scale. Color ratings were secured by self-and-friend ratings in four categories: white, light skin, brown skin, and dark skin" (Hill and Whiting, 1950, p. 235).

"On several occasions, meetings were held with the Atlanta University laboratory school staff. As the focus on human relations became clear, the staff formed itself into a committee to work on various school problems. . . . [One study] was a sociometric study of interpersonal and intragroup relations in the sixth- and seventh-grade classes, with both classes known to have clique

**Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools:** Intergroup education, another generic, human relations-oriented approach, entered the Secondary School Study professional development activities through the work of Hilda Taba and the 1945 Guidance Workshop staged for Study teachers at the University of Chicago and, indirectly, Taba's 1943 Secondary School Study Social Studies Curriculum Conference (Secondary School Study, 1943). She directed the American Council on Education-sponsored project, Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools, also funded by the General Education Board and coordinated through the Council on Cooperation in Teacher Education (Brady, 1996, p. 61). Taba's Intergroup Education research team focused on social tensions of groups learning to live together in a democracy, along with basic concepts of status, acculturation, social class and caste. The Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools program was similar to Davis DuBois' Service Bureau and the Keliher Commission in that curricular materials were developed for teachers and students and distributed to school systems.

However, unlike Davis DuBois' Service Bureau that rested upon a normative belief in cultural diversity, and Keliher's Commission that adopted a psychoanalytic perspective, Taba's project was grounded more in socioeconomic analysis, intelligence testing (and social sensitivity testing), anthro-sociological research, and developmental (stage) theory that addressed topics pertaining to the nature of social relationships and status differences within communities. Interwoven with Taba's intergroup program was the research of her colleagues and future collaborator, Robert J. Havighurst, who served as a staff member at the University of Chicago Guidance Workshop for the Secondary School Study. Havighurst with W. Lloyd Warner and Martin B. Loeb, published *Who Shall Be Educated?* which addressed issues of race, class, and caste and brought attention to the structural inequalities of education. "This book describes how our schools, functioning in a society with basic inequalities, facilitate the rise of a few from lower to higher levels but continue to serve the social system by keeping down many people who try for higher places. The teacher, the school administrator, the school board, as well as the students themselves, play their roles to hold people in their places in our social structure (Warner, Havighurst, and Loeb, 1944, p. xi). *Who Shall Be Educated?*, reflecting the research mores of the time and describing period statements of discrimination, caste and class differences, and education's role in subordinating blacks, appeared in Secondary School Study libraries.

## **American Council on Education's American Youth Commission Studies of Negro Youth**

These three terms—human relations, intercultural education, and intergroup education—at times appear in the historical literature of multiculturalism; they are typically interchangeable *and* often appear as synonyms. Yet, the type of research inquiry rather than the research topics distinguished Taba's intergroup education from Keliher-Zachry-Giles' human relations from Davis DuBois' intercultural education. The publications of these groups were drawn upon by Secondary School Study teachers as they sought to develop school philosophy, to determine the personal-social needs of youth, and to help their students cope with discrimination. In addition to these projects, another significant professional resource was included in the Secondary School Study lending library: the American Youth Commission Studies of Negro Youth, sponsored by the American Council on Education (ACE) and, yet again, funded by the General Education Board. This publication series addressed the educator's quest to determine adolescent needs and to understand further the problems of black youth. The Negro Youth Studies, written by the country's leading psychologists, psychoanalysts, sociologists, and anthropologists, sought to help teachers and students understand personality development; however, these researchers would not necessarily be considered progressive educators or, like Keliher and Zachry, Eight-Year Study progressives.

To what extent ideas from Studies of Negro Youth were incorporated into the thinking of Secondary School Study principals and teachers cannot be determined. The books introduced information to teachers who sought to help their students during the homeroom period and beyond, and the series was introduced and discussed at annual meetings of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes. Robinson noted that teachers "were acquainted" with the studies and wished to use the content to develop curriculum (Robinson, 1942). Further, bibliographic references appear in workshop materials, and these authors were involved with Secondary School Study activities and workshops. Participating teachers worked directly with Ira DeA. Reid, author of the first volume; Allison Davis, co-author of the second volume, (along with Robert Havinghurst) participated as staff in the University of Chicago Workshop in Guidance; and E. Franklin Frazier, another series author, was in regular contact with William A. Robinson (Palmer, 1943b; Steinzor, 1945; Robinson Jr., 2011). Other theoretical and personal connections relate the Negro Youth Studies to the Secondary School Study (and Keliher's Commission on Human Relations). Caroline Zachry, a resource staff member for the Study, served on a select advisory committee for the publications,

groupings. All pupils filled in a 'guess who' form, a social acceptance scale and a friendship test. . . . In appraising the sociometric approach to group study, the laboratory school staff felt that it made clear and exact the contacts, influences, and groupings of which teachers were already more or less conscious. They also felt that it would give reliable base lines against which to estimate success or failure in making human relational changes" (Hill and Whiting, 1950, pp. 238-239).

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**From the ACE's American Youth Commission Studies of Negro Youth: *In a Minor Key: Negro Youth in Story and Fact* by Ira DeA. Reid**

"There are important variations within the Negro community itself, but the usual classification of upper, middle, and lower class, based largely on the ownership of economic goods, does not completely interpret the Negro community's structure, because of the fact that Negroes own almost none of the basic instruments of production, control relatively little land, have few persons of great wealth, and are excluded from many of the positions of prestige occupied by whites. Because of these limitations, the members of the Negro community are, on a strictly economic basis, assigned with few exceptions to the lower and lower-middle classes of a stratified society. If, however, the class structure is considered more broadly in terms of functional association, we find that the Negro communities, like the white, have a well-organized hierarchy of relationships. Admission to the more exclusive upper circles is determined to some extent by economic success but also by family tradition, education, place of residence, degree of [blackness], and a complex of other factors" (Reid, 1940, p. 8).

**From the ACE's American Youth  
Commission Studies of Negro Youth:  
*Children of Bondage* by Allison Davis  
and John Dollard**

"The popular belief that 'all Negroes are alike' is a caste-encrusted dogma. Although all Negroes have the status of lower-caste people in the South, they differ socially among themselves as far as the poles of the earth. Since white people do not participate in Negro society, they are unable to see its differentiated strata. In examining the lives of the children dealt with in this book, the reader must long ago have asked himself the question, 'Why does their social class appear to have been far more important than their racial status in shaping the habits and goals of these children?' The answer seems to be that social class governs a much wider area of the child's training than do the Negro-white controls" (Davis and Dollard, 1940, p. 256).

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**From the ACE's American Youth  
Commission Studies of Negro Youth:  
*Negro Youth at the Crossways* by E.  
Franklin Frazier**

"The teachers' influence on the child's developing conception of the Negro race and of himself as a Negro is not restricted to the formal exercises during Negro History Week or even to what is said in classes in Negro history. They exert a far greater influence through the casual remarks which they make from time to time concerning the Negro. For example, the teachers are naturally concerned with the conduct of their pupils which in some of the tougher sections of the city presents a serious problem of discipline. It seems that some teachers undertake to improve the children's behavior by disparaging remarks concerning the Negro and by holding up to them the supposedly better behavior of white children. In some cases this is probably due to the fact that the teacher, being a member of the upper class, actually has the same attitude toward lower-class Negroes as

and the series was embedded in "culture and personality" theory, with John Dollard and W. Lloyd Warner, who were both 1934 Hanover Seminar participants, authoring one of the seven research books.

Studies of Negro Youth publications conceived personality as a cultural construct rather than viewing its development from a moral or biological perspective, and the research focused on youth studies in various settings of the North and the South. The series' preliminary report was published in 1940 by Ira DeA. Reid, professor of sociology at Atlanta University. *In a Minor Key: Negro Youth in Story and Fact* presented information, literally in separate sections of story and fact, about black youth for the general public and secondary school students. In what seems to summarize the basic intent of the project, Reid stated that "the 'race problem' cuts a wide swath in the cultural heritage of Negro youth as their people have moved away from the complete subordination of slavery into a state of theoretical freedom. Problems of adjustment and conflicts of interests between white and Negro races have arisen with perplexing consistency" (Reid, 1940, p. 107).

Allison Davis (University of Chicago anthropologist) and John Dollard (Yale University psychoanalyst) prepared *Children of Bondage: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in the Urban South* (1940) addressing the "mysteries of personality" through a series of life history vignettes of adults and youth from the lower, middle, and upper classes (with topics of caste introduced in the treatment). E. Franklin Frazier (Fisk/Howard University sociologist) published *Negro Youth at the Crossways: Their Personality Development in the Middle States* (1940) where interviews provided source material to construct two biographical vignettes as a way to discuss factors affecting the personality of black adolescents, including the topics of community, family, school, church, and social ideologies. Charles S. Johnson (Fisk University sociologist) and his research team published *Growing Up in the Black Belt: Negro Youth in the Rural South* (1941), drawing data from a study of 1,000 rural counties to construct cases for eight southern communities with accompanying interviews and tests regarding attitude and personality.

Social class differences served as the focus of W. Lloyd Warner (University of Chicago socio-anthropologist), Buford H. Junker, and Walter A. Adams' *Color and Human Nature: Negro Personality Development in a Northern City* (1941), as this research team drew data from a broader geographical perspective of southern rural and city sites, middle states city sites, and northern large and small city settings. An often overlooked work among the publications, *Thus Be their Destiny* by J. Howell Atwood, Donald W. Wyatt, Vincent J. Davis, and Ira D. Walker (1941), included a series of biographical vignettes drawn from northern and southern research. The final publication, *Color, Class, and Personality* (1942), was prepared by proj-

ect coordinator Robert L. Sutherland (sociologist and director of the Studies of Negro Youth Commission), who sought to provide a summary for the project. Additional mimeographed resource materials were released after the publication of Sutherland's book.

The *Studies of Negro Youth* publications do not readily appear within the historical treatments of Jim Crow education; yet, Malinda Lindquist notes that the series was "the first systematic description of the state and status of black youth by region and class" while maintaining that the books ushered in "the psychological research trajectory that eventually predominated throughout the second half of the century—the focus on troubled youth" (Lindquist, 2012, p. 152). Stereotypes and biases, "documented" from quantitative and qualitative research, are common within these publications as black social stratifications, color in intragroup relations, and attitudes toward the "folk negro" were portrayed in great detail through narratives and life histories. The descriptions of black youth are unsettling for today's sensibilities; however, this material must be viewed in some way as reflecting the impressions, understandings, concerns, and fears of teachers from the Secondary School Study era (Holloway, 2013; Semmes, 1992).

The most comprehensive analysis of the American Youth Commission's series appears in Anne C. Rose's *Psychology and Selfhood in the Segregated South* (2009) where she examines and critiques the tensions of methodology and ideology among the biracial group of researchers. From today's perspective, the combination of psychoanalytic-Freudian analysis with data-driven, offensive generalizations, with unpleasant period terminology, with an *idée fixe* of social economic class distinctions and skin color, combined with the period understandings of personality development of the adolescent, with stereotypical, objectionable assertions of the African American psyche (coupled with offensive dialogue written, at times, in black vernacular), all imbedded in quantitative and qualitative field research . . . makes for an odd and rather upsetting reading experience. Most certainly, contemporary multiculturalists have much more to research and to critique from this historical series than those standard issues arising from cultural gifts, pluralism, and ethnic pride.

Rather than analyzing and questioning the sensibilities of the Negro Youth Studies researchers, I am left to wonder how this material was used during the 1940s by African American teachers and, specifically, those educators in the Secondary School Study. Negro Youth Study references appeared in the period literature, and the series was included in the Study's lending library. Further, these topics arose during the oral history interview sessions of Study students: socioeconomic class dynamics in

whites. For example, a freshman college student told the story of his teacher in elementary school and junior high school: 'In junior high and elementary school, she used to always be talking about how much worse colored people were than white people. She said she didn't blame white people for not letting colored people go in their places. She used to say she wouldn't let them come in either if she was white because they were so lame-brained and didn't have sense enough to act right'" (Frazier, 1940, p. 101).

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**From the ACE's American Youth Commission Studies of Negro Youth: *Growing Up in the Black Belt* by Charles S. Johnson**

"Segregation is not resented by Negro youth as vigorously as are economic suppression and insults from whites. While these youth are aware of the restrictions imposed by the racial mores, most of them have adjusted themselves to these restrictions. Unlike the injustices of white employers and the insults of white children, segregation does not seem to generate active resentment. Most youth feel that segregation imposes only minor deprivations. In most cases the youth expressed themselves as preferring not to associate with whites, and viewed their segregation with indifference. It is true, of course, that cause and effect may be somewhat confused here, since avoidance of whites is as much a consequence of segregation as it is a cause of the passive acceptance of segregation. The awareness of restrictions imposed by segregation and the rationalizations employed in the process of making adjustment are apparent in the comment of 15-year-old Raymond Towers, who said: 'I can't do everything a white person can. I can't go in a white café. I don't think it's fair 'cause they let you go there and buy everything else, but it never did bother me, I never wanted to sit down in there anyway, and I get plenty of milk at home'" (Johnson, C., 1941, p. 288).

**From the ACE's American Youth  
Commission Studies of Negro Youth:  
*Color and Human Nature* by W. Lloyd  
Warner, Buford H. Junker, and Walter  
A. Adams**

"When this inquiry into the development of Negro personality began, an extensive study of the Chicago Negro community had been in progress for nearly two years. Over 5,000 interviews had been held and the economic, social, and ecological characteristics of this community had been studied statistically. Case histories and autobiographies of individuals had also been collected by sociologists and psychiatrists. Several years before the Chicago projects, some of us had conducted investigations of Negro-white communities in the Deep South" (Warner, et al., 1941, p. 6).

"Early in this study it became apparent that 'being a Negro' with its implications of both race and color distinctions, does not mean the same thing to every person but rather operates in total situations involving many other variables. For one thing, social and economic levels make a profound difference, and so do the factors of sex, education, and regional background. Furthermore, individual variations of temperament and physical health exert a powerful influence. Nevertheless, inasmuch as color is the badge of racial separateness as well as, in very large measure, the basis of high or low position in the Negro social hierarchy, this factor is the most important single element that determines for better or for worse the development of Negro character. What a Negro has to say about his color and that of other people, together with his response to color evaluations, may often furnish a direct key to all or most of his thoughts about himself and his very existence. Such evaluations somehow get involved in almost every incident in his life, sometimes more and sometimes less explicitly" (Warner, et al., 1941, pp. 292-293).

relation to city/rural backgrounds and issues of caste and skin color. (One group of interviewees even described the aftermath of a lynching that they witnessed in what most certainly would have dramatically affected the "adolescent experience" and nature of personality.) Rose offers a convincing argument that the Studies of Negro Youth were not best-selling publications; yet she, too, notes that the books were used in GEB-sponsored workshops.

The pedigree of the authors and the extensive research data, reflecting societal norms, would have caused Secondary School Study educators to take seriously the publications, and series author Donald W. Wyatt, in his "fact-based" portrayals of Greensboro, North Carolina youth, may have foreshadowed the reception of this material (in this instance, "attitudes toward the Negro race") among Secondary School Study teachers: "The interest of this topic lies not in the accuracy or fairness of the generalizations about their fellow Negroes made by the young people intensively interviewed so much as in the actual nature of these evaluations. For whether or not they be correct, they do constitute attitudes that play an important part in the shaping of their personalities" (Atwood, et al., 1941, p. 55). In essence, this research exposed attitudes among blacks that were extant, that in some manner were shaping personalities, and that could no longer be ignored.

Secondary School Study teachers viewed their role and responsibility as guiding as well as educating the young—attending to the personal-social needs of their students was a normal and integrated aspect of their teaching. Pearl High School teachers even defined "good education as guidance and guidance as good education," and stated that "the major concern of the school should be to help the teachers understand the emotional needs of children [and] that in counseling relationships, a teacher should understand her own emotional needs as well as those of her students" (Pearl High School faculty, 1943, p. 23). These publications, along with the writings and curricular materials from the Bureau of Intercultural Education, Commission on Human Relations, and Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools projects, offered information and activities for both students and teachers as schools sought to build caring, thoughtful communities during the homeroom period, during the school day, and during the course of the academic year. As I have encouraged alumni of these remarkable schools to prepare their own memoirs and educational researchers to write their school histories, similarly, I hope historians of multiculturalism and critical pedagogy will expand their focus from Davis DuBois and intercultural education and begin to examine the Studies of Negro Youth and the extensive practices of the Commission on Human Relations and the Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools projects.



**From the ACE's American Youth Commission Studies of Negro Youth: *Thus Be their Destiny* by J. Howell Atwood, Donald W. Wyatt, Vincent J. Davis, and Ira D. Walker**

"In response to unpleasant interracial situations southern Negro youth must disguise their feelings, dramatize subservience, and accept humiliations without resentment or any form of open aggression. The seriousness of the situation lies in the fact that, in the process of going to school and elsewhere imbibing the culture of this country, Negro children are confused by the disparity between the idealism of America and the realities of their lives. They hear much of the inviolable right to every American boy and girl to the full exploitation of his abilities and of the typical American dream of successful achievement from very humble beginnings. Yet they [Dudley High School students] cannot move very far in the streets of Greensboro without confront-

ing physical obstacles to their progress. The resulting frustration is particularly severe for those with keen minds and enterprising dispositions. The greater the capacity of the individual and the more extensive the area of potential development, the more acute is the problem arising from the conflict. The data of this interview study suggest the techniques by means of which these boys and girls try to come to terms with their inner confusion" (Atwood, et al., 1941, pp. 61-62).

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**From the ACE's American Youth Commission Studies of Negro Youth: *Color, Class, and Personality* by Robert L. Sutherland**

"With some youth, learning how to be a Negro in a predominately white world is not a difficult task, while to others, learning how to preserve self-respect and acquire ambition to rise while

belonging to a subordinate group takes on the proportions of a personal crisis. No one pattern of adjustment or rebellion will describe all cases. The biological nature of the individual has an effect upon his interracial behavior, and his earliest interracial contacts are often crucial in defining his later mode of response. His home training in racial attitudes is important; his schooling, his occupation, his membership in social groups, and many other factors enter into a full account of a particular child's reaction to his membership in a minority racial group. Curiously, however, although the determining factors in any given case are numerous, several patterns of personality adjustment to racial status have become almost standardized among Negro youth. These patterns are a part of Negro culture and are transmitted like any other culture patterns. The standardization is never complete, for new patterns or new combinations come into use" (Sutherland, 1942, pp. 40-41).

## William A. Robinson: A Prophet of Social Justice

*Any acute observer of the program of public secondary education in the South would discover that the development of the Negro high schools has been affected more by the dogma of white supremacy than by any rational philosophy for meeting the needs of the Negro population.*

—William A. Robinson (1936, p. 395)



William A. Robinson (1890–1972)

WHILE WILLIAM A. ROBINSON WOULD turn to progressive education as the “rational philosophy for meeting the needs” of the black student, he knew that much more than cooperation and new instructional methods would be necessary for significant and long-lasting social change in black secondary education. Through his actions, either in New York during the 1920s with E. Franklin Frazier as they sought to desegregate Harlem movie theatres or during the late 1930s when he relentlessly wrote to General Education Board staff seeking support for the Secondary School Study, he sustained faith “for a better day in social thinking” but relied upon cordial confrontation as well as aggressive persis-

tence for educational and cultural improvement (Robinson, 1937b, p. 60; Flores, 2010). He also recognized the overwhelming challenges for change and would not allow himself to be misled into thinking that any type of reform was appropriate or permanent. Nor would he be fooled by progressive education and the patriotic rhetoric of democracy for, as he stated in a 1936 forum on the reorganization of black education, there was “the persistent hope with which the American masses invest the chimera of American democracy. It underestimates the power of the vested interests in ignorance and helplessness and their determined control of American schools. It is built upon a hope that America will treat *the new prophets of social justice* more kindly than has been her custom in the past” (Robinson, 1936, p. 399–400; italics added). Robinson’s presidential roles with the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools and the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes caused him to maintain a sense of hope but also to recognize dogma and misguided trust.

White privilege and middle-upper social class status permitted many 1930s and 1940s progressives to adopt “attending to the needs of the child” as a mantra for their unwavering belief in improving schools. Ideology and worldwide political tensions caused other progressives to accept the cultural concept of democracy as the defining motif for redefining education. Robinson did not embrace

*Throughout almost the entire South the confusion arising from the attitude of the white South toward the Negro's proper place in the American social economy has muddled the efforts at rational curriculum planning for the Negro high schools.*

—William A. Robinson (1936, p. 394)

progressive education “as a way of life” unconditionally; it served as the best method he had come upon in his quest for guiding curriculum development and building strong black communities. In many respects, Robinson’s use of progressive education was similar to his conception of the term—all efforts were experimental as he sought to develop an overarching philosophy of education and to discover effective methods for social change. His roles as principal of the Atlanta University Laboratory School and as director of the Secondary School Study were indeed effective but certainly not without complaint and disagreement. Yet, with his no-nonsense persona, oriented toward solving problems and completing whatever task was at hand, he demonstrated what a thoughtful black principal and director could accomplish as he addressed the dogma of white supremacy, accepted the consequences of “doing what had to be done,” and worked as a prophet of social justice (Robinson Jr., 2011; Corbin, 2010; Goode, 2010; Grigsby, 2010).

While this research project reclaims if not anoints Robinson as one of the leading black progressives of his era, progressive education did not define his career as was the case for Boyd H. Bode and William H. Kilpatrick. Arising from his early administrative life as a supervisor of black high schools in North Carolina and from his organizational presidencies and high school principalships, his struggle for equitable school accreditation

remained another primary mission throughout his career (Robinson, 1940b). During the time of the Secondary School Study and beyond, Robinson continued efforts to combat the low caste of black schools and unfair secondary school accreditation practices caused by the inequity of public funding, the hegemony of white administrators, and the unquestioned and ill-conceived acceptance and intransigence of maintaining the traditional ways of schooling.

William Albert Robinson came from American black aristocracy. His maternal grandfather, Thomas Day, was an early nineteenth century free black cabinetmaker from North Carolina whose pieces are highly prized today with a number of items owned by the North Carolina Museum of History (although Day’s successful business suffered during the mid-nineteenth century and was under receivership shortly before the Civil War). Robinson’s father, David A. Robinson, was a physician in the Danville, Virginia area, this being where Robinson was born in 1890. David Robinson would die young, and his widow, Annie Day Robinson, would remarry James E. Shepard, the founder and president of what is now North Carolina Central University (the first public liberal arts institution for blacks in the United States). Robinson taught mathematics at this institution after receiving a B.A. degree in 1913 from Atlanta University.

*The technique by which the school shall accomplish [the ideals of democracy] is still a matter of controversy and experimentation, and American educators are still trying to decide upon the real meanings of democratic social justice.*

—William A. Robinson (1936, p. 400)

He continued as a secondary school math teacher in Louisville and Washington, DC until 1921 while also completing requirements for a B.S. degree at Teachers College.

In 1921, Robinson became supervisor of black secondary schools for the state of North Carolina while engaging in study for an M.A. degree at Teachers College. (His 1924 master's thesis has yet to be found during recent archival searches.) During his seven-year tenure as a high school supervisor, the Garland Fund Studies stated "the most astonishing development in North Carolina is that of Negro High Schools. Indeed, Basil Mathews, the English author, declares it to be 'the most remarkable High School development of recent years in the United States of America'" (Crisis, 1927, p. 117). This success was specifically attributed to Robinson. In 1928, he would shift his interests to secondary school administration—becoming principal of the black high school in Knoxville and then, in 1931, accepting the principalship of Atlanta University Laboratory High School until assuming the full-time directorship of the Secondary School Study in the summer of 1940.

His work at the Atlanta Lab High School was not without its struggles. In correspondence to Jackson Davis, a GEB southern field agent, he expressed his frustrations working with the secondary school faculty: "It has not been easy to take a staff with no training or background in the new point of view and make them enthusiastic about the extra work

attendant upon overcoming the inertia of the traditional. There are no schools about us to encourage us by their efforts, and, on the contrary, we are constantly conscious of the impact of the traditional secondary education from the schools about us and from the people in the colleges whose personal education has followed the traditional lines" (Robinson, 1938b). Serious concerns were also felt by others as Davis would write, months before, to the central GEB staff requesting that they rescind Robinson's invitation to participate in the 1938 Eight-Year Study workshop at Sarah Lawrence College since Atlanta University faculty felt that he would not best represent the university (Davis, J., 1938). Differences—personal and professional—would inevitably exist between Robinson and Atlanta University faculty and administrators as he called for, if not demanded, new ways of preparing educators and new methods to instill progressive practices for teachers and students.

Much controversy existed between public secondary school educators (whom Robinson represented and championed) and college faculty; in many respects, the public black high school was an anathema to colleges, representing the loss of control of the secondary school curriculum. As Robinson noted in a 1932 article, "The Negro public high school of the South is such a recent development that

it is still looked upon with more or less suspicion by the colleges and the movement to discontinue the high school from the college has made, of necessity, very slow progress. The day is hardly yet past when the Negro college must create a college student body by educating it from infancy, guarding it jealously from marauders at every advancing stage of development until the survivors land in the freshman class" (Robinson, 1932, p. 55). The Secondary School Study prized open experimentation and, in keeping with the mission of the Eight-Year Study, attended to the needs of *all* youth and not just those students who were college-bound. The tensions of autonomy for curricular and instructional exploration permeated the Secondary School Study. Robinson's quest for new teaching practices would have elicited reluctance from some black high school teachers, but his call for new teacher training methods would have provoked outright rage from many college teacher educators. Throughout his directorship of the Study, he would note that the area of teacher education was lagging behind the experimentation at the secondary school level (Robinson, 1944c). Robinson's criticism of teacher preparation programs at the postsecondary level was expressed when, in writing to GEB staff, he mentioned that "the colleges are little tyrannies, some more benevolent than others, and they are so abstract in their teaching that few teachers could tell anyone what their goals, other than academics, are" (Robinson, 1946). While strained relationships between "school people and professors" have existed at most times during the twentieth century, the black college's traditional role of maintaining an autonomous, high school program certainly established another source of ideological conflict between secondary and postsecondary educators.

Robinson was content to work at the secondary school level and did not accept the perceived lower caste of a "high school man." While many of the Eight-Year Study administrators expected to obtain college appointments and, while Secondary School Study leaders—W. H. Brown, L. F. Palmer, W. H. Jackson, W. H. Dennis, C. M. Colson, and others—did receive such professorships and presidencies, Robinson chose to remain in the high school and continue his work in secondary school leadership. During the final stage of the Secondary School Study, he somewhat unexpectedly accepted, in 1945, the principalship of Carver High School in Phoenix where, as he stated, "race relations are fluid, we can get adequate financial support. . . . There is a real job to be done and I think I shall enjoy doing it" (Robinson, 1945). Robinson, who was described as calm, distinguished, and straightforward in his leadership style, brought with him the many insights for school experimentation and development that were discussed among the Study's member schools—cooperation and open discourse would define his principalship. He would serve as the beloved principal of Carver High School until the 1954 desegregation of the Phoenix schools where he then became a district administrator and counsel to the superintendent, assisting with desegregating the system (Corbin, 2010; Flores, 2010; Goode, 2010; Grigsby, 2010). Robinson remained in Phoenix until his death in 1972.

*The greatest offense . . . is in the denial to Negroes of thoroughgoing leadership in Negro public education in the South. . . . I am convinced that provisions should be made for giving the fullest opportunity to Negroes to share both in the task of administering and supervising the system and informing the policies that shall influence and control the system. Such officials should not be mere political puppets; they should be persons with the courage of their convictions and should be chosen for their intelligence and fitness.*

—William A. Robinson (1936, pp. 398–399)

In 1937, William A. Robinson would stand before the membership of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes, at what was reported as the best attended session at the conference, and state that he hoped “black secondary schools in America will make careful and serious study of the progressive movement in education and . . . the careful and thoughtful formulation of an educational philosophy for experimentation with and evaluation of progressive school practices” (Robinson 1944a, p. 146; Robinson, 1937b, p. 65). He represented an educator constantly engaged in the re-examination of procedures and practices rather than adhering to established methods or progressive dogma. Further, he embraced cooperation and experimentation as he sought for more collaboration with the staff of the Southern Study, calling for “interracial understanding and comity.” In fact, Robinson suggested that the publication of the final reports should describe both the Southern Study of white schools and the Secondary School Study of black schools, as “one story of the region . . . or separate parts of the same volume” (Robinson, 1942). Such an undertaking would never have been adopted as indicated from private GEB correspondence; however, Robinson’s constant call for interracial cooperation throughout his years as director of the Study indicates a

sincere willingness to bring together and desegregate the educational research of the South as well as the schools and teaching faculty.

As Robinson completed his work for the General Education Board, he sent to a staff member a fitting summary-tribute of his participation in the Secondary School Study: “The General Education Board has done more to remake American education than any other influence. Many of its investments have fallen upon other than productive soil. That is to be expected. But there is a good crop of productive efforts. I must say that the Board has not indoctrinated, a phenomenon I shall never understand knowing the source of its funds. I know I would have been sensitive to any such effort and would have repelled strongly against it personally. If any influence indoctrinated in the Study, it was my own influence and that, I am pleased to say, was not to my own ideas but the best I could find and use the nation over. Wherever I found people with ideas that I considered good, I sought them and brought them in contact with our schools. The Board made that possible. I hope I did a good job of it. At any rate, I constantly searched myself for motives. I laid my motives out for others to see and sought the best evaluation of these I could find” (Robinson, 1946).

## Participants in the Museum of Education's Secondary School Study Project



**Top, left to right:**  
William M. Corbin; Raymond J. Flores; Calvin C. Goode

**Right:**  
J. Eugene Grigsby;  
William A. Robinson Jr.

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This perhaps best summarizes the spirit of his engagement and sense of experimentation—active and fully involved; reflective and transparent of his motives; and constantly vigilant against dogma and indoctrination. While Robinson's selection to serve as director of the Secondary School Study was fraught with tension, somehow the General Education Board staff was able to identify a person with the courage of his convictions who refused to serve as a mere political puppet. They could have done no better.

## Epilogue: Ascertaining the Impact of the Secondary School Study

From a letter to William A. Robinson, director of the Secondary School Study:

*Even though the activities of our study are beginning to taper off, the kind of teacher personalities that you have been instrumental in helping . . . to develop . . . will always stand out as a living monument to you and Mr. Brown in the Southern region. Then when you two will have passed off the stage of action, there will still live in the hearts and the actions of people whom you have touched as you have touched me, a burning passion for the type of educational philosophy which you have always advocated.*

—F. M. Richardson, principal of Natchitoches Parish Training School (1943)

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDY represented a cooperative as well as implementative study defined by teachers on their own terms and in accord with their situated, idiosyncratic problems and interests. These types of 1930s and 1940s national research projects “upheld no specific models to be implemented and evaluated, and established no set of predefined outcomes. Rather, they embraced a robust and determined faith in experimentation as an ‘exploratory process’ to include gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data for the sole purpose of improving educational practice. [They] sought not to ‘prove’ hypotheses with today’s conventions of validity and reliability but, instead, to implement and test the best thinking of seasoned educators” (Kridel and Bullough, 2007, p. 37). For this (and other) reasons, “success” is difficult to detect when attempting to examine historically the Secondary School Study. Further, simple explanations of impact, all too common in the contemporary literature, serve little purpose and only obscure the subtle work of these cooperative projects.

In recent years, the importance of 1930s and 1940s progressive educators has been dismissed since, clearly, they were unable to eliminate the use of Carnegie units in secondary education or to replace traditional methods. Today’s standard narrative maintains that World War II and the Cold War prevented the Eight-Year Study from exerting influence on American education when, in fact, the perceived acceptance of the Harvard Redbook and, later, the Conant Report by secondary school principals and teachers throughout the country also represents a logical explanation for the “grammar of schooling” and lack of curricular change at the secondary level. Yet, at a 1964 conference, progressives gathered to reconsider the Eight-Year Study in relation to then-current educational practices. Participants did not view the project as a failed effort of educational reform; they acknowledged the program’s many influences that had been diffused throughout American education—in curriculum and instruction, evaluation, professional development, and educational leadership. Success was not conceived exclusively

as changing entrenched national policy or by the number of citations that appeared in the professional literature; rather, the Eight-Year Study's importance was apparent when one began examining the project in relation to fundamental concepts of human and social capital and the leadership roles and activities of its participants in the subsequent years and decades.

Similarly, any discernible influence of the Secondary School Study could easily be dismissed in view of its inability to change the deplorable conditions of segregation as well as the inequity of school funding. And, certainly, no instructional models were disseminated and no African American curriculum legacy remains. Further, no formal set of conclusions or results arose from the Study. Throughout the community of involved Southern black educators, however, there was "a burning passion" for experimentation, as described by F. M. Richardson. This led to a network of individuals, with common ideology and sensibilities, providing services and resources for their school settings and for others. In fact, ACSSN conference speaker Hilda Taba had earlier called for an educational social network, a "permanent central clearing house, and a research institute with a staff solely devoted to research in terms of the needs of progressive schools, to advising, to consolidation of research and experimentation, to the dissemination of useful materials, and—most important—to the breaking of new paths in the approach to, and the methods of solutions to, new problems" (Taba, 1934, p. 168). In order for implementative and cooperative studies to function and flourish, a central service agency needed to be established, and no network for black high schools existed before the establishment of the Secondary School Study. In the partial evaluation of the



William Harrison Brown (1907–1968), director of the Secondary School Study during its concluding years. Photo courtesy of North Carolina Central University Archives

Study presented at the 1945 ACSSN meeting, central staff would feature their service agency role as "the good will and confidence of hundreds of schools and individuals in the region who have shared, to some extent, the resources of the Study" (Brown, W., 1945a, p. 51). Such a network was established with hundreds of educators involved at various levels of participation throughout the Southeast, and Brown and Robinson called for the further funding of a coordinating agency of black schools in their final report (Brown and Robinson, 1946, p. 73).

**In 1946, the chair of the Secondary School Study Control Committee, L. F. Palmer, stated that the “true story of [the Study’s] influence, not only upon the secondary schools but upon all levels of Negro education, will probably never be told” and proceeds to state the accomplishments of the Secondary School Study:**

- “1. It discovered among Negro high schools a great desire to improve their programs [in addition to the eternal quest for greater and more equitable funding].
2. It stimulated this desire through its workshops, consultative service, its publications and library loans.
3. Through its close connection with the Co-operative Negro College Study, and by inviting college teachers to participate in its workshops, and to serve as visiting consultants to the high schools, it brought the Negro colleges and secondary schools into a closer relationship than had ever before been known.
4. Since most Negro high schools are housed with and are really a part of elementary schools, the teachers in the grades have been stimulated along with the high school instructors wherever the Study’s influence has touched these union schools.
5. Through close co-operation with state agents in the Southern States it has brought the needs of Negro schools into clearer focus before the state departments of education.
6. By means of conferences, workshops and scholarship aid, the Study has developed hundreds of resource persons whose services can be utilized to carry on the work which the Study has begun” (Brown and Robinson, 1946, p. 4).

This leads to a different understanding of the conception of educational influence, one that Robert Bullough and I adopted when researching the Eight-Year Study. Rather than attempting to document “success” or “impact,” we chose to portray the *significance* of the Eight-Year Study as an educational experiment. We maintained that “no specific educational changes endure forever. Knowing this, the leaders of the Eight-Year Study focused on people rather than on programmatic permanence, recognizing that the most direct and powerful way to improve schools is through educating teachers and then working to create organizational systems that support and sustain their continued development” (Kridel and Bullough, 2007, p. 8). Directors William A. Robinson and William H. Brown, both guided by Eight-Year Study progressives, took this same position as did GEB staff—Flora Rhind acknowledged that cooperative studies, “though intangible and hard to measure, are slowly raising the quality of our educational effort.” She noted that there is no clear way to assess the effectiveness of this type of project but described outcomes as “less tangible and perhaps even more significant. . . . leading to the disappearance of faculty and administrative complacency, [with a] new appreciation of working together” (Rhind, ca. 1945, p. 2).

Similarly, Robinson would describe an outcome of the Secondary School Study as “the experience of helping others seemed to be in itself a stimulus and a means to growth. By attempting to share their experiences with others, teachers seemed to evaluate their own efforts more carefully and more critically and to develop more clarity in their own thinking” (Robinson, 1944a, p. 151). Such comments make this project an easy target for critics. A turn to significance rather than influence may be dismissed by contemporary educators who believe that success is proven through test scores; however, Robinson, aware of the inherent research design complications from the differentiated samples of high school students in the Eight-Year Study, knew better. John Goodlad reminds us, with the Eight-Year Study as an example, that while such research “fits today’s dominant ideology of what is worth measuring in judging the quality of our schools. . . . this orientation as the conceptual core is to both distort and minimize the intent, conduct, and comprehensiveness of this [the Eight-Year Study] incredibly complex, bold, and innovative enterprise” (Goodlad, 2007, pp. ix-x). The same could be said of this and other high school implementative-cooperative studies: the Southern Study, the Michigan Study, and the California Study.

What insights do emerge from the Secondary School Study, a project based upon cooperation and experimentation? We see a generation of African American educators working together who, in different ways, recognized society’s hypocrisy toward blacks and displayed a willingness

*The effort to make schools places where Negro youth grow into effective maturity has just begun. There is a hopefully large (or small) number of workers in the region who have begun to get both the philosophies and the skills that will produce a useful type of education. I pray that they will not give up the struggle. The Study has, I feel, pushed up the hands of the clock, but the hour is still late.*

—William A. Robinson (1946)

to engage in varying forms of struggle—subtle and surreptitious as well as overt—for civil rights and social justice; acknowledged the significance of community and sought ways to strengthen relations among students, teachers, parents, and the general public; believed in the importance of integrated core curriculum, teacher-pupil planning, school philosophy, and interests and needs of students; and explored curricular and instructional activities that further developed basic tenets of progressive education in African American educational settings.

In keeping with the principles of implementative research and cooperative study, influence and significance emerged in nuanced ways as these participants continued their professional careers. Rhind states, “A cooperative study always presents a challenge to its participants. It says in effect, ‘It is up to you to find ways of making your role in education more effective.’ Those who strive to meet that challenge are bound to be better for the striving” (Rhind, ca. 1945, p. 2). Perhaps the greatest insight from the Museum of Education’s research study is the recognition that Secondary School Study educators saw the improvement of schooling from a truly qualitative perspective and were willing to determine success from the strength of their experiences and activities without acquiring questionable quantitative data. They recognized the complexities of the classroom, believed in “cooperation” and discourse and

in their own abilities for making education more effective, and viewed their professional judgments and expertise as the best indicators of ascertaining the success of their schools and their students.

One must always wonder if the Eight-Year Study’s significance for American education would have been greater if the release of the first volume of the Aikin Commission’s final report had not occurred within weeks of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Similarly, with the building of a black, progressive education service agency–social network by the Secondary School Study during the 1940s, one must wonder if the effect of the *Brown* decision served to undermine the efforts for school experimentation and curricular and instructional development in these segregated settings. Certainly in the American Southeast, school desegregation did not transpire with all deliberate speed and many years passed before the structure of the black school system was dismantled. I do hope this research project will entice educators to examine further this “Brown/post-Jim Crow” period and entice scholars to consider the curricular programs of those black teachers who, during the 1950s and 1960s, sought to work within a racist, inequitable system on the verge of and in anticipation of cultural transformation.

Among the many reactions to *Brown* were punitive measures taken by school boards

to undermine and punish outstanding black schools—dismissing well-qualified black teachers, demoting black administrators, reassigning well-prepared black teachers to traditionally white schools, relocating ill-prepared white teachers to traditionally black schools, adopting the names and mascots of white schools, and eliminating emblems of black schools. Such actions of spiteful desegregation of the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s served to undermine the important 1940s and 1950s community building of Secondary School Study member schools. While interviewees rejoiced when discussing the Brown decision, conversations continued to focus on the quest for fairness and equity, recognizing that desegregated schools, with the lingering effects of discrimination and prejudice, were not the same as integrated schools. Conversations were honest as many interviewees attempted to reconcile their support for the abolition of the lie of “separate but equal” with the loss of strong black school communities and with forms of civil rights protest for which they were unaccustomed.

From the sweep of history, we know that these Secondary School Study teachers did not end the Jim Crow era. Yet, their tough kindness, their love for their students, their dedication to their profession, and their fierceness-merged-with-compassion changed many lives of young people whom I would later meet and, most certainly, changed many more lives of African Americans who would enter the struggle for civil rights. By attending to interests and needs, these teachers would display boldness and kindness as they confronted white supremacy while simultaneously building communities of hope and strength for their students and for themselves.

#### I ENCOURAGE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Study teachers and alumni to prepare their own accounts of education at these remarkable institutions and, similarly, I hope that educational scholars may come upon new ways of discussing social agency and action during this long civil rights era that recognizes and honors the courage of these classroom teachers and students, those who walked a narrow line between public and private social protest and insubordination. During my research, I spoke with individuals whose careers would have ended if school administrators were aware of their activities, and I found myself in discussion with students whose period descriptions of experiences brought forth feelings of outrage and indignation, years after such events occurred. Many, if not most, interviews included descriptions of denigration, often as accepted institutional policy within cultural settings. It is my hope that further historical research detects and designates such acts of microdefiance from this era for a more sophisticated conception of pedagogical disobedience. I invite Museum patrons to visit each school’s web exhibition and to learn more of the insights and struggles of Secondary School Study teachers and students.

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## ABBREVIATIONS:

ACSSN:

Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes

GEB:

General Education Board Collection Record Group 632.1; Rockefeller Archive Center, Pocantico Hills, NY

Moewe:

Museum of Education Web exhibitions: [www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second\\_study.html](http://www.ed.sc.edu/museum/second_study.html) and [www.museumofeducation.info/sss](http://www.museumofeducation.info/sss).

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**Opposite, left to right:**

**Top row**

Fannie Phelps Adams, site coordinator for Booker T. Washington High School research, Columbia, South Carolina

Alice D. Epperson, site coordinator for Pearl High School oral history interviews, Nashville, Tennessee

Brenda Dalton James, site coordinator for Dudley High School oral history interviews, Greensboro, North Carolina

Alma Loftin Johnson, site coordinator for Natchitoches Parish Training School oral history interviews, Natchitoches, Louisiana

**Second row**

Sedonia C. Johnson, site coordinator for Southern University A&M College Demonstration School oral history interviews, Scotlandville, Louisiana

Genevieve Lancaster, site coordinator for Booker T. Washington High School oral history interviews, Rocky Mount, North Carolina

James Mallard, site coordinator for Terrell High School oral history interviews, Fort Worth, Texas

Cleveland Mayo, site coordinator for Huntington High School oral history interviews, Newport News, Virginia

**Third row:**

Thelma Brown Rush, site coordinator for Magnolia Avenue High School oral history interviews, Vicksburg, Mississippi

W. Mack Rush, site coordinator for Lincoln High School oral history interviews, Tallahassee, Florida

Mary Jo Smiley, site coordinator for Laboratory High School oral history interviews, Montgomery, Alabama

**Fourth row:**

N. Carolyn Thompson, site coordinator for Staley High School oral history interviews, Americus, Georgia

Beverly Washington, site coordinator for Terrell High School oral history interviews, Fort Worth, Texas

Dale Williams, site coordinator for Moultrie High School for Negro Youth oral history interviews, Moultrie, Georgia

## Museum of Education Site Coordinators

With special thanks to those individuals who assisted with the coordination of the research visits for the web exhibitions.



**Craig Kridel** is Curator of the Museum of Education and the E. S. Gambrell Professor of Educational Studies at the University of South Carolina.



The author, in front of the J. A. De Laine wall-portrait at the Museum of Education, University of South Carolina, 2013.

Museum of Education  
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