

**“VILLAGE PERSPECTIVES”-A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING
THE PERSPECTIVES CONCERNING THE OKLAHOMA
CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEIGHBORHOOD
SCHOOLS PLAN/STUDENT
REASSIGNMENT PLAN**

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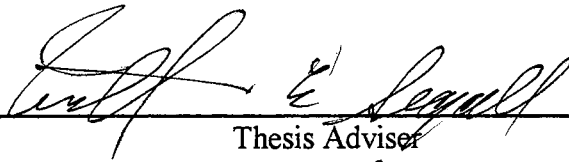
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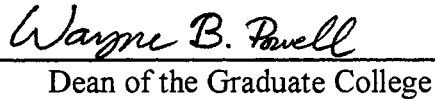


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FORWARD

A Personal Interview with A. L. Dowell

Dr. A. L. Dowell was interviewed in his optometrist office on Monday, January 19, 1999.

I grew up in West Virginia. Actually, I was born in Ensley, Alabama, outside of Birmingham. Ensley is a suburb city, like Midwest City is to Oklahoma City. The area where I am from is very poor. You have heard people talk about the Appalachian region, this area is that poor. However, I was always able to find work; someone would need a window washed or a floor scrubbed, and I was proud that I found it. That was back in the depression days and I had lots of different jobs. I was always somehow lucky enough to come up on somebody who needed someone to do this or a man to do that. I went to Western State College in Charleston, West Virginia. That is where I met my wife, at Western State College. Afterwards, I went into the army for fifty-three months. Finally, I went to the School of Optometry in Chicago. I lived in Chicago for about three and a half years and I worked at the post office there when I got married. I worked hard. But I got it honestly, my daddy was energetic that way. He got jobs tunneling the coal out of the coal mines. It was a dangerous job.

I remember the last time I saw my father, just as good as if it was yesterday morning. My daddy said the blessing and we had eaten breakfast and I thought everything was alright. My mother's name was Laura, he said "Laura," and he began to get up from the table, "Now I am going to leave and go and try to find a job somewhere.

Somewhere there is a job for me. You and the children stay here. And just as soon as I get a job, I will send you some money. I do not know where I am going." He got up, they had a crocker sack out of cloth, and he said, "I am taking this." He also had a cane, this cane was made of just a stick. We doubt whether he rode the freight cars. There used to be, what they called the Scottsburrough boys, about six or seven Black boys, riding on a train with White girls. Some White fellow tried to get with these girls for different illicit reasons and the girls told the guy who is like a sheriff on the train. The Colored boys somehow got the blame although they were not guilty. So after they had a big court case,

and said that these Colored boys did not bother them at all, and they started traveling from city to city telling this story. As a result, the parents would say don't ride the freight train because you will run into some bad girls and you'll get killed. They were killing Negroes right and left back then. And as a result, my mother said to my father, "I don't want you riding on a freight train because they might hurt you." Somehow my father got to Harrisburg from way down in West Virginia.

He was working in a little coal mine and as a result they told us a story that my daddy was killed in a coal mine. At that time if you were killed in a coal mine, the coal mining company wouldn't even buy you a plant and wouldn't give your family a quarter for your death...you were just dead. Since then, they have changed their policies thanks to the coal mining union. Now they have to give you a certain amount of money to take care of the funeral, and they provide other benefits. But since my daddy didn't have this option when he was killed, he had eighty-seven dollars and some cents on him when he was killed and that's all we received. That was in 1928. Sadly, they did not tell us until a week later when the coal mining superintendent of the coal mine came to the house. It was a cloudy evening. I can remember distinctly that my mother predicted rain for that day. "You all come on in," she said, it was dusk dark. "Stop playing ball in front of the house and let's go to bed" she said. We went in and around nine o'clock that night we heard a knock at the door. When we went to the door, a man said that he wanted to see my mother. My mother came and the coal mining superintendent at the door said, "I'll tell you, I have come to tell you that your husband was killed in the coal mine this past Friday." Well my mother cried, it hurt me so much, this was something that just fixates to my mind. I could not get this out of my memory...seeing my mother crying. My mother said, "I don't believe my husband was killed in the coal mines." She knew that something was wrong and so they talked about going down there to get his body. She said, "I'm afraid if we go down to get his body they might do something to us." She told some of the neighbors about it and they volunteered to go down and get my dad's body. So they went down to this strange community and asked, "Do you know where some Colored man got killed down here in this coal mine?" Some Mexicans said, "No, we do not know about the Colored man being killed in the coal mine. But, one got killed the other day. We saw him one Sunday morning, he was sitting up on the steps of the store." They further explained that this company store was the only store there that took care of people when they didn't have money. They had a certain type of credit that was good in that store. They further explained "that he was sitting on the porch reading his bible, and this car, really two cars drove up. My father walked over to the cars with the bible in his hand. Then they noticed there was fighting and the men from the car jumped in the car and left. They did see West Virginia license plates on both cars. They finally noticed that the Colored man was lying on the

ground with the bible open and he had been killed. They had obviously beaten him to death." My mother's dreaded prediction had been confirmed.

I moved to Oklahoma City around 1945. I first came out here from Tuskegee to visit my girlfriend, who later became my wife. My children went to school here around 1961 or 1962. They had gone to segregated Edwards Elementary. My oldest son lives in Los Angeles now. I have three children now, but my oldest son, Bobby, was the reason for the court case. We thought that since he talked about becoming a doctor like mommy and daddy, his mommy/my wife is a dentist. We thought that he was going to be a physician. We had asked him "Well, do you want to be a dentist, optomologist, or a medical doctor?" He talked in terms of becoming a doctor. We should have discussed this long before. I said if he is going to study medicine, he must have Latin. At that time Latin was required. I went to the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) Board of Education. I wanted to get my son in one of the White schools right after the 1954 Supreme Court Brown decision. I went down to the OKCPS Board of Education to request a transfer, and I was trying to see a man named Burr. Burr was in charge of issuing transfers. They kept telling me that he wasn't in. So, I was just gullible enough that I would have believed them if they had said, "I'm sorry but all transfers have been given out and we don't have any room and we don't do this and that." If they had told me a nice little lie, I would not have bothered them anymore. So I said, "Let me see Dr. Parker, the Superintendent of Schools." I saw him and he was a nasty so and so. And very indignant. He said, "No I'm not going to let him go to school here because I would just be aiding integration. We've got enough Whites here in this thing. We are not going to aid integration. He said, we have a stipulation where we'll only take twenty five, we'll let twenty-five Colored folks go to a White school and that's the last of the quota." And I asked, "Regardless of the urgency, you'll just let the twenty-five in, you have a stipulation that only 25 can attend?" He said, "Yes." Only twenty-five Colored students were allowed to go to Northeast High which was the school that offered Latin. I said to myself that I'm sitting up here listening to that rascal tell me all this and I spent fifty-three months in the army to protect him. I said, "Well then, I don't go along with that." He began digging in deeper and made me feel my daddy coming up in me. He added, "We had a Black woman over here - we told her she couldn't go and that would have been twenty-six and if I let you in, that would be twenty-seven and that's over the quota." I replied, "They did not have a quota when I was in the army, and I had to spend that time regardless. And you mean to say when I come home after risking my life, my son cannot go because of some quota." "No, no, we're not going to do it," he responded. So I left and made an appointment to see Mr. Burr, so he could look at my request. Mr Burr told me, "You ought to be like another doctor in town. When we told him that he couldn't go he listened to us

like somebody intelligent. But no, you just keep raising cane, you are just persistent." I said, "You are not going to do it." He said, "No, I'm not going to do it." And I think he said h-ll and d--n in two or three places. And I said "Let me tell you one thing, when I was in school and a boy was trying to pick up another boy's girlfriend and they were going to fight about it, we said we are going to meet down in the gym and we're going to tango." I added, "you just grabbed a hold of a tiger and we are going to tango, you and me. I tried to talk to you decent and polite like and you just don't have sense enough to reason this out." So I told John Green, an attorney, about all the conversations.

At that time, Mr. Green was the assistant United States District Attorney for Southwestern, Oklahoma. Green responded, "Don't you know that man wouldn't tell you that. And he said I'm not trying to say you're lying but you sure misunderstood him and you did not hear it right." I replied, "John, I'm telling you what I heard and what took place and I don't like it. That's why I talked to my wife and we decided that I would come to you and see what you had to say. Or whether we should ask you to take our case and see if they committed any errors whereby we would have something. I don't like this, I'm a grown man and I have gone through battles to save everybody in America. They have no business talking to me like that and being nasty. There was no need for it." He said, "I know Jack Parker, he would not say something like that." I said, "Fine I will make you a deal. I'll pay you for every minute that you spend with me and what I will do is I'll go to him and ask the questions in a way to come back to the point, for example: Did you tell me.....? Did I understand you right the other day, Dr. Parker, when you said you were not going to let my son in because that would be aiding integration because he is Black, and he will respond, yes. Then, Mr. Green, you will be surprised." So I went down all these points that John did not think that I had gotten correct and when Green and I left out of Parker's office Green said, "Mr. Dowell I apologize." He said, "I just couldn't believe it. I know that you are not a lying man, but yet and still I can't believe that you heard it right. But you came down the line and asked the questions and he answered yes. I just cannot believe it." He then added, "Now if you don't do something about this, you are not the man I thought you were. Parker was insulting, he was wrong, he lied, and he violated the law of the land. You have to do something. When do you want to get started." I said, "I'm ready to get started right now. But I don't ever do anything without talking to my wife. And my daddy always told me, "Before you ever make a big move in life or make any kind of deals, sleep on it." Then I said, "You give me a week unless I tell you differently." My wife and I want to sleep on this. We prayed about this to see if the Lord said we should do it or should not do it. And I thought to myself maybe I am just worked up now but, as soon as I think about it and relax, maybe I'll drop the whole thing.

What was in the background that kept the fire burning inside me was that I personally had to stay out of school until I was almost nine. My father worked very hard to find a school for us to go to in the hills of West Virginia. I thought if he could do that for me, than I owed this to my son. I thought I can't do less than that. After that my wife and I prayed very hard about it for about a week or two. We got up the one morning and she said how do you feel? I said I feel that things are right for us to go to court, everything is a go. And I said how do you feel. She said that is how she felt too. That's what I would see my father do, and I often heard my daddy pray. I thought this was a divine thing to be associated with him. It was like a calling. So I just decided that we would go to court and I told John Green that we had no objections. We were ready to go full speed. And afterwards, he brought something in, I did not know anything about it. He argued that we wanted all the Black children to have the same freedom that they may win in the court case. And then my wife is the one who said we would go to court if the case included the teachers, because the Blacks were often discouraged from going into various areas where there were nothing but White students. We were assured that they would have some Black teachers in the classroom. And they included that in the suit. Soon then we got the court case started.

We finally won the right for Blacks to go to White schools. We were in court about thirty-three years. We were in the court about ten years when the trials first started. They finally began some degree of integration then when they got the Finger Plan. The Finger Plan had to do with the busing and there are some intimate details that I can't reveal because I gave my word that I wouldn't reveal them. But I knew the Finger Plan was coming. I was for anything that would integrate.

The sad part is that when we finally won our case and my son could go to Northeast, he had already graduated from high school and had moved away from Oklahoma and earned two master degrees at Cornell University. Fortunately, he worked for a television station for a while and later opened his own place of business working in Los Angeles.

After the case, I sent word back to my community by my lawyer, that the Whites did not want to bus their children. The district said they were going to bus five hundred Black students across town. Well Negroes got mad at me because they had to get their children up to get across town. I recommended a compromise. I suggested that instead of sending five hundred across town, we send two hundred fifty and let them bus/send two hundred fifty. But, they did not like that either. Many Negroes got angry with me because they had to bus their children across town. Many said to me, "You are destroying a good relationship between the good Whites and the Colored." My response to them was what did they think about all these Blacks going without. Finally, Judge Bohannon passed an order that the district had to comply with the Finger Plan.

Well the case was tested again during the early 1990's. And we had a certain amount of Negroes writing in, sending letters against it, that was one of the sad things about it. You had some teachers that were not in my corner as well. Now there were some teachers that were very much in my corner. And they gave me information. They would come by the house and park their cars down the street. They would say, "This is what you ought to do...." and they would offer a strategy. Honestly, I can't get on the teachers for not supporting the Finger Plan. Many of them were just Uncle Tom's trying to save their jobs, as much as possible, providing they could trust that I wouldn't tell. And still, I have not told lots of things they told me because they were Black just like me.

Some of the Black's had attitudes, they did not want to send their children across town and I said "You have got to pay some type of price until we can get it for the same price, education, the same price that they get for it." There were some Negroes and some NAACP representatives that were for the Finger Plan.

Well, the plan ultimately didn't work because the Negroes didn't want to send their children across town and the White folks didn't want to send theirs across town either. And when I went to the school board meeting to have my say about the OKCPS NSP/SRP, they didn't pay me any attention. Later, Negroes acted like I was a poisonous, poisonous, snake. They did not want to be seen in my presence. They said, "You will get us into trouble and we will be treated like dirt on a stick, they can really treat you like dirt on a stick." Black Preachers said the same thing. That's what really threw another dimension into the picture...when you have Blacks holding your feet while the White man is kicking your behind. (Excuse that language, but, that's the way I feel.) And the Blacks played along with the Whites and buddied up with them.

Listen to me, I'm for integration so long as they don't have these barriers up and we can get the same things that they get. I have recently gotten some reports that the Blacks in the Black part of town are not getting the same things that the White schools are getting. I'm getting older and I just can't be running around seeing after these things to help those people who don't even speak to me. I no longer have the energy. As a result, our schools are not equal. We don't have the same facilities, we don't have the same materials...no, not by any means. And the Whites get certain amenities, certain academic paraphernalia, equipment and courses that we don't get in these Black schools. Black kids today are not receiving a quality education. Some Black students are having to tolerate a racist classroom with a prejudice teacher teaching them. Oh, I'm sorry, time is up, I have to get back to work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The fight against segregated public schools and the push for integration in America has been a continual uphill battle. Historically, *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) enacted “separate but equal” educational practices and facilities. Later, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) overturned “separate but equal” Jim Crow laws and institutionalized school desegregation and busing. The overall focus of *Brown v. Board of Education* according to Crisis Magazine (1993) was to eliminate the separate but equal doctrine while working to create an integrated society by enrolling African American students in EuroAmerican schools.

National

Today, public school districts across the nation are reexamining the issue of racial integration and school busing. Eddings (1997) reports that court-ordered school busing has been nationally debated since 1971 when it first began. According to Whitman’s & Friedman’s (1992) poll in U.S. News & World Report, the majority of Americans in 1992 still opposed busing, while, 40 percent of the public then favored busing. The number of EuroAmerican supporters increased from just 14 percent in 1972 to 32 percent in 1991.

Meanwhile, African American supporters increased from 55 percent in 1972 to 63 percent in 1991 (p. 65). Eddings (1997) explains that until recently, EuroAmerican opponents have argued that busing has disrupted their neighborhoods, while proponents have argued that it was the only solution.

Today the debate continues with a slightly different twist: African American leaders frustrated with the slow pace of progress in their schools, are now challenging the issue of busing (Eddings, 1997). Urban school districts in DeKalb County, Georgia (Taylor, 1992); Kansas City, Missouri (Williams, 1995); Denver, Colorado; Buffalo, New York; Dallas, Texas; Savannah, Georgia; and Wilmington, Delaware (Bouchard, 1996) have all won court cases which lifted desegregation orders. Each of these districts filed petitions for “unitary” status—the legal term for the condition that a district must achieve to end court oversight (Bouchard, 1996).

Forty-four years later, after *Brown v. Board of Education* and despite desegregation efforts, inner city schools are resegregating dramatically (Orfield, 1993). Wilce (1994) reports that today’s public schools are more segregated than at any time since 1968, with two out of three African American students attending schools with a student population that is half African American or Hispanic. Orfield’s Harvard study (1993) found that 66 percent of all African American students in America (6.9 million) attended predominantly minority schools during the 1991-92 school year. States with the highest segregation rate of African American students were Illinois, Michigan, New York and New Jersey—all with more than 50 percent of their African American student population attending segregated schools. Additionally, between 1970 and 1994, the average proportion of EuroAmerican students at a public school attended by African

American students dropped from 36.2 percent in 1980 to 33.9 percent in 1994 (Orfield, 1993). Thus, overcrowded and under funded urban schools are heavily populated with minority students. Meanwhile, suburban and private schools maintain significantly large EuroAmerican student populations. This shift in population frequently referred to as “White flight” has caused many urban school districts to abandon their busing plan and develop new plans to redistrict (Coughlin, 1991). Often these public school-redistricting plans move students back to schools located in their neighborhood. The problem is that most inner city neighborhoods remain racially and economically segregated, therefore, public neighborhood schools have become racially and economically segregated as well. Orfield (1993) concludes that African Americans in urban neighborhoods are becoming increasingly isolated and that African American students are far more likely than EuroAmericans to live in impoverished areas and attend impoverished schools. Orfield warns that segregation is even more important today because a good education is instrumental in obtaining a decent job and schools with large minority populations tend to be in poor areas with fewer resources. Another demographic trend promoting segregated communities is “voluntary resegregation” meaning self-segregation. Many upwardly mobile African Americans are choosing to live in African American middle class areas rather than EuroAmerican middle class communities (Fineman, 1996). Fineman adds that in Washington, Atlanta, New York, and Los Angeles, many moderately wealthy African Americans are flocking to suburbs they can call their own.

National African American community and organization leaders such as Tavis Smiley (a Black Entertainment Television host and a national radio spokesperson), Kenneth Jenkins (former head of the Yonkers, New York NAACP), and Ina Boon

(regional director of the NAACP) are publicly debating the benefits and limitations of public neighborhood schools. Numerous studies have been conducted concerning the benefits of desegregation in relation to academic achievement, economic status, and social interaction (Braddock, J.H. II., Crain, R.L., & McParland, J.M., 1984; Crain, R.L., Mahard, R.E., & Narot, R.E., 1982; Fetters, W.B., 1974). On the other hand, research by Gay (1990) and Sleeter (1990) highlighting the educational gap between students of color and EuroAmerican students is convincing as well. Both studies conclude that desegregation has never yielded equal educational outcomes for African American students. Nevertheless, the current neighborhood public schools debate is centered on personal perspectives rather than educational research.

Community leaders, school district representatives, and concerned citizens are vehemently debating the neighborhood schools issue (Coughlin, 1991). Increased parental involvement, ethnic and racial pride, and stronger communities are all envisioned hopes of proponents (Coughlin, 1991). Proponents argue that ethnic identity and a sense of community have both been lost in the quest for fairness, access, and integration (Fineman, 1996). Robert Robinson, president of the Bergen County, New Jersey NAACP summarizes another valid argument of proponents (Drake, 1996), "We want the highest-quality education for Black children, and integration of schools hasn't provided that. *Brown v. Board of Education* has been in effect for 41 years. What have we really gained?" Meanwhile, opponents currently argue that public neighborhood schools will perpetuate racial segregation and inequity. Ina Boone, regional director of the NAACP argues, "Until equality is achieved...we don't want to hear about an end to busing" (Crisis Magazine, 1993 p. 28). Research studies concerning these perspectives are scarce

(Coughlin, 1991). New educational issues and debates like public neighborhood schools often take time to investigate. This recent educational debate has significant social and political implications that need to be investigated.

Oklahoma City Public Schools

Oklahoma obtained statehood in 1907. From 1907 to 1977, Oklahoma City Public Schools maintained segregated schools (Legal Information Institute, 1998). First, this district relied on Jim Crow laws requiring dual school systems; afterwards, restrictive covenants and residential segregation perpetuated segregated schools in the Oklahoma City Public Schools District (Legal Information Institute, 1998). Desegregation litigation began in 1961 when African American students and their parents sued the Board of Education of Oklahoma City for an end to de jure segregation. On October 9, 1961, Dr. A. L. Dowell, an African American optometrist, filed a suit on behalf of his son Robert L. Dowell, challenging the constitutionality of the “minority to majority” transfer policy of the Oklahoma City Public Schools District (Thomas, 1990). It seemed Robert wanted to participate in Northeast’s science program and school officials vehemently denied him a transfer from Douglas High School to Northeast High School. They claimed that Northeast High School had met its quota of African American students for that year (Dowell, 1999).

According to Boulton (1980) and Thomas (1990), “the Court ordered seven major acts of relief: (1) Robert Dowell would be admitted to Northeast High School under the same conditions as other students; (2) the School Board was permanently restrained from using the Minority-to-Majority Transfer Plan as this was unconstitutional; (3) special

transfers from one school to another would not be based in whole or in part on race (4) the Board was to begin the integration of faculty and staff beginning in the 1963-64 school year; (5) the defendants were ordered to maintain complete records of all special transfers from school to school within the district, specifically the race of the student involved and the reason for the transfer; (6) the Board was ordered to file a plan for complete desegregation of schools within ninety days from July 11, 1963; and (7) the defendants were also ordered to file with the court all records pertinent to the still unresolved charge of gerrymandering of attendance zones within ninety days from the decision.” Judge Bohanon retained complete jurisdiction over the case to assure compliance with the District Court’s decision and to make further decrees as the need for them arose” (p. 200).

Finally nine years later, after the Board failed to develop a court-approved desegregation plan, the District Court ordered the lower courts to implement the “Finger Plan” in the court case *Dowell v. The Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools (1972)* (Thomas, 1990). In 1963, the District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma ruled that Oklahoma City had intentionally segregated both schools and housing historically, and that Oklahoma City Public Schools was operating a “dual” school system – segregated by race (Legal Information Institute, 1998). In 1965, the District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma found the Oklahoma City Public Schools neighborhood zoning efforts unsuccessful in desegregating its schools. Robert L. Dowell and African American students and their parents presented their desegregation case to the District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma in *Dowell v. Board of Education*

(1969). The Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit granted relief of the District's desegregation plan despite the objections of Dowell and others.

Eighteen years after the *Brown* decision, and after the Board's failure to develop a court-approved desegregation plan, the District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma ordered the Board to implement the "Finger Plan," Dr. John A. Finger's desegregation plan, in the case *Dowell v. The Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools* (1972) (Thomas, 1990). This plan paired and clustered district schools and began cross-town busing of large number of district students (Thomas, 1990).

The "Finger Plan" assigned kindergartners to their neighborhood schools unless their parents opted otherwise; students in grades 1-4 attended all EuroAmerican schools and bused African American children to EuroAmerican schools; fifth grade students were assigned to all African American schools and bused EuroAmerican students to African American schools. Additionally, the junior high grade structure was changed from grades 7-8-9 to a new middle school concept of 6-7-8 by establishing new attendance zones for each school according to the elementary school that the student attended (Thomas, 1990). Most attendance zones experienced little change except for the large number of African Americans being bused to the middle schools on the perimeter of the district. These attendance zones changes meant that no school had less than 15% or more than 30% African American enrollment (Thomas, 1990; Dowell, 1972, p. 1267). As a result, high schools were structured from a ten-twelve to a nine-twelve grade system. Students were then assigned to high schools based upon their elementary attendance zone. The elementary schools became the high school's "feeder schools" (Thomas, 1990). Elementary schools were classified as neighborhood elementary schools when they

enrolled their regular attendance zone with more than 10% and less than 35% African American students. A provision known as “stand alone schools,” schools unable to maintain more than 10% and less than 35% African American student populations without busing, was created (Thomas, 1990). After implementing the “Finger Plan” for twelve years, the Board claimed that additional busing burdens were placed on young African American children because of continued demographic changes and increased “stand alone” schools. Thomas (1990) writes, “as more than a dozen elementary schools qualified for a stand alone status which returned the fifth graders to their neighborhoods, the fifth-year centers primarily in the northeast quadrant, were subject to student population shifts which placed them in jeopardy of closure.”

Thomas (1990) adds, “By 1970 further evidence revealed support for the fact that the Black population was in the initial stages of spreading across the school district boundaries primarily because of the removal of restrictive housing ordinances, availability of less expensive housing, central downtown access to jobs and personal preference.” In 1980, significant student population changes occurred as well. According to *Dowell* (1987) between 1969-1986, the Oklahoma City Public Schools African American student population increased from 22.7% to 40% and Non-African American minorities increased from 4% to 13% while the EuroAmerican student population dropped from 73% to 47% (p. 1509).

Minutes from the Oklahoma City Public Schools Board report on December 17, 1984 indicate that an Equity Officer was hired to monitor all schools, and an Equity Committee was appointed to assist the Equity Officer (Thomas, 1990). The Equity Committee was directed to study ways to integrate students of racially identifiable schools

several times each year. The Equity Committee was initially comprised of thirty-one members, four individuals appointed by each Board member from each of their respective sub districts and three additional members added from district five (Thomas, 1990).

Thomas (1990) explains that equity was defined for the original members of the Equity Committee as they pursued their charge the fall semester of 1985.

Equity is defined as an educational system that provides equal educational opportunities for all children. Encompassed within this premise is the assurance of equal learning environments. Facilities, equipment, qualified personnel, and pupil-teacher ratios will be equal in the [OKCPS] System. The goal of equity in education can be measured by immediate evidence of appropriate classroom materials, appropriate classroom equipment, adequate and usable playground equipment, clean facilities, maintenance of facilities, and pupil teacher ratios.

The goal can also be measured through year-end achievement such as reduction of drop out rates, improved retention rates, proportionate representation in programs for all children, improved individual test scores, and improved standardized test scores which meet or exceed the district national norms (Thomas, 1990).

In 1977, the Board made a "Motion to Close the Case" and the District Court ruled that constitutional requirements had been achieved (Legal Information Institute, 1998). District Court Judge Luther Bohanon declared the school district unitary and closed the case (Thomas, 1990). In 1984, the Oklahoma City Public School Board claimed that demographic changes led to greater burdens on young African American children. They claimed that African American students were being bused further out from their inner-city neighborhoods to suburban EuroAmerican areas. In an effort to alleviate this burden and to increase parental involvement, the Board adopted the Student Reassignment Plan, which reassigned K-4 students to their neighborhood schools. Meanwhile, students in grades 5 -12 continued to be bused. Appendix A describes the

Student Reassignment Plan through a brief history of opinion of *Oklahoma City Board of Education v. Dowell*. Subsequent maps produced by the Oklahoma City Public School Board reflect the Board's position in student reassignment. Henceforth, in this study, the Student Reassignment Plan will be referred to as the Student Reassignment Plan (SRP).

In 1985, respondents filed a “Motion to Reopen the Dowell Case” contending that the School District failed to achieve unitary status and that the SRP was a return to segregation (Legal Information Institute, 1998). The respondents further claimed that under the SRP, 11 of 64 elementary schools would be greater than 90 percent African American, 22 would be greater than 90 percent EuroAmerican, and 31 would be racially mixed. The District Court refused to reopen the case ruling that the district remained unitary and that recent residential segregation was the result of private choices and economics rather than the district’s discriminatory intent (Legal Information Institute, 1998).

In 1991, the question arose as to whether 13 years of desegregation was enough. Thus, the 1991 *Oklahoma City Board of Education v. Dowell* case supported neighborhood schools. The Supreme Court acknowledged that districts need to determine when they should be released from court oversight. The test, it held, was whether the district had complied in good faith with the trial court’s decree and eliminated, “to the extent practicable,” vestiges of segregation in those areas of schooling known as “Green factors” – students and staff assignment, transportation, facilities, and extracurricular activities (Bouchard, 1996). The Green factors, named after the Supreme Court’s 1968 decision in *Green v. New Kent County School Board*, were used in the 1960’s and 70’s to determine the existence of “dual” systems, where schools remained racially segregated

usually as a result of patterns in housing and school assignments. In *Dowell*, the Supreme Court adopted a standard that ended court oversight. In the *Dowell* decision, the high court emphasized that desegregation decrees were never intended to be perpetual. It explained that local control over public education is a vital national tradition that allows for citizen participation and encourages school programs adapted to local needs (Bouchard, 1996). Educational considerations, and not an intent to discriminate, are given as the basis of the Oklahoma City School Board's decision to discontinue a mandatory student busing plan.

Meanwhile, U.S. District Judge Luther Bohanon dissolved the 1972 court order that established compulsory student busing in the district. He agreed with the School Board's argument that changing housing patterns in the district caused longer bus rides for students and produced "hardship so extreme as to make the decree oppressive." The issue according to Snider is the degree of freedom that a School Board has to abandon a busing plan once the courts have ruled that a district has achieved unitary status. The Oklahoma City School Board bore the burden of proving that changed conditions require modification (of the desegregation order) or that the facts or law no longer require enforcement of the order (Snider, 1988). Justice Blackmun and Justice Stevens agreed with Justice Marshall's dissenting opinion. Marshall argued, "Racially identifiable schools are one of the primary vestiges of state-imposed segregation which an effective desegregation decree must attempt to eliminate. The evil to be remedied in the dismantling of a dual system is the racial identification of the system's schools. The goal is a system without White or Negro schools – a system with 'just schools.' A school authority's remedial plan or a District Court's remedial decree is to be judged by its

effectiveness in achieving this end. In a district with a history of state sponsored school segregation, racial separation, in my view, remains inherently unequal” (Legal Information Institute, 1998, p. 4). A timeline indicating significant court dates and events concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools District is provided on the next page.

Statement of the Problem

The recent neighborhood schools movement has dramatically resegregated American schools. This national debate includes opposing perspectives concerning the impact of neighborhood schools on low socioeconomic African American students and their communities. This study investigates the perspectives of Oklahoma City Public Schools administrators, educators, parents, and notable community leaders who are either African American and/or work with low socioeconomic African American students concerning the Neighborhood Schools Plan or Student Reassignment Plan and the plan’s effect on low socioeconomic African American students and communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate and present a holistic picture of the effect of the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan on low socioeconomic African American students in their community. This holistic picture is provided through the investigation and analysis of the perspectives of administrators, educators, parents, and notable community leaders who are either African American and/or work with low socioeconomic African American students concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP. The study presents the various

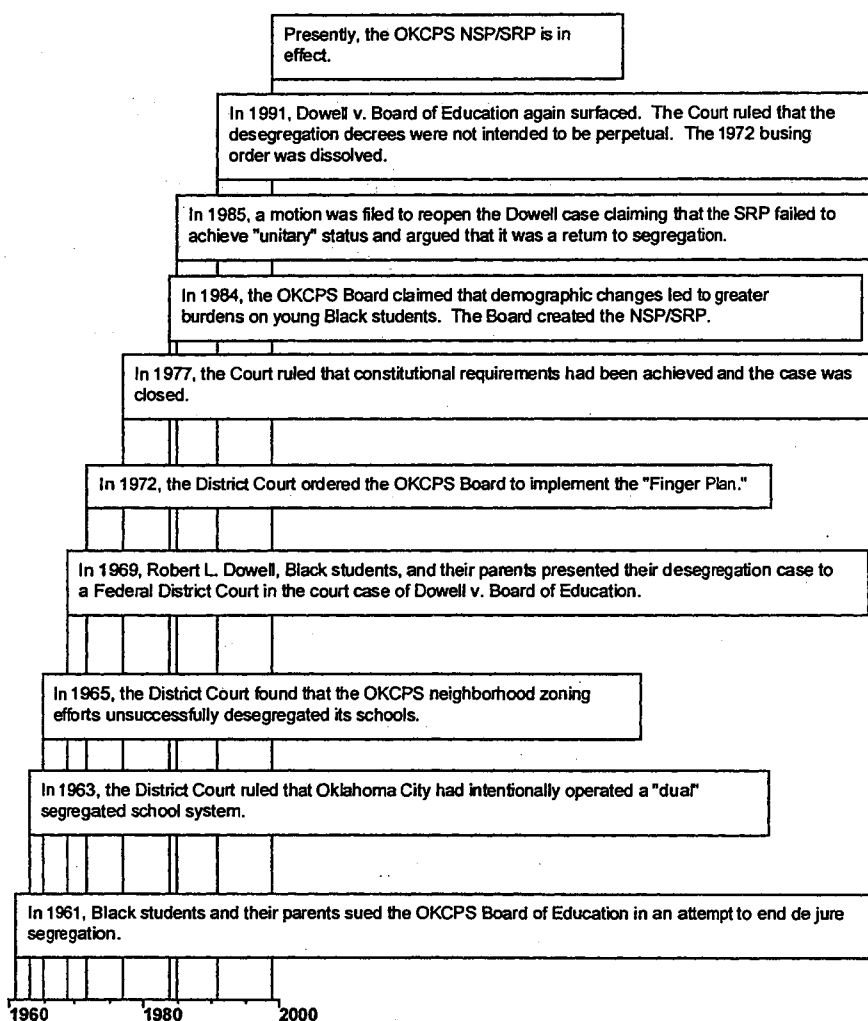


Figure 1. Oklahoma City Public Schools Court Timeline.

perspectives of this specific population. This case study entails document analysis, interviews, and focus groups with administrators, educators, parents and community leaders.

Guiding Questions of the Study

Many public school districts such as Oklahoma City Public Schools have enacted plans to redistrict and move students back to their neighborhood schools. Oklahoma City Public Schools, like many urban districts, is largely populated with African American students. Consequently, the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP significantly effects African American neighborhoods and communities. Therefore, questions concerning the effect of the plan on African American neighborhoods and communities in Oklahoma City have surfaced. This study investigates the following guiding questions:

- What are the national perspectives of African Americans and those who work with low socioeconomic African American students concerning neighborhood schools?
- What are the perspectives of administrators working with low socioeconomic African American students in the Oklahoma City Public Schools District concerning the SRP?
- What are the perspectives of educators working with low socioeconomic African American students in the Oklahoma City Public Schools District concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP?
- What are the perspectives of African American parents in the Oklahoma City Public Schools District concerning the SRP?

- What are the perspectives of African American community leaders working with low socioeconomic African American families and students concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP?
- How has the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP impacted African American communities in Oklahoma City?

Significance of the Study

Recent debates are surfacing in urban African American communities nationwide regarding the benefits and limitations of public neighborhood schools in their communities. There is little research concerning the impact of urban public neighborhood schools upon low socioeconomic African American students. Further, there is little research relating to the perspectives of African American community leaders or those who work with low socioeconomic African American students. As a consequence, it is important to investigate these perceptions found throughout African American communities. Currently there are no case studies available regarding the perspectives of administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP and its effect on low socioeconomic African American students and African American communities. This research expands current literature related to public neighborhood schools and analyzes the effect of a recent neighborhood school plan in Oklahoma City.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

This study confines itself to interviewing administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders who are either African American and/or work with low socioeconomic African American students in the Oklahoma City Public School District. While the author has not been able to locate the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP in its various publications, this study investigates the SRP from the position of the Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit in *Oklahoma City Board of Education v. Dowell*.

Limitations

The purposive sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of findings. This study will not be generalizable to all areas of education. In this study, the findings could be subject to other interpretations.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into the following chapters: Chapter One provides the introduction to the study. It explains the importance of the perceptions of African American administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders and/or those working with low socioeconomic African American students concerning neighborhood schools. Chapter II provides a historical account of African American schools in the United States; review of the literature concerning school busing and desegregation; and, current review of landmark educational court cases. Chapter II also presents arguments in the debate

between integrationists and public neighborhood school proponents by providing national African American perspectives and national perspectives of those working with low socioeconomic African American students regarding neighborhood schools. Finally a review of literature pertaining specifically to the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP is provided.

Chapter III, the methods section, contains explanations of the instruments and methods of inquiry that will be utilized to obtain data from these administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders. Chapter IV presents the findings and analyses of data. Finally, Chapter V provides a summary of the study, contextualizes the findings, and offers conclusions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Neighborhood school plans are being implemented by public school districts across America. For example, urban public school districts in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Dallas, Texas; Savannah, Georgia; and Wilmington, Delaware (Bouchard, 1996) have all won court cases which lifted desegregation orders and provided assistance in implementing neighborhood school plans (Bouchard, 1996). Many large urban districts and community leaders believe that the days of forced racial integration and busing are no longer needed. Kenneth Jenkins, former president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), summarizes these sentiments best (Drake, 1996), "School busing may have outlived its usefulness to achieve academic parity."

Unfortunately, the majority of minority students enrolled in urban school districts find themselves attending racially segregated and dilapidated school buildings (Orfield, 1994). Likewise, lower income African American and Hispanic students are increasingly attending segregated, impoverished neighborhood schools. Orfield (1994) warns that in large urban areas, segregation by race is strongly related to segregation by poverty. These urban neighborhood schools often become segregated due to two changing shifts in population. The first, frequently referred to as "White flight" results when the majority of

EuroAmerican students and their families in a district have transferred to suburban and private schools. The second, “voluntary resegregation” often occurs when middle class minority groups relocate to suburban areas that are predominantly populated with residents that are of the same race and same socioeconomic status.

Numerous researchers have explained the benefits of desegregation in relation to academic achievement, economic status, and social interaction (Metz, 1994; Braddock, J.H. II., Crain, R.L., & McParland, J.M., 1984; Crain, R.L., Mahard, R.E., & Narot, R.E., 1982; Feters, W.B., 1974.) Yet, many African American administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders adamantly support the neighborhood schools movement. While African American schools are not new, the public neighborhood schools movement is the new controversial issue. This chapter provides the reader with a historic account of African American schools; summary of national desegregation trends; brief review of school integration and desegregation landmark court cases; synopsis of national trends and the debate concerning neighborhood schools; and current literature review of the *Oklahoma City Board of Education v. Dowell* case.

Historic Accounts of African American Schools

The earliest African American independent schools were created in the United States during the late 1700’s following the Revolutionary War. According to Ratteray (1992), Prince Hall, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, petitioned the city of Boston to establish a separate, tax-supported school for Africans. When his petitions proved unsuccessful, Hall started an alternative school in 1798. He created schools in northern cities such as Philadelphia and New York. Later schools opened in Georgia, Louisiana,

Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina although Africans were still enslaved at the time (Ratteray, 1992). By 1897, African Americans controlled 18 colleges, 34 academies, and 51 high schools and seminaries (Ratteray, 1992). Surprisingly, most of the African American independent schools functioning today were started between 1964-1984. According to Ratteray (1992) these schools presently serve the second largest group of African American students in private schools in the United States, second only to the national parochial school system. These African American schools past and present were created to protest social inequality, serve as examples of African American institutions, and provide service to their communities. The curricula and pedagogy of African American schools, in both their content and perspectives, are often similar to Eurocentric educational institutions (Ratteray, 1992). African American independent schools have attempted to minimize the impact of outside control by gathering their financial support from African American organizations and institutions – churches, fraternities, sororities, and African American community members.

Today's independent neighborhood schools obtain most of their operating budgets from tuition rather than philanthropic resources (Ratteray, 1992). In 1993, M. Ratteray and J. Shujaa conducted a study investigating the demography of students attending African American independent schools. The study confirms that the majority of African American independent school families sampled had total annual incomes of less than \$30,000. Most of these were families containing four or five family members. A sample of schools in the study which voluntarily provided test data, revealed that most students performed above the national norm (a percentile rank of 50) on such tests as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, the California Achievement Test, the Iowa Tests of

Basic Skills, the Metropolitan Achievement Test, and the Stanford Achievement Test (Ratteray, 1992). Despite these results, integration and desegregation have historically been publicly debated and have pushed legislatively for over four decades. For example, in the early nineteenth hundreds the great debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois developed. Booker T. Washington was in favor of integration and vocational education. While, W.E.B. DuBois argued for separate or dual educational systems which prepared African American students for higher educational institutions. Later, during the early 1960's, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. publicly debated the issue of desegregation. Malcolm X supported a separate or dual society and M.L. King, Jr. fought for a desegregated and integrated society.

National Desegregation Trends

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was the leading organization in desegregating the nation's schools. Thurgood Marshall, later to become a United States Supreme Court Justice, challenged official segregation in court cases throughout the nation. His efforts culminated in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 which overturned the "separate but equal" decision that legalized racial segregation since *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896). Additionally the NAACP was instrumental in the court-ordered legislation that ultimately sped up the integration of schools (American Business Review, 1997).

Landmark Court Cases Concerning School Integration And Desegregation

Attempts to desegregate public facilities were rejected by the United States Supreme Court in *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896). The “Separate but equal” ruling required that separate but equal facilities be available for both races. This court case was initiated by Mr. Homer Plessey, a 23 year old man who was one-eighth African American and seven-eighths EuroAmerican. Mr. Plessey attempted to sit in the EuroAmerican section of a passenger train in Louisiana. The train conductor ordered Mr. Plessey to move to the section of the train reserved for African Americans (Data Research Inc., 1993). Mr. Plessey refused and was arrested for violating a Louisiana law that required the races to have separate seating sections. Subsequently, the United States Supreme Court refused to hold the statute unconstitutional. In the Court’s opinion, it was not a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause. It ruled that as long as equal facilities were provided for the two races, a state could require racial separation (Data Research Inc., 1993). Consequently, Mr. Plessey was fined \$25.00.

By the mid 1940’s race relations, political attitudes, and government actions began to change both locally and nationally (Thomas, 1990). Oklahoma contributed significantly to this wave of change when Thurgood Marshall, then Chief Counsel for the NAACP, argued and won two cases (Thomas, 1990). In *Sipuel v. Oklahoma Board of Regents* (1948) the United States Supreme Court ordered Oklahoma to set up a law school specifically for Ada Sipuel, the only attending African American student. University of Oklahoma Regents established a separate law school within two weeks. When Sipuel

declined to attend this institution, the State Regents for Higher Education established the Langston University School of Law which was then located in the basement of the State Capital in Oklahoma City (Thomas, 1990). Finally, on January 12, 1948, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher gained admission to the University of Oklahoma law school in *Sipuel v. Oklahoma Board of Regents* (1948). The second landmark civil rights case in Oklahoma arose in 1950 when George McLaurin was admitted to graduate school at the University of Oklahoma as a result of *McLaurin v. Oklahoma Board of Regents of Higher Education* (1950). On June 5, 1950, McLaurin had won another suit against university officials (Thomas, 1990). After admittance they segregated him in the classroom, library, and cafeteria. The United States Supreme Court ordered an end to these segregation practices and ordered the state's system of higher education to integrate (Thomas, 1990).

The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) is significant because it was the first time that the United States Supreme Court held that racial segregation violated the fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause (Data Research Inc., 1993). The plaintiffs in this case were African American children in Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia and Delaware (Data Research Inc., 1993). The plaintiffs argued that segregated public schools are not equal and cannot be made equal because they are separate from EuroAmerican facilities. The United States Supreme Court examined the effect of separate facilities and ruled that separate but equal facilities are inherently unequal. The Court created the argument that segregation has a negative psychological effect on African American children. It causes a sense of inferiority and affects their motivation to learn (Data Research Inc., 1993). The Court ruled that segregated public schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. It added that further litigation

was necessary to formulate decrees on how districts should desegregate (Data Research Inc., 1993).

The United States Supreme Court examined the possibilities of turning dual, segregated school systems into unitary desegregated systems in the court case of *Brown v. Board of Education (Brown II.)* (1955). The Court heard the opinions of the parties involved and of the state and federal attorneys general (Data Research Inc., 1993). The Court ruled that school districts have the primary responsibility of implementing the Brown I (the 1954 decision) mandate and that implementation had to take place with “all deliberate speed.” The Federal Courts had the ultimate responsibility of reviewing school district efforts to determine whether the Brown I mandate had been implemented in good faith. The Federal Court added that the District Court could examine implementation plans, analyze problems related to administration stemming from physical condition of the school facility, the school transportation system, personnel, revision of school districts and attendance areas, and revision of local laws and regulations (Data Research Inc., 1993). District Courts were to retain jurisdiction of the case during the implementation process.

The meaning of “all deliberate speed” was interpreted to mean immediate dissolution of dual school systems in *Alexander v. Homes County Board of Education* (1969). The segregated school status of African American children in Mississippi went to the United States Court of Appeals and Fifth Circuit Court. Both Courts allowed the school districts more time to desegregate under the standard allowing “all deliberate speed.” The United States Supreme Court granted certiorari and struck down the Court of Appeals decision (Data Research Inc., 1993). The United States Supreme Court then

ordered the districts to immediately transfer African American students to desegregated unitary schools.

Desegregation suits were filed by several different groups of minority students (Data Research Inc., 1993). According to Data Research Inc. (1993) de jure segregation (see case below for definition) was eliminated after the Brown I decision and the San Francisco school district redrew school attendance lines to encourage racial desegregation. Chinese students in San Francisco, California resisted attempts to form a unitary school system because of their fears that Chinese language and cultural classes would be terminated under the desegregation plan. In the case of *Guey Heung Lee v. Johnson* (1971), Chinese students requested a stay of a federal District Court order which reassigned Chinese elementary students to unitary desegregated elementary schools. The Supreme Court solved this problem by applying the Brown decisions to all racial minorities and supporting the school district's plan (Data Research Inc., 1993). The Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment protects not only African Americans, but, all racial minority students.

The distinction between de jure and de facto segregation was determined in the court case of *Gomperts v. Chase* (1971). De jure segregation means people of different races are separated based on law, while de facto segregation separates races by culture or tradition rather than by law (Segall & Wilson, 1998). According to Data Research Inc. (1993), a California school approved desegregation plans less than fifteen months before the opening of the 1971 school year. The controversial plan was revised following a School Board election. Several parents and students argued that the mandatory integration was needed to desegregate the school system. The group sued the Board in a

Federal District Court. The Court refused to grant the order and the appeal proved unsuccessful. Justice Douglas wrote that an order would have been granted had the case been a classical de jure segregation case (Data Research Inc., 1993). The plaintiffs argued that the state had created segregated schools by constructing a freeway which isolated African American neighborhoods and caused neighborhood schools to become predominately African American. It also accused state planners, local realtors, and banks of perpetuating residential segregation resulting in school segregation. The plaintiffs presented evidence that the African American high school in the district was not equal, but an inferior facility. Justice Douglas refused to grant the requested order despite these arguments (Data Research Inc., 1993).

“Free transfer” policies and “freedom of choice” programs were common as a means to avoid desegregation mandates (Data Research Inc., 1993). “Free transfers” allowed students to attend racially identifiable schools. In *Goss v. Board of Education* (1963), several African American children in Tennessee challenged their School Board’s desegregation plan in a Federal District Court arguing that the plan allowed students to request a transfer back to the segregated school from which they had been reassigned. This plan was approved by a Federal District Court and by the United States Supreme Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit. The United States Supreme Court granted certiorari (Data Research Inc., 1993). The plaintiffs provided evidence that the plan perpetuated segregation by requiring students to show “good cause” for a transfer to a school where their race would be in the minority. The Court supported the argument of the plaintiffs and struck down the plan ruling that it was constitutionally insufficient to fulfill the desegregation requirements of *Brown*. The Court added that classifications on the basis

of race for transfer purposes between schools violate the Fourteenth Amendment (Data Research Inc., 1993).

In the court case of *Green v. Country School Board* (1968), a “freedom of choice” program in New Kent, Virginia was struck down and ruled unconstitutional because it placed the burden of desegregation on parents and students (Data Research Inc., 1993). The New Kent County in Virginia ignored the Brown II mandates and maintained two segregated schools in its district despite the fact that half of the county’s population was African American. After the federal government threatened to cut off financial funding to the district, the county adopted a “freedom of choice” program which allowed students to choose the school which they wanted to attend. The plan allowed eighty-five percent of the county’s African American students to attend an African American school (Data Research Inc., 1993). The United States Supreme Court granted certiorari. The Court ruled that the plan placed the burden of desegregation on the parents and children instead of the School Board.

School districts also attempted to achieve racial desegregation by redrawing school attendance zones and increasing the number of African Americans attending EuroAmerican schools. In the court case of *Dowell v. Board of Education* (1969) a Federal District Court approved the Oklahoma City Public Schools’ desegregation plan which changed attendance boundaries pending that a complete desegregation plan would be submitted two months later (Data Research Inc., 1993). Students intervened and requested a stay to the United States Supreme Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit. The Court of appeals vacated the District Court’s decision, ruling that the attendance changes were premature and should be postponed until the school district submitted the completed

plan. The United States Supreme Court reversed the decision ruling that the District must desegregate at once and that the school district's attempt to redraw attendance boundaries should have been upheld (Data Research Inc., 1993).

Unfortunately, school districts were not constitutionally required to make adjustments to reach "no majority" of minority attendance requirements once a school district had implemented an approved plan (Data Research Inc., 1993). In the court case of *Pasadena City Board of Education v. Spangler* (1976) Pasadena, California, high school students and their parents sued their school district for operating racially segregated schools. A Federal District Court ordered the school district to submit a desegregation plan that would ensure that the majority of minority students would not attend a school that was predominately minority. The school district complied and submitted a plan that the District Court approved. Afterwards, school officials filed a motion to modify the District Court's earlier order that there be no majority, and claimed that the term "majority" was ambiguous. The District Court denied the modification and held that shifting populations of students within the school district had violated the requirement. The Court stated that the school district had the duty to continually abide by the "no majority" requirement (Data Research Inc., 1993).

The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit disapproved of the District Court's view that the school district had a lifetime commitment to maintain "no majority" requirements (Data Research Inc., 1993). The United States Supreme Court granted certiorari and vacated the lower Court decisions. The Court added that the Board was not constitutionally required to make adjustments after it had complied with an approved plan because the racial composition of some attendance zones had changed due

to relocation changes of students and their families. The Court also concluded that school officials had a justifiable grievance as to the ambiguity of the term “no majority,” and could modify the Court’s original order.

In the Court case *Bustop Inc. v. Board of Education of City of Los Angeles* (1978), parents requested a stay to a desegregation plan which bused over 60,000 students (Data Research Inc., 1993). The plan paired EuroAmerican and minority schools and required an exchange of students between the paired schools to achieve racial balance. Parents objected to the plan claiming it required some students to ride buses as much as one and one-half hours per day. The Court refused to stay the order, although, the California Court of Appeal reversed this decision. The California Supreme Court vacated the Court of Appeal’s decision, basing its decision on the California Constitution rather than on the United States Constitution (Data Research Inc., 1993). The parents then appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court and the Court refused to grant the stay finding that the case rested on the California Constitution. The Court also added that under the California Constitution, parties seeking desegregated facilities were not held to the standard of showing de jure segregation. Thus, state courts were permitted to bus students as a means of achieving desegregation and racial quotas (Data Research Inc., 1993).

According to (Data Research Inc., 1993), the landmark case, *Swann v. Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1970) affirmed the broad discretionary powers of Federal District Courts to implement desegregation plans. The Federal District Court of Charlotte, North Carolina approved a geographical zoning plan implementing free transfers. This plan allowed half of Charlotte’s African American student population to

attend twenty-one mostly African American schools. The Board's plan was challenged in District Court and the Court ordered the school district to immediately implement a satisfactory desegregation plan. After the Court found both the initial and additional plans inadequate, it appointed an expert to draft an acceptable plan. The Board and the expert then submitted plans. The Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit affirmed the District Court's order regarding secondary school plans, but vacated the order concerning elementary schools (Data Research Inc., 1993). The Court of Appeals contended that pairing African American and EuroAmerican schools would burden the Board and students. The District Court ordered implementation and the United States Supreme Court granted certiorari. The Court held that policies with regard to faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities, and facilities are sufficient indicators of a district's desegregation efforts. The Court identified the following four considerations when reassigning students to achieve desegregation:

- 1) Racial quotas within schools need not reflect the racial composition of the whole system.
- 2) The existence of a single-race school does not necessarily mean the whole system is segregated by law.
- 3) The alteration of attendance zones does not automatically mean that segregation will end because the change may fail to take into account past discrimination.
- 4) The use of busing is an appropriate exercise of District Court power. However, busing cannot be used if it involves such great distances as to

impair children's health or impinge on the educational process (Data Research Inc., 1993).

The District Court's orders were upheld and it was determined that District Courts have broad discretion in ordering desegregation plans (Data Research Inc., 1993).

Brown I's desegregation mandate also required integration of faculty. The Court implemented efforts to eliminate faculty segregation and to establish the conditions necessary to meet Fourteenth Amendment requirements (Data Research Inc., 1993). The court cases of *Rogers v. Paul* (1965); *United States v. Montgomery Board of Education* (1968); *Davis v. Board of School Commissioner* (1971); and *Bradley v. School Board* (1965) all involve the desegregation of school faculty (Data Research Inc., 1993).

Research on the Benefits and Limitations

Of Desegregation

School desegregation has been continually reexamined, from its effects on self-esteem and achievement to the inequitable practices of ability grouping and tracking (Braddock and McPartland, 1990; Oakes, 1990). Many agree throughout the field with the research of Gay (1990) and Sleeter (1990) that the educational outcomes for students of color have never equaled those of EuroAmerican students. Curriculum and instructional experiences differ for children according to race, class, ethnicity, and gender. For example, teacher expectations are lower for girls, low socioeconomic students, and children of color – excluding Asians (Gay, 1990). Gay also warns that African American children are overrepresented in the dropout population, at greater risk for disciplinary

referrals, frequently assigned to the lower tracks, and overrepresented in special education classes and Chapter I programs.

Numerous research studies supporting desegregation have been conducted listing the long-term social and financial benefits of integration. Braddock (1986) surveyed African American college students from four Florida colleges and found that in predominantly Eurocentric two-year colleges, African American students who attended desegregated high schools are more likely to major in the higher paying scientific or technical fields than are African American graduates of segregated African American high schools. The results from this study suggest that school desegregation can indirectly affect the career income potential of African American students. Crain (1984) investigated employment practices in a national survey of more than four thousand employers and found that employers showed preference in hiring African American graduates from desegregated schools. Studies conclude that African Americans who have attended desegregated schools are more likely than their counterparts from segregated schools to work in desegregated settings (Braddock, & Dawkins, 1994; Braddock & McPartland, 1983, 1989; Braddock, McPartland, & Trent, 1984; Green, 1981). Crain (1984); Pearce (1980); and Pearce, Crain, & Farley (1984) conclude that cities with successful desegregation plans obtain increased interracial contact, integrated neighborhoods, and quantity of desegregated housing. Studies have been conducted both supporting and disputing the need for integration and desegregation.

Research studies investigating African American parental attitudes towards integration suggest that African American parents both before and after implementation of the Brown decision highly value African American teachers and the teaching and caring

within many African American neighborhood schools (Foster, 1993; Irvine, 1990; Siddle-Walker, 1993). Parents were not as concerned with integration as they were with equal access to educational resources (Foster, 1993; Irvine, 1990; Siddle-Walker, 1993).

Additionally, early desegregation studies reported that African Americans who attended predominately African American schools tended to have much lower achievement scores than African American students who attended schools which were predominately EuroAmerican (Crain, Mahard, & Narot, 1982; St. John, 1975). A significant limitation of these studies according to Gadsden, Smith, & Jordan, (1996) was that children from poor families were constantly compared to children from middle-class families. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the results are based on economic class factors rather than on desegregation factors. Equity is a major concern in this debate. *Separate* in 1954 was ruled *not equal*. The controversial question today is . . . can separate truly be equal?

Crain (1982) explains it best -

The value of desegregation need not be justified solely in moral terms—that is, fostering social contact between African American and EuroAmerican students for the sake of the larger society: the value may be located in the opportunity that an open environment creates for African Americans to experience the advantages of attending an affluent school. Sitting adjacent to EuroAmerican children in a classroom does not increase academic achievement among African American students; having exposure to better teachers, higher academic standards, greater instructional resources, and overall better school facilities does (p. 393).

Crain adds that desegregation is currently the only chance that many low socioeconomic African American students will have at attending a middle class school.

National Trends and Debates Concerning Neighborhood Schools

Several school districts across the nation have recently struggled to reinstitute neighborhood schools and racially segregated classrooms despite the 1954 decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Cleveland, Ohio; St. Louis, Missouri; Pittsburgh, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Prince George's County, Maryland are all trying to eliminate mandatory busing (Fineman, 1996). Meanwhile, two major demographic trends are causing segregated neighborhoods. The first, "White flight" occurs when a large proportion of EuroAmerican students leave the urban school districts to attend schools in suburbs and private schools. The second, "voluntary resegregation" often occurs when upwardly mobile African Americans choose to live with each other in African American suburban communities (Fineman, 1996).

Thus, four decades past the Brown decision, America's schools generally remain segregated. According to a recent National School Boards Association report, 66 percent of African American children in the United States now attend schools that are predominately minority (Williams, 1995). Although there are varying degrees of segregation, the highest levels are found in the Northeast, where half of the African American student population attend schools that are predominantly African American. This report also indicates that Hispanic children have recently become the most segregated group. (Williams, 1995).

Opponents of desegregation argue that busing is extremely costly. In addition, bused children are travel-weary and often remain in segregated groups both inside and

outside the classroom (The Economist, 1994). A 1996 Washington Post poll revealed that the majority of African American parents surveyed disapproved of mandated school busing (American Business Review, 1997). The demand for neighborhood schools was first raised by African American parents who claim that neighborhood schools can serve as community building institutions (Ehrenhalt, 1996). These parents argue that the benefits of neighborhood schools are that children can walk to school; parents become familiar with other parents in the school; P.T.A. membership and participation increases; and the quality of local leadership, public safety, and economic development improves (Ehrenhalt, 1996).

Proponents of desegregation argue that during the long period of busing and emphasis on magnet schools, neighborhood facilities deteriorated badly. Repairing these older neighborhood schools will be costly (Ehrenhalt, 1996). On the other hand, many African Americans claim that it is better to spend scant resources on improving their schools than on chasing the rainbow of integration (Eddings, 1997). Hilary Wilce (1994) and other proponents argue that segregated schools mean students grow up never seeing, let alone interacting with, a student from another racial group; meanwhile, their crumbling ghetto schools continue to deteriorate.

National African American Community Leaders

Perspectives Concerning Neighborhood

Schools

African American community leaders across the nation are voicing their opinion concerning the neighborhood schools movement. These national leaders appear torn on

this controversial issue. Public statements supporting and opposing the neighborhood schools movement have been made by the following African American leaders: Robert Robinson, president of the Bergen County, New Jersey National Association for the Advancement of Colored People states, "We want the highest quality education for African American children, and integration of schools hasn't provided that. What have we really gained since the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision?" (Drake, 1996, p. 39).

Alvin Thornton, a former Prince George's County, Virginia School Board Member and a current desegregation consultant, agrees with Robinson and claims that we need to scrap busing altogether. Thornton adds that busing was never an ultimate solution and has ultimately become obsolete (Thornton, 1996). Additionally, John Stanford, an African American Seattle School Superintendent, maintains that busing has done nothing to improve test scores (Eddings, 1997). Freeman Bosley, the African American mayor of St. Louis Missouri, claimed, "The desegregation plan, imposed by a St. Louis Federal Court in 1980, has harmed the children it was meant to help" (The Economist, 1994, p.1).

Bosley added, "If people don't go to school in their neighborhoods they become detached. If they chose to attend neighborhood schools, we would have some strong and vibrant neighborhoods." He supports developing a plan that will bring city kids back to the cities (Crisis, 1993). This heated debate has caused costly consequences for national community leaders such as Kenneth Jenkins, an African American civic leader in Yonkers, New York. Jenkins was recently ousted from his position as head of the Yonkers branch of the NAACP because of his public stance supporting neighborhood schools (Ehrenhalt, 1996). Jenkins has been quoted as saying "School busing may have outlived its usefulness to achieve academic parity" (Drake, 1996, p.39). He adds, "We must insist that schools be

improved and equitable resources are expended in school districts. We must focus on educating the tremendous number of students in our public schools instead of worrying about who is not attending public schools” (American Business Review, 1997, p. 1).

Thus, the NAACP appeared torn on the neighborhood schools issue.

Nevertheless, Chairman Myrlie Evers-Williams made a firm stand in support of integration and against neighborhood schools in her keynote address during the NAACP’s annual conference in Pittsburgh (Eddings, 1997). Ina Boon, regional director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, agrees with Chairman Evers-Williams and argues that busing should not end until equality is achieved. She explains that an end to desegregation efforts will trap victims of segregation in schools they believe are inferior, in order to enlist them in improving city schools and neighborhoods. Ina warns the NAACP will fight to ensure that every child receives a quality education, free from a “separate but equal” practice (Crisis, 1993).

National Community Leaders Perspectives

Concerning Neighborhood Schools

National non-African American leaders have recently began voicing their opinions concerning the neighborhood schools issue as well. The following three community leaders have stated the following: Justice Black, A Supreme Court Judge, supports the argument that many American schools have never desegregated despite the 1954 Brown decision. He noted that students in DeKalb County, Georgia and elsewhere never have attended a desegregated school system even for one day (Taylor, 1992). Gary Orfield, director of the Harvard University Project on School Desegregation, reports that schools

are now more segregated than at any time since 1968 (Wilce, 1994). Contrary to popular belief, Orfield's 1989 report indicated that the South continues to have the most integrated schools in the nation (Snider, 1989). Not surprisingly, Orfield wants to see the federal government enforce civil rights laws and make commitment to school desegregation that encompasses wider issues such as housing and urban renewal (Wilce, 1994).

Additionally, Glenn C Loury, a professor of economics at Boston University states, "School desegregation is an important issue in American history and the way it has played out over the years has been disappointing. The engine of opportunity that good schools represent has never achieved full speed in the inner cities. I'm sympathetic to school choice and vouchers, but serious people need to realize that those options are not a panacea for correcting urban schools" (Williams, 1995, p.2).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study used case study methods. The method of case study was selected to investigate the perspectives of Oklahoma City Public Schools administrators, educators, parents, and notable community leaders who are either African American and/or work with low socioeconomic African American students concerning the SRP because of the following reasons:

1. A need existed to explore and describe the perspectives of individuals associated with the Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan because of the controversy surrounding this issue.
2. The nature of this phenomenon was not suited for quantitative measures.

The following sections of chapter three has provided the reader with the assumptions and rationale for a qualitative research design, a definition and characteristics of case study designs, an explanation of data collection procedures and methods, a summary of the role of the researcher, and verification and ethical procedural strategies.

Assumption and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Rudestam and Newton (1992) explained that research questions, based on naturalistic inquiry methods, as were used in this study, required a different philosophical orientation than those orientated by rationalistic inquiry. Qualitative research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes the process rather than products. Creswell (1994) classifies qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (p. 1). The qualitative research design was selected for this particular study because this investigation into the history of the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP and the perspectives of those individuals effected by the plan were conducted in a natural setting and involved complex, holistic, human/social phenomenon.

According to Berg (1995) qualitative research properly seeks to answer questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative researchers, then, investigate how humans make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social roles, and communication. As a result, qualitative techniques allow the researcher to investigate and understand the perceptions of the participants/informants and examine how they make sense of themselves, their environment, and others (Berg, 1995). Qualitative researchers assume that there are multiple realities; the world is not an object thing out there but rather, a function of personal interaction & perception; and that beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perceptions and perspectives (Merriam, 1988). Likewise, the analysis of qualitative data

allow the researcher to discuss in detail the social constructs and process informants use to create their social realities. In short, a qualitative research design assisted the researcher in investigating, understanding, and analyzing the perceptions of the informants in this study.

Case Study

Case studies became popular in the 1970's as sociologists tried to explain the gaps in their correlations between classroom processes and other social phenomenon that experimental studies could not explain (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Case study designs are often used in human and social science research. A case study is a research design in which the researcher investigates a single entity or phenomenon bounded by time and activity. Case study researchers use a variety of data collection procedures to gather detailed information during a sustained period of time (Yin, 1989). Merriam (1988) defines a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (p. 16). Case studies can build theory, incorporate purposive sampling, and include qualitative data. A case study researcher gathers all the information available and strives to interpret and theorize the phenomenon.

Case studies are generally classified as experimental and nonexperimental. The nonexperimental case study is generally preferred in examining contemporary issues and events and involves behaviors that cannot be manipulated. This nonexperimental case study, examines the contemporary issue and event of neighborhood schools, and does not involve the manipulation of behaviors. The case study is considered unique in its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence such as documents, artifacts, interviews, and

observations. Nonexperimental case studies are generally inductive in nature and the results are presented qualitatively (in words) rather than quantitatively (in numbers).

Although the nonexperimental or case study does not claim any particular method of data collection or analysis, it provides holistic description and explanation. Bromley (1986) claims that case studies get as close to the subject as they possibly can in natural settings and gain as much access to subject factors as possible- thoughts, feelings, and desires.

Additionally, Kenny & Grotelueschen (1980) advise that a case study should be selected when “the desired or projected objectives of an education effort focus on humanistic outcomes or cultural differences, as opposed to behavioral outcomes or individual differences.” As previously mentioned, my particular study involved gaining access to the perspectives (thoughts, feelings, and beliefs) of the subjects. Also, the objectives in this study focused on humanistic outcomes and cultural differences. Olsen (1982) lists four heuristic qualities of a case study -

- It can explain the reason a problem exists, the background of the problem, what happened and why.
- It can explain why a program/plan worked or failed.
- It can discuss and evaluate alternatives not chosen.
- It can evaluate, summarize, and conclude. (p.14)

Needless to say, all of these heuristic qualities were perfectly aligned with this study.

Data Collection

Creswell (1994) recommends the consideration of four parameters in a qualitative study: setting, actors, events, and processes. Oklahoma City Public Schools was the

setting for this particular study. The actors were the Oklahoma City Public Schools administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders associated with low socioeconomic African American students. The events involved the informants' everyday experiences regarding the SRP and the expressed meaning and perspectives attached to their experiences. Interview and focus group processes continued until the researcher concluded that the quality and quantity of collected data was sufficient.

Document analysis, semi-structured, informal interviews, and focus groups were utilized to collect data for this study. Case studies rely heavily upon qualitative data obtained from documents and interviews (Merriam, 1988). Patton (1980) explains that qualitative data consist of "excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records and case histories; and direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts" (p. 22).

A variety of documents have been analyzed to investigate the events and reactions relating to the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP. Finding relevant primary source material is the goal of document mining (Merriam, 1988). The majority of historical primary source data concerning the SRP have been obtained from school board minutes, court records, district records, and newspaper articles. Documents such as district zoning blueprints were also collected for analysis.

Merriam (1988) claims using documentary material is advantageous because of its unobtrusive and objective nature and stability. Documentary material does not alter what is being studied and it is not effected by the presence of the interviewer. The data found in documents is often used in the same manner as data from interviews or observations. It

often provides the researcher with descriptive information to verify hypotheses and advance new categories for further historical understanding (Merriam, 1988).

The recent implementation of the SRP provided a large number of primary source informants to interview. The purpose of interviewing, according to Burgess (1982) is to enter into the person's perspective. Thus, Oklahoma City Public Schools administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders were all interviewed to gain an understanding of their perspectives concerning the SRP. Tracking down leads, being open to new insight, remaining sensitive in terms of the data, and relying on intuition are similar in document analysis, interviews, and focus groups (Merriam, 1988). Semi-structured, informal interviews and focus groups were conducted, audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed.

Written interviews were provided to informants interested as an alternative to the verbal interview. The researcher also took notes during and immediately following the interview and focus group sessions to effectively transcribe the interview and focus groups. A contact list (a detailed list of people to be interviewed with contact information) and a journal was kept throughout the study to document the researcher's personal impressions of informants and progress in the study. Follow up interviews were conducted as needed. The number of interviews depended upon the availability of willing participants in the schools, within the district, and throughout the community. The researcher conducted fifty-six semi-structured informal interviews involving 12 administrators, 22 educators, 14 parents, and 8 community leaders and four small focus group sessions. Ethically sound practices, such as maintaining the anonymity of informants and destroying all audiotapes after transcription, were followed.

Merriam (1988) explains that an interview is a purposeful conversation. The interviewer wants to find out what is on the informant's mind. Interviews allow the researcher to investigate the feelings, thoughts, and intentions of the informants that are not observable. The purpose of the interview, according to Patton (1980), is to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. Good interviewers are sensitive to the verbal and nonverbal messages provided by informants, and are good reflective listeners (Whyte, 1982). Informal discussions with on-site observation participants often lead to the discovery of key people to be interviewed. Key people to interview are also discovered when mining documents. Later, these key persons (often considered knowledgeable) can provide the researcher with interview referrals. Taylor & Bogdan (1984) list five issues that should be addressed at the outset of every interview:

- 1) The purpose of the inquiry and the researcher's motives and intentions.
- 2) Pseudonyms of the informants as a means of protection.
- 3) Deciding who has final say over the content of the study.
- 4) Payment (if applicable).
- 5) Logistics with regard to scheduling the time and place of the interviews
(pp. 77&78).

Most of the interviews conducted in case studies are classified as open-ended and less structured (Merriam, 1988). Merriam (1988) explains semi-structured interviews are guided by a list of questions or issues to be investigated, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is predetermined. Merriam (1988) adds that the number of participants is not as critical as the quality, the potential of each person to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon.

Focus groups were planned and facilitated by the researcher. The focus group schedule follows:

Focus Group #1 - Administrators

Focus Group #2 - Educators

Focus Group #3 - Parents

Focus Group #4 - Community Leaders

Berg (1995) states “the focus group is defined as an interview style designed for small groups” (p. 68). Researchers use focus groups to understand the conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychological and sociocultural characteristics and processes among various groups (Berg, 1995). Focus group interviews were first utilized during World War II by military psychologists and civilian consultants to determine the effectiveness of radio programs in boosting army morale. Later, marketing researchers used focus groups extensively. Focus groups typically consist of a small number of participants under the guidance of a facilitator/moderator. The facilitator or moderator draws out information from the participants regarding important topics to the investigation. The informal focus group atmosphere should encourage the participants to speak freely and candidly about their attitudes, opinions, and perspectives. Discussions are stimulated when one group member reacts to comments made by another. Berg (1995) refers to this type of group dynamic as “synergistic group effect” (p. 69). This synergy allows for collective brainstorming and in-depth discussion. A greater number of ideas, issues, topics, and solutions can be generated through group discussion than through individual conversation (Berg, 1995).

Role of the Researcher

According to Creswell (1994) “qualitative research is interpretative research.”

Therefore, the researcher’s biases, values, and judgment need to be stated explicitly in the research report. I am an African American female. I am frequently classified as a baby buster and a first generation college graduate. I was raised in a middle class family consisting of two working parents and a younger sibling. I lived in a large metropolitan city (Chicago, Illinois) and attended a large inner city, interracial school until second grade. I obtained my third through fifth grade education in a small urban magnet school after my family relocated and transferred my sister and me to a smaller district. My father’s employer then relocated our family from Chicago, Illinois to Tulsa, Oklahoma. As a result, I was educated in urban magnet schools from sixth grade through twelfth grade. I graduated from high school in 1982 and from Oklahoma State University in 1988. I began my teaching career by teaching in the same school district from which I had graduated. However, I taught in a predominately EuroAmerican, middle socioeconomic status school rather than the integrated magnet schools which I attended. After the first two years of my teaching career, I left the district and began teaching at a prestigious, high socioeconomic status independent (private) school in Tulsa. I also began working on a Master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction. I taught second and third grade for two years before relocating to Oklahoma City. I began teaching second grade gifted and talented students in a large urban neighborhood school which maintained a 93% African American student population while completing my Master’s degree. Afterwards, I began taking required coursework to complete a Doctor of Education degree and left teaching to

become a consultant for the district as a Title I Parent-School-Community (PSC) Coordinator. As a P.S.C. Coordinator, I worked with low socioeconomic African American students and their families for two years.

My experiences as a student, teacher, and consultant has provided me the opportunity to reflect on past events and their relation to the neighborhood schools plan. My personal and professional experiences with both (integrated) magnet schools and (segregated) neighborhood schools provided me with the background that I needed to successfully investigate and interpret this study. Additionally, I was able to obtain insider privileges being that I had worked for the district both as a teacher and consultant. I chose to investigate this topic because of its personal meaning to me as an African American educator working with low socioeconomic students in the Oklahoma City Public Schools District.

Assumptions, Views, and Theoretical Orientation

Of the Researcher

Having attended integrated magnet schools, attended predominantly EuroAmerican universities, resided in EuroAmerican neighborhoods, and attended EuroAmerican churches, I openly favor integration and have become an integrationalist. I honestly do not believe that segregated educational institutions themselves provide superior or inferior educational opportunities, just different educational experiences. In my opinion, the greatest problems in segregated systems are equity (especially financial) and racial exposure (the chance for races and cultures to mix). My personal biases toward integration have often been internally questioned when I participate in events or groups

that are predominantly African American (example – church functions, social events, and civic and community groups). This experience that I earlier referred to as “just different” is a unique social and emotional experience. Commonalties and shared experiences can often be found among homogenous members of a culture or group that are not as apparent or consciously present when interacting with heterogeneous individuals from various groups/cultures. I purposely chose to work with inner-city African American children in the Oklahoma City Public School System for this reason. My experience in teaching these African American children provided a uniquely different experience than I had experienced previously. I felt a special bond and a sense of community that I had not experienced earlier in my career. The parents were amazingly trusting and open. The children were more openly affectionate and intense rapports were established almost instantly.

Therefore, I see the different advantages of both integrated and segregated schools. My questions thus became . . . What are the perceptions of other African American educators, parents, and community leaders concerning this phenomenon? What are the unique advantages and disadvantages of both systems? In sum, I entered the field with a neutral position appreciating the various perceptions that I encountered so that I could obtain meaningful findings about the perceptions of the participants being interviewed.

Methodologies, Verification, and Ethics

All researchers are concerned with producing valid, reliable, and ethical research. The terms "trustworthiness" and "authenticity" are used as verification of qualitative

research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Distortions can be detected by checking the plausibility of the account and the reliability of the informant. This is done by comparing an informant's account with accounts given by other informants (Whyte, 1982). Confirming the information obtained from informants by verifying it with the documentary material is also wise. The use of multiple methods of collecting data is one form of what Denzin (1970) refers to as triangulation. Methodological triangulation, as it is frequently called, combines dissimilar methods such as document analysis, interviews, and focus groups to study the same case (Denzin, 1970). This combination of methods helps the researcher overcome the deficiencies found in each unique method. One major strength of case study research, is that it allows the researcher to use multiple data collection methods.

Internal validity, reliability, and external validity allow the researcher and others to trust the findings of a qualitative study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) prefer using the terms "truth value" for internal validity, "transferability" for external validity, and "consistency" for reliability.

Internal validity evaluates the findings in relation to or against reality. Ratcliffe reminds us that "data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter or translator; researchers cannot observe or measure a phenomenon without changing it; and that numbers and words are all only symbolic representations of reality, rather than reality" (p. 167). Again, validity must be evaluated in terms of the interpretation of the investigator's experience, instead of reality itself. Qualitative research takes into account that the researcher gathers and records the informant's construction of reality, how they understand the world. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) report that "the qualitative researcher is interested in perspectives

rather than universal truth, and it is the researcher's obligation to present these perspectives and experiences of the informants" (p. 168). As a researcher, it was my duty to record, transcribe, understand, analyze, and report the perspectives of the informants.

Merriam (1988) lists six basic strategies that researchers should use to ensure internal validity:

- 1) Triangulation - using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the findings.
- 2) Member checks - taking data and interpretations back to the informants for their verification.
- 3) Long-term observation at the research site or repeated observations of the same phenomenon.
- 4) Peer examination - asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge.
- 5) Participatory modes of research - involving participants in all phases of the research.
- 6) Researcher's biases - clarifying the researcher's assumptions, views, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study. (p. 170).

Triangulation, member checks, repeated interviews, and the clarification of the researcher's biases have all been utilized to ensure internal validity for the purpose of this study.

Insider/outsider or emic and etic theories also relate to validity. Emics and insiders are those individuals with access to information and activity. These insiders or emics can often provide pertinent information to researchers. Etics and outsiders are those

individuals that are not part of the particular group or culture. These outsiders or etics often are not able to obtain information or participate without the assistance of one or more insiders (guides). Guides are defined as persons found among the group and the setting to be studied (Berg 1995). Once these individuals are convinced that the research is worthwhile and that no harm will come to them and the other insiders, guides often assist the researcher with contacting and interviewing/observing other insiders. Guides for this study were identified and located through friends, acquaintances, and colleagues. For example, the researcher in this particular study is African American and a former consultant for the Oklahoma City Public Schools District (insider status). The researcher honestly explained that the purpose of this study was to investigate, understand, and report the perceptions of various individuals concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools SRP and that confidentiality practices would be implemented. Therefore, the researcher had little trouble gaining insider or emic privileges with the help of various guides.

According to Berg (1995), the researcher's frame of mind when entering a natural setting is crucial to the results of the study. The wrong attitude can destroy the possibility of learning the perceptions of the participants. Berg (1995) advises that one must enter the field appreciating the situations rather than intending to correct them. This neutral position allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon and provides a less biased approach and stance. The researcher of this study clarified her assumptions, views, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study (see Assumptions, Views, and Theoretical Orientation of the Researcher section). Again, the researcher was only interested in investigating, understanding, and reporting the perceptions of the participants, not advancing any particular agenda.

Reliability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be replicated (Merriam, 1988). Positivists and quantitative researchers generally believe that a single reality exists and thus, repeated studies will yield the same results if the study is reliable. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, believe that there are many interpretations of what is happening and there is no benchmark for reliability. However, Lincoln and Guba (1981) claim “since it is impossible to have internal validity without reliability, a demonstration of internal validity amounts to a simultaneous demonstration of reliability (p. 171).” Scriven (1972) adds that just because a number of people have experienced the same phenomenon does not necessarily make the phenomenon more reliable. Merriam (1988) lists three techniques a researcher can use to ensure reliability:

- 1) The researcher’s position: The researcher should explain the assumptions behind the study.
- 2) Triangulation: Triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity.
- 3) Audit trail: The researcher must describe in detail how the data were collected, categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study. (p. 172).

All three of these techniques were used in this study.

External validity refers to the generalizability of the results of a study. As mentioned earlier, case studies usually have high internal validity. Nevertheless, case studies are generally selected to investigate a single case rather than to investigate what is generally true (Merriam, 1988). Merriam (1988) adds that applying generalizations to individuals is hardly useful. Often in qualitative research, researchers try to improve

external validity by using many cases to study the same phenomenon (multicase or cross-case analysis). In multicase or cross-case analysis the researcher uses sampling strategies, predetermined questions, and specific coding and analysis procedures. Merriam (1988) lists the following three strategies as ways of improving the generalizability of a study:

- 1) Providing a rich, thick description.
- 2) Describing how typical the program, event, or individual is compared with others in the same class, so that users can make comparisons with their own situations.
- 3) Conducting a multicase or cross-case analysis (p. 177).

Summary

This study used case study methods such as document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups to investigate the perspectives of administrators, educators, parents and notable community leaders concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan. The researcher conducted 56 semi-structured interviews including 12 administrators, 22 educators, 14 parents, and 8 community leaders. Four focus groups including 8 administrators, 4 educators, 4 parents, and 8 community leaders were also conducted to assist the researcher in presenting the data in a holistic context. Pseudonyms were provided for the informants as a means of protection. The researcher also explicitly presented biases and values in the research report. Triangulation, using multiple sources of data and multiple methods to confirm the findings, was also used. Member checks, peer examinations, and an audit trail were all used to strengthen reliability and internal validity.

This particular research design includes rich, thick description and a typical modal category of the case. In sum, the various strategies and techniques listed throughout this chapter were used in the study to ensure internal validity, reliability, and external validity.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study's findings were concerned with eight questions (Appendixes C-G) that dealt with issues relating to the social acceptance of the OKCPS Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan. Questions described the demographics of the fifty-six participants and outlined their awareness and knowledge of the OKCPS NSP/SRP and its history. The findings also included their understandings of the impact of the OKCPS NSP/SRP on African American students and the African American community. Their recommendations are also provided. Further, the focus groups (Appendixes H,I,J,K) gave the researcher a confidence level in the information presented.

Interviews

1. How Are You Affiliated with the Oklahoma City Public Schools District? – A total of fifty-six participants were interviewed. This included twelve administrators, twenty-two educators, fourteen parents (including nine mothers, one father, and two couples) and eight community leaders. Twenty-five African American females, sixteen African American males, thirteen EuroAmerican females, and two EuroAmerican males were interviewed.

2. How Long Have You Been Affiliated with the Oklahoma City Public School

District? – The administrators interviewed have an average of 18.75 years of experience with the OKCPS District. The educators interviewed have an average of 15.74 years of experience with the OKCPS District. The parents have been affiliated with the District for an average of 18.75 years. Many of the community leaders interviewed were not directly affiliated with the Oklahoma City Public Schools District.

3. Where Have You Taught or Worked in the Oklahoma City Public Schools

District? And/or What Schools Have Your Children Attended? – Three of the four groups of interviewees/participants had a wide range of experience within the OKCPS District. The Table I lists the schools in which the administrators and educators have worked, and the particular parent/school affiliation.

The community leaders interviewed were not directly affiliated with any particular school or schools in the OKCPS District.

4. What Do You Know about the OKCPS NSP/SRP? – (See Appendix C) The

majority of the participants had an adequate understanding of the OKCPS NSP/SRP. Numerous responses also indicated knowledge of the Finger Plan and the District's attempt to integrate the schools prior to the NSP. The following are illustrations of outlying responses. Of the twelve administrators interviewed, one African American female administrator claimed to have only superficial knowledge of the plan because she did not pay attention to the plan earlier in her career as a teacher and one EuroAmerican female administrator explained, "I am not sure what you are asking, I think that I had just joined the OKCPS District when the plan was implemented." In addition, of the twenty-

TABLE I
PARTICIPANT AFFILIATION WITH OKLAHOMA
CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

| Administrators | Educators | Parents |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Arcadia | Arcadia | |
| Bodine | Bodine | |
| Britton | Britton | |
| Buchanan | Buchanan | |
| Capital Hill | Capital Hill | |
| | | Classen |
| Cleveland | Cleveland | |
| Columbus | Columbus | |
| Coolidge | Coolidge | |
| Creston Hills | Creston Hills | Creston Hills |
| Dewey | Dewey | |
| Dunbar | Dunbar | Dunbar |
| Edwards | Edwards | Edwards |
| Eisenhower | Eisenhower | Eisenhower |
| Fillmore | Fillmore | |
| Garden Oaks | Garden Oaks | |
| Gatewood | Gatewood | |
| | Green Pastures | |
| Hawthorne | Hawthorne | |
| Hillcrest | Hillcrest | |
| | | Hoover Middle School |
| | | Horace Mann |
| | | John Marshall High School |
| King | King | King |
| Lafayette | Lafayette | |
| Lee | Lee | |

TABLE I - Continued

| Administrators | Educators | Parents |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Longfellow | Longfellow | Longfellow |
| Nichols Hills | Nichols Hills | |
| | North Highland | North Highlands |
| | | Northeast High School |
| Parker | Parker | |
| | | Parks |
| Pierce | Pierce | |
| Polk | Polk | |
| | Prairie Queen | |
| Quail Creek | Quail Creek | |
| Ridgeview | Ridgeview | |
| Sequoyah | Sequoyah | |
| Shidler | Shidler | |
| Shields Heights | Shields Heights | |
| Spencer | Spencer | |
| Star | Star | Star |
| | Stonegate | Stonegate |
| Telstar | Telstar | Telstar |
| West Nichols Hills | West Nichols Hills | West Nichols Hills |
| Western Village | Western Village | Western Village |
| Westwood | Westwood | |
| Wheeler | Wheeler | |
| | Willow Brook | |
| Wilson | Wilson | |

two educators interviewed, one educator claimed to not have much knowledge of the plan and one educator confused the Finger Plan with the OKCPS NSP/SRP. One parent of the twelve interviewed, responded that she was not sure of the events preceding or following the NSP and one parent mistakenly thought that the plan balanced the schools in the OKCPS District.

5. What Are the Strengths and Weaknesses of the OKCPS NSP/SRP? – (See Appendix D) The majority of the participants in all four groups believed that the OKCPS NSP/SRP was implemented to eliminate busing, encourage community cohesiveness, and increase parental involvement. More than half of the participants (50% of administrator participants including 3 African American males and 3 African American females; 68% of educator participants including 2 African American males, 6 African American females, 6 EuroAmerican females, and 1 EuroAmerican male; 57% of parent participants including 2 African American males and 6 African American females; and 62% of community leader participants including 1 African American female and 4 African American males) agreed that neighborhood schools are beneficial in that they eliminated busing and provided a school in close proximity to the students and parents. 41.6% of the administrators interviewed (3 African American females and 2 African American males), 36% of the educators interviewed (1 EuroAmerican female, 2 African American males, and 5 African American females), 28.5% of the parents interviewed (1 African American male and 3 African American females), and 50% of the community leaders interviewed (1 African American female and 3 African American males) claimed the plan has significantly increased participation in extra curricular activities and provided more school volunteers.

However, the other participants argued that parental and community involvement have not significantly increased. A few participants (two community leaders) believe that the NSP/SRP has saved the District money in transportation costs, while a central office administrator/participant explains that the District is spending as much or more in transportation costs. The African American male central office administrator interviewee responded that the District is still busing children, but for different reasons (See Appendix D).

Note: The OKCPS NSP/SRP resulted in eleven racially imbalanced elementary schools in northeast Oklahoma City with student populations which were predominately African American. Across the years, these predominately minority eleven schools were colloquially grouped together and referred to in the media and in publications (including charts/graphs) as the “Dowell schools.” The District’s charts which indicated parental and community involvement in the “Dowell schools” (Management Information Services, 1997) are shown in Figure 2 and 3.

Likewise, a majority of participants (67% of the administrators interviewed including 4 African American females, 3 African American males, and one EuroAmerican female; 81% of the educators interviewed including 7 African American females, 6 African American males and 5 EuroAmerican females; 100% of the parents interviewed including 11 African American females and 3 African American males; and 87.5% of the community leaders interviewed including 2 African American females and 6 African American males) stated that inequity is a large problem. These participants claimed that African American students are being educated in old, dilapidated buildings/ facilities; using outdated and inadequate materials, computers, and equipment; and, are not receiving sufficient resources and programs.

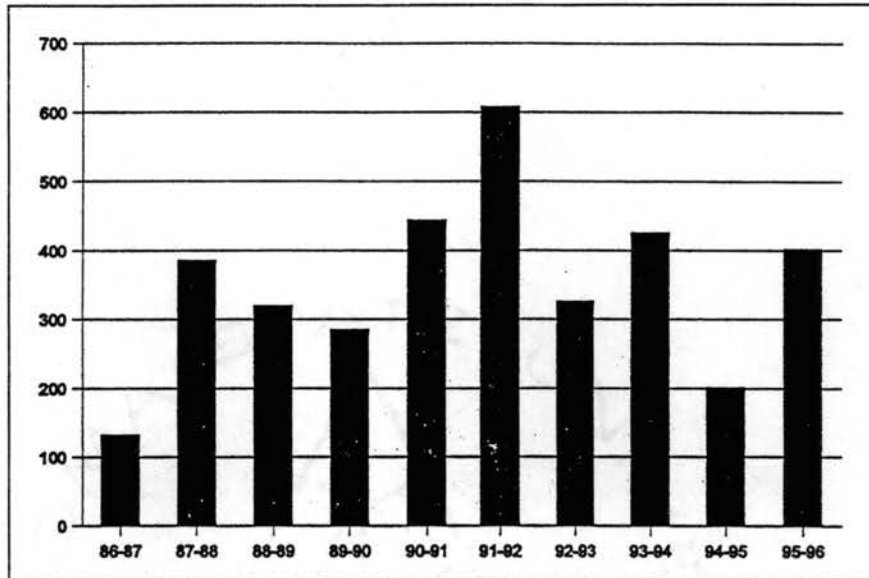


Figure 2. Dowell Schools Results – Parent-Teacher Association Membership, 1986-87 to 1995-96.

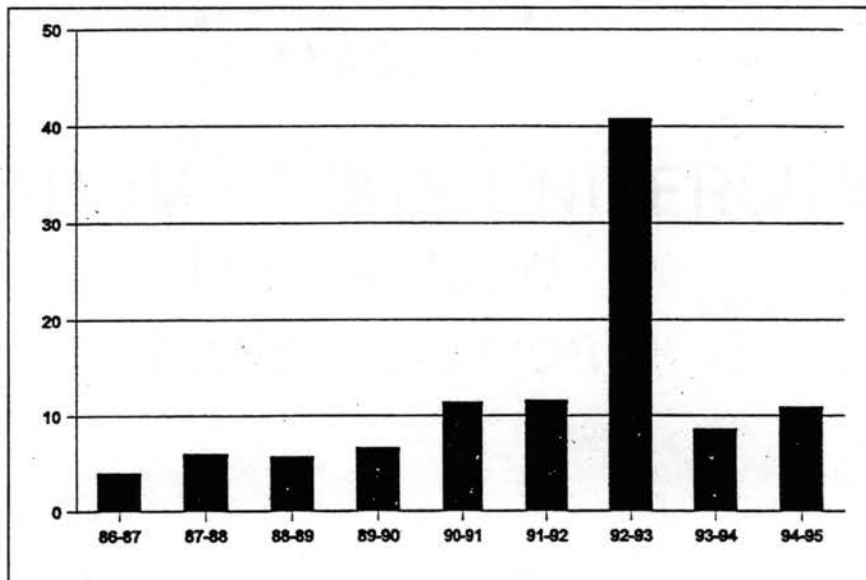


Figure 3. Dowell Schools Results – Business/School Partnerships, 1986-87 to 1994-95

An overwhelming number of participants (75% of administrator participants including 3 African American females, 2 EuroAmerican females, and 4 African American males; 86% of educator participants including 9 African American females, 5 EuroAmerican females, and five African American males; 71% of parent participants including 7 African American females and 3 African American males; and 75% of community leader participants including 2 African American females and 4 African American males) agreed that the OKCPS NSP/SRP has isolated and resegregated African American students and their community both racially and socioeconomically. As a result, they believe that diversity and multicultural education are issues that need to be addressed. The District's map which illustrates the African American student populations in the Dowell Schools and elementary schools with large African American student populations (Management Information Services, 1997) is shown in Figure 4.

6. How Does the Plan Effect Low Socioeconomic African American Students?

(See Appendix E) – The remaining participants who were not mentioned in the findings directly above claimed that neighborhood schools increase African American pride and increase African American students' self-esteem. Meanwhile, those who believe that the NSP/SRP has lead to isolated and resegregated communities argued that inequitable resources and programs negatively affect the self-esteem, motivation, and morale of African American students. A few participants (two African American male community leaders) claimed that neighborhood schools have positively effected the test scores of African American students. But, the majority of the participants from all four groups argued that the test scores of low socioeconomic African American students have not

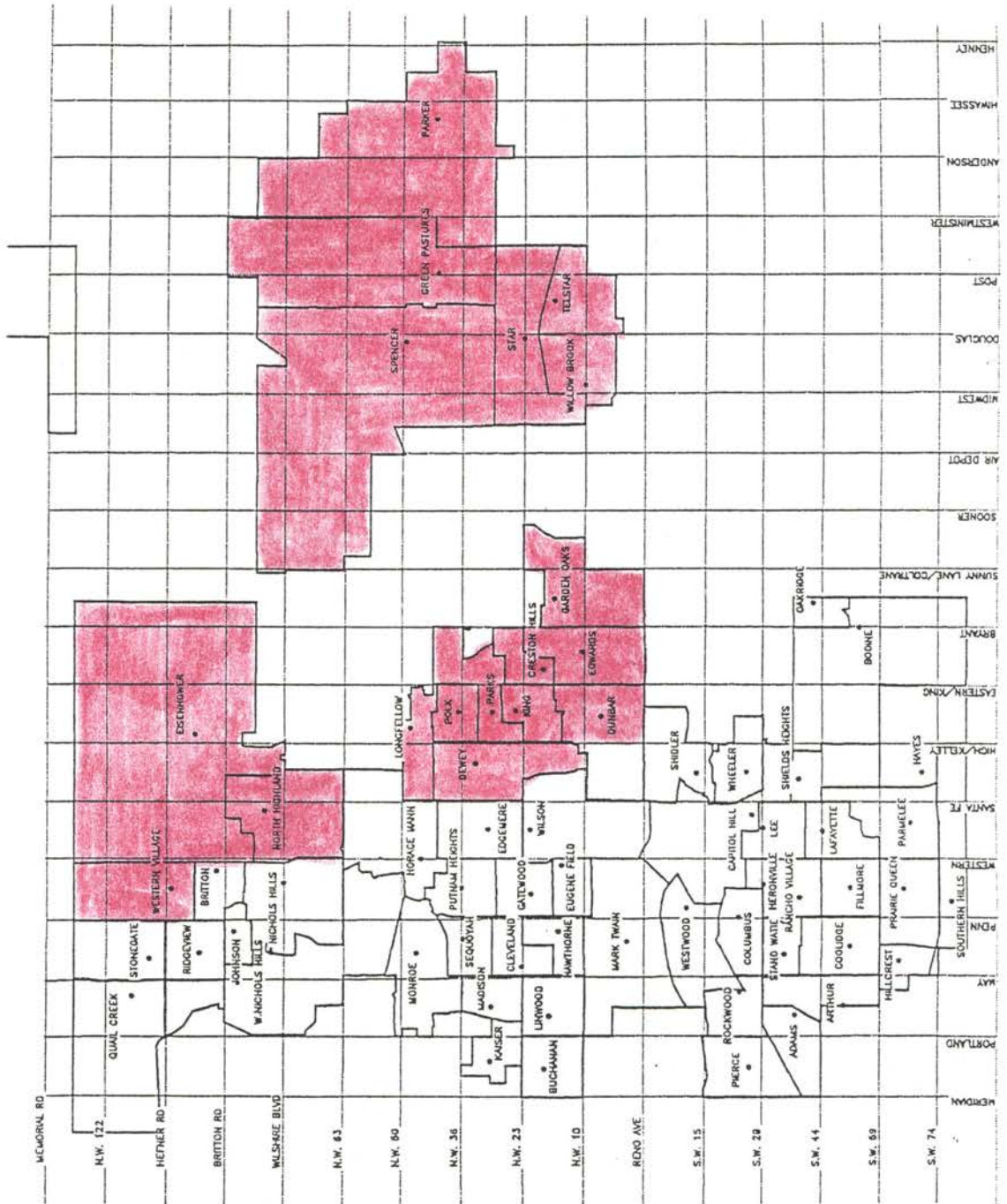


Figure 4. Oklahoma City Public Schools African American Elementary Schools

significantly increased or have slightly declined in recent years with the NSP/SRP. The District's chart which is an average of the test scores of all the Dowell Schools (Management Information Services, 1997) are shown below in Figure 5.

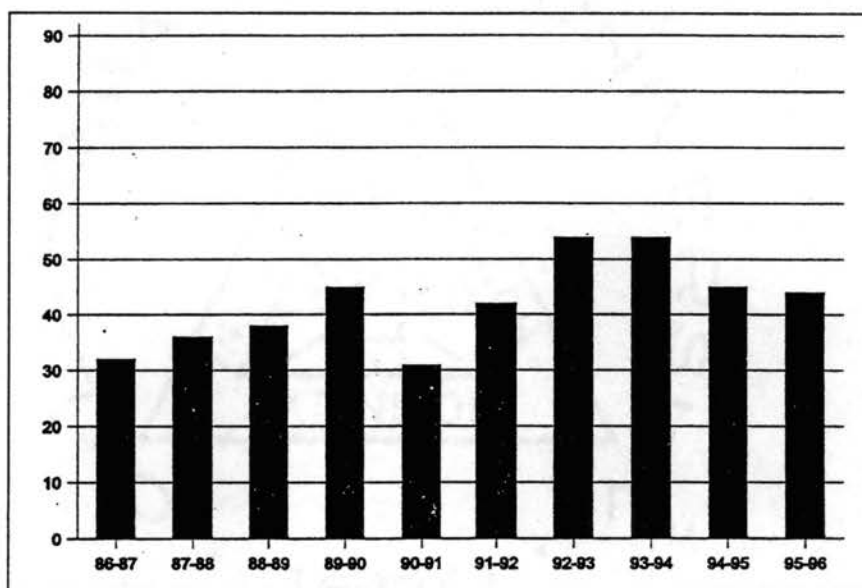


Figure 5. Dowell Schools Results – Average Composite Score on Standardized Achievement Tests Elementary Grades, 1986-87 to 1995-96

7. How Has the OKCPS NSP/SRP Effected the African American Community in Oklahoma City? (See Appendix F) – Two golden threads were repeated throughout these interviews, one group of participants argued that inequitable resources and programs, as well as, resegregated neighborhood schools have negatively influenced African American communities by providing African American students with a false sense of security and success. They claimed that these students are not adequately prepared to

compete in the global society. As a result, declining test scores and increasingly more at-risk schools plague low income African American communities. Furthermore, low income African American students who are not receiving a quality education are often times doomed to repeat the cycle of poverty and substandard conditions that permeate their lives and community.

As one EuroAmerican female educator explained, “low income African American students attend their neighborhood schools and possibly do not venture outside of that community. They often do not get the opportunity to better themselves or their community and thus, remain in their socioeconomic class” (See Appendix F). The other group of participants claimed that the NSP/SRP benefits students, parents, and the community by making the school more accessible and homogeneous. They added that neighborhood schools have united African American community leaders, parents, and teachers.

8. What Are Your Recommendations? (See Appendix G) – Participants from all four groups agreed that low income African American schools are generally the last schools to be upgraded. They also added that the teaching staff in low socioeconomic African American schools is frequently new and/or young and have not yet developed the management nor instructional skills that work best with African American students. They believed that poorly managed classrooms prevent maximum learning from taking place. For example, at times teachers assigned to work in these schools do not want to be there or have prejudices that prevent them from doing their best and causes a deterioration in the success and the self-esteem of low income African American children. As a result, they assert, these students are often expected to perform lower and less is expected of them

educationally (See Appendix G). They explained, once many of these veteran teachers master classroom management and successful teaching strategies, they frequently transfer to more affluent schools and communities. The NSP/SRP, they assert, also prevents interaction among races at an early age because of Oklahoma City's housing patterns (See Appendixes F & G). In general, the participants from all four groups recommended the following recommendations in four specific areas:

a) Equity

- It has been suggested that the District provide more equitable resources, materials, supplies, and equipment to African American students and communities.
- The participants recommended that the District modernize and/or rebuild schools in African American communities.
- It was suggested that an OKCPS Equity Committee and Committee Officer be reestablished to investigate, record, report, and correct inequities in the schools.

b) Teacher Training/Higher Education

- The participants suggested that the District and universities train teachers to successfully teach low socioeconomic African American students and students of color.
- They advised the District and universities to recruit and retain more African American teachers and teachers of color.
- They believe that teachers and educators in the OKCPS District need to embrace both multicultural and urban education.

- It has also been recommended that the District and/or state pay additional compensation to master teachers who are qualified to successfully work in inner city or low socioeconomic schools.
- c) Racial Integration and Family & Community Involvement
- The participants suggested that the District examine alternative ways to integrate its schools and communities (i.e., magnet schools, specialty schools, etc.)
 - They recommended that a task force be created for each quadrant of the district to specifically address the needs of that quadrant.
 - They believe African American parents and community members need to become more involved in all phases of education (i.e., planning, implementation, funding, and volunteering).
- d) Funding
- The participants suggested that state and/or federal government restructure our property tax structure and promote education funding reform.
 - They believe that low income schools should receive additional allocations to compensate for inequities (i.e., grants, special projects). For example, allocate critical resources to low socioeconomic students. We need to send the best teachers and resources to the at-risk schools.
 - They also recommended that the OKCPS Board stop misusing bond money.

Focus Groups

Focus Group One - Administrators – (See Appendix H) Nine administrators participated in focus group one. The group included: 3 African American females, 2 EuroAmerican females, and 4 African American males. Seven of the nine participants were elementary principals, one participant was a middle school principal, and one participant was a central office administrator.

Summary of Focus Group One - Administrators – The administrator focus group participants explained that the OKCPS NSP/SRP was implemented to appease parents in the district who expressed concerns about the burden of bussing being placed on students of color, namely African American students. These parents felt that the burden was placed upon them to integrate the schools and they wanted their children to attend their home schools. These administrators added, “The NSP was really designed to make the neighborhood school the center of the community and to foster more parental and community involvement. District costs were also supposed to be reduced with the NSP/SRP. However, the NSP did create racially identifiable schools and segregated kids and schools according to socioeconomic group.” All of the administrator focus group participants agreed that the NSP/SRP separated students and their communities by race and class. They also agreed that parental involvement continues to be a major problem for neighborhood schools in the OKCPS District. The majority of the administrator focus group participants (6 out of 8) claimed that significantly little parent participation occurred unless the students perform. Familiarity was suggested as one as of the possible reasons

for parent and community apathy. They discussed a range of parental involvement strategies from bean suppers to parent workshops.

One focus group participant claimed that her parents are not significantly participating in the awards assemblies either. Another focus group participant explained that her teachers made the effort to promote informal parent meetings and they ultimately proved successful. This project was held on two Saturdays and was in conjunction with the Oklahoma Excellence Program through the University of Oklahoma. The participants agreed that the District's costs were not significantly cut and one principal participant predicted that the costs may have increased by as much as twenty percent. The administrator focus group participants believe school administrators and teachers make the difference for African American students under the NSP/SRP. They mentioned that it is hard to attract top of the line teachers, and the majority of their applicants have had little to no experience working with African American and/or low socioeconomic students. They further explained that educators lacking classroom management and leadership skills create and perpetuate unsuccessful learning environments. Again, they listed culture shock as a huge problem. A few interview techniques and strategies were suggested during this focus group. They unanimously agreed that equity is a major problem. They too listed deteriorated buildings, grounds, libraries, equipment, materials, etc. as monumental concerns.

They unanimously recommended that the universities and District form a close alliance to successfully prepare teachers to teach in urban and multicultural schools. It was also suggested that low income at-risk schools be staffed with master teachers instead of new/young inexperienced teachers. Merit pay and increased pay and/or additional

compensation to inner city teachers was also suggested as a solution to recruit and retain master teachers throughout the District and across the state. They believed that stronger alliances with community organizations/institutions and social agencies, such as churches and businesses, need to be formed as well. They commented that the educators of today are becoming increasingly involved in social work. They claimed that a sense of community identification needs to be provided to promote successful African American schools and communities. Finally, they claimed that administrators and educators should not be lock-stepped into working with any particular socioeconomic and/or racial groups.

Focus Group Two - Educators – (See Appendix I) Three teachers and one teacher's assistant participated in focus group two. The group included 2 African American females, 1 Asian female, and 1 African American male.

Summary of Focus Group Two - Educators – The educator focus group participants had a fairly clear understanding of the OKCPS NSP/SRP. They all agreed that equity is a major problem. As one focus group participant explained, “Our students do not receive the same education and our educational system has not improved.” They also agreed that the plan has perpetuated both racial resegregation and economic isolation.

An overriding concern of the focus group was that if we continually fail to educate our low socioeconomic students of color (particularly African American), the cycle of poverty and ignorance is only perpetuated and widened. They attributed the lack of parental involvement to the parents' personal negative experiences with school, and lack of maturity and education. They further explained, “As a result, a two tiered educational system exists between the poor and the ones that are going to succeed.” As

one educator focus group participant commented, “Many of these low socioeconomic African American students must leave their community and/or neighborhood school in order to make it.”

They believed that today’s young parents do not understand the need for parent involvement. Past racial discrimination has also been suggested as one possible reason that the patrons of the community distrust and fail to support the school. They saw community familiarity and increased membership in the PTA as the benefits of the OKCPS NSP/SRP plan. They attributed the lack of parent volunteers to the fact that many low income parents have to work one or more jobs that are less flexible. They explained that as a result, these parents are not able to attend school events. They also discussed current transportation problems such as late buses and undesirable weather conditions. The educator focus group participants listed the leadership/administration and the parents as key factors that determine the success or failure of the school.

Their recommendations consisted of parent training programs and workshop intervention, increased alliances with social agencies, site-based management, an equalization of resources, fair and positive media coverage, and business and community support (physical and financial). Like the educator interviewee participants above, they also proposed the idea of turning low income schools into magnet schools to solicit quality patrons.

Focus Group Three - Parents – (See Appendix J) Four parents participated in focus group three. The group included four African American mothers.

Summary of Focus Group Three - Parents – Not all of the parent focus group participants had a clear understanding of the OKCPS NSP/SRP. However, this group was very vocal concerning their stance on the plan. Those who supported the plan claimed that it has caused the community to become closer and more cohesive. They liked the fact that they know and often see the other members of their community. They believed that although the African American community has changed somewhat in that its members are no longer free to discipline the majority of the children of that community, community members still “look out for” these children. Opposing parents argued, “The plan has put us back in neighborhood schools to segregate us. We did not want to go back to segregation.”

All of the parent focus group participants agreed that inequity, racial discrimination, and economic discrimination remain major problems. They added that low income African American students generally do not receive the same quality of education nor are they provided the same quality of teachers and resources. They agreed with the educator focus group that parental involvement is important and that low income parents are often not able to fully participate in school events and programs because of the demands of their jobs. One parent focus group participant responded that apathy among young, unemployed, uneducated, and immature parents is also a significant problem. This group also discussed the cycle of poverty that perpetuates their community. As one parent focus group participant explained, “We have a lot of Black students that are trying to succeed and Black families trying to support them. You have so many that want to do good, so many that want to do better, but you have the majority of society pushing them

back.” They added that they also believe that the African American community is divided. One focus group participant expressed, “We don’t have a common community.”

The parent focus group participants suggested the following six recommendations:

- 1) utilize innovative strategies to increase parental involvement;
- 2) keep money raised for the school and school use at the site and avoid sending the monies to a general fund;
- 3) reassure the parents and community members that the District and/or schools do not have crooked or dishonest employees;
- 4) provide equitable resources and facilities;
- 5) provide enlightening field trips and expose children to a variety of cultural events; and
- 6) solicit the assistance and support of community organizations and institutions (i.e., churches, businesses, etc).

Focus Group Four - Community Leaders – (See Appendix K) Eight community leaders participated in focus group four. The group included: 2 African American females, 1 EuroAmerican female, 4 African American males, and 1 EuroAmerican male. One former OKCPS School Board member, three ministers, one NAACP officer, one NAACP representative, and two central office administrators participated.

Summary of Focus Group Four - Community Leaders – The community leader focus group participants provided detailed and lengthy explanations of their understanding of the OKCPS NSP/SRP. Their explanation helped the researcher understand the historical events of the District preceding the implementation of the NSP/SRP. Several debates transpired during the course of the focus group interview. The first debate developed between the former Board member and the NAACP officer. This debate helped the researcher contextualize the events and perspectives concerning the OKCPS

NSP/SRP. The former Board member argued that the NSP resulted as a response to the concerns of African American parents and the problems associated with busing. The NAACP officer argued that the Board only claimed to appease concerned African American parents, but implemented the plan for selfish and racist reasons. The NAACP officer further argued that the plan increasingly segregated and isolated the African American community in Oklahoma City.

Five of the eight community leader focus group participants agreed that equity continues to be a problem in the OKCPS District. Examples of inequitable situations were provided. A discussion resulted as to the meaning of the word equity. The majority of the focus group participants defined equity to mean an equal opportunity to receive an equal educational experience. For example, they argued that African American students should have the same facilities, materials, resources, and other artifacts which will help them learn. Another view expressed by a central office administrator encouraged the focus group to think of equity to mean the identification of African American student needs as specific to them in the same fashion as EuroAmerican students have specific needs.

The former School Board member argued that equity was one of the initial concerns of the Board during the plan's initial design and implementation. She further explained that an Equity Officer and Equity Committee were utilized. The NAACP officer explained that the initial Equity Committee and Equity Officer were dismissed upon delivering an unsatisfactory report. The two debated the exact reason that the report was considered unsatisfactory. The former Board member argued that the information was incorrect, dishonest, and misleading. Meanwhile, the NAACP argued that the report did not provide the positive and favorable results that the Board had commissioned.

One central office administrator elaborated, "Quality education also comes from having caring teachers, administrators and staff believing and encouraging students to succeed, and reinforcing that failure is not an option. The mindset that I had as an OKCPS student was . . . it wasn't what you didn't have, it was what you made of it." She further explained that she was torn on the issue of integration v. neighborhood schools. She also commented, "integration is more than putting bodies together, and even though our schools appear to be resegregated, our teaching staff is very integrated." "Now, I blame it on poor administrators if we need items and we don't get them."

One minister publicly supported the plan claiming that the NSP has increased parental involvement. He explained that he attended school in the OKCPS District under the Finger Plan and that many African American parents (especially those in the low socioeconomic group) were unable to attend school functions across town for various reasons. The former School Board member added, "You all have heard about the complacency that we had before we implemented the Neighborhood School Plan. Hardly anyone even cared to come to a meeting, or express an opinion. Complacency is very dangerous . . . it is fertile ground for inequity. When people don't care they quit asking questions, they quit looking, and they quit caring. I think that's real dangerous."

One minister anxiously responded to the label complacency, "I am active in the school because my parents were active in school." He further explained, "In the seventies, during integration, many African American parents were forced out of school activities because the school was on the other side of town. And so what happened is that those kids grew up with inactive parents, so they became inactive parents." Another minister insightfully replied, "What is sometimes called apathy and complacency has more to do with

frustration and a lack of expectations." He further explained that many of these people have confronted a lifetime of broken promises and eventually they quit believing, expecting, and finally listening. He concluded, "Sometimes, what has been labeled, particularly by the media, as apathy - was not apathy, it was frustration and it was at times from people who were left out of the formula." A lengthy discussion regarding past OKCPS Bond elections resulted. The community leader focus group participants also discussed the current Board's misuse of funds and poor judgement in budgeting and allocating bond monies. One respondent warned that the OKCPS District cannot afford to waste a single dollar.

Standardized test scores and evaluation were also important topics. The former School Board member passionately summarized, "The achievement gap should continue to narrow. The results of student achievement should be monitored by an Equity Committee. This doesn't mean that one child's test score is going to be the same as some other child's test score. You have got to look at where the child started." She further cautioned, "If we don't start doing it soon, I think we are going to have another horrible thing imposed on us, school vouchers or charter schools, and we will end up having a very good school for a very few students."

The community leader focus group believed that the media in Oklahoma City does not support the District. In fact, they fault the media for frequently reporting negative and misleading information about schools in the OKCPS District. The community leader focus group participants suggested several recommendations. Their suggestions include uniting the churches, parents, schools, social agencies, and businesses for collaborative support; improve communication by publicizing activities/events and thoroughly explaining

changes to people both inside and outside of the District; find innovative ways to reach all students and improve teacher-parent-student climate; provide equitable resources and facilities to all schools throughout the District; use bond monies efficiently and wisely; and, ensure the use of a standardized curriculum throughout the District.

Analysis

While the interviewees and focus group participants analyzed the perspectives concerning the OKCPS Neighborhood School Plan/Student Reassignment Plan, the following is the explanation of that analysis within a specific context. In analyzing the perspectives of the participants concerning the OKCPS NSP/SRP, it is important to examine the similarities and differences of their responses by race, gender, and school affiliation.

In general, EuroAmerican female administrators and educators consistently listed racial isolation as a concern. Meanwhile, African American representatives from all four groups consistently listed economic isolation and equity as major concerns. Interview participants from all four groups consistently faulted the District, government, educators, and society for apathy (student, parent, community), low student achievement, and substandard learning conditions and facilities.

Focus group participants varied, according to group, in their perspectives concerning the causes of apathy, low student achievement, and substandard learning conditions and facilities. Focus group #1- administrators collectively blamed the universities for not adequately preparing teachers to successfully teach in urban schools and communities, but, they commented that the District had neglected the schools in low

income neighborhoods. The African American male administrators mentioned social work as a major concern of urban educators. While the African American female administrators discussed relationships (student-teacher and parent-educator) and classroom management as major areas of concern. The administrators' focus group climate appeared frank and realistic. They discussed real world issues and offered practical solutions. For example, these administrators discussed issues in the third person such as: "students today" and "new teachers."

Focus group #2 - educators faulted the District and administrators for inequitable facilities and resources; "young and uneducated" parents for the lack of parental involvement and educational support; the business community for demonstrating racial and economic preference and discrimination in providing educational resources; the media for negative and inaccurate media coverage; and the educational system for perpetuating cycles of poverty. Examples of institutionalized racism and discrimination were provided. Community churches were mentioned as possible sources for educational and financial support. The climate of this focus group was much more personalized, sympathetic, and cohesive. Statements like "our children" or "our students" and "our community" were frequently used throughout the discussion.

Focus group #3 - parents blamed the District for consolidating and misappropriating funds; providing inequitable facilities and resources; and, perpetuating educational bureaucracy. Community churches were also mentioned as possible sources for educational and financial support. These focus group participants all agreed that their African American community is divided. They faulted society, "young and uneducated" parents and community members, and integration for the division and apathy that exists in

their community. Examples of both institutionalized and personal racism and discrimination were provided. This focus group was extremely vocal in their stance concerning neighborhood schools. Two of the four parent focus group participants supported the OKCPS NSP/SRP, while the remaining two parent focus group participants opposed the plan. The parent focus group appeared more informal, vocal, and confrontational. Their discussions were frank and candid.

Focus group #4 - community leaders seemingly blamed each other for problems with the plan. For example, the NAACP representative and the former School Board member constantly debated the motivation for the plan (see Appendix K and page 74) OKCPS representatives (1 African American female central office administrator, 1 EuroAmerican male central office administrator and 1 EuroAmerican female former School Board member) consistently sided together on issues relating to bond elections, equity, and parental involvement. On the other hand, the ministers (3 African American males) consistently agreed on issues relating to apathy, equity, communication, and racial/economic discrimination. All agreed that the media coverage in Oklahoma City has been less than favorable towards the District. This focus group was the only focus group that discussed curriculum issues including a standard curriculum. This focus group maintained an extremely formal and political milieu. For example, political debates continued all evening.

Both the educator and parent focus groups commented that the African American community has become divided. The educators characterized this as a division between the educated and the poor. They further explained that many successful African

Americans have left this community and the remaining African Americans in this community are predominately young, unsuccessful, and uneducated.

Three of the four focus groups, teachers, parents, and community leaders, mentioned the possibility of utilizing area churches as a source of disseminating information and providing resources. Both the administrator and community leader focus groups discussed the possibility of increasing teacher salaries and improving teacher recruitment practices.

Summary

The participants in this study appeared torn on the issues concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools NSP/SRP. Two opposing positions surfaced during this investigation. The first position embraces the cultural aspects of the African American community and envisioned hopes of community cohesion, identity, and pride. The second position argues that neighborhood schools perpetuate resegregation and racial and economic isolation.

One interviewee (an African American female community leader) insightfully summarized the first position of this continuing debate. She believed that African American neighborhood schools should provide African American students both a sense of community and identity. She further explained that we must remember that the attitudes of those who affect low socioeconomic students can be cloudy and detrimental. She warned, "Often the attitudes of African Americans towards themselves and their race can be just as destructive as the racist and discriminatory attitudes in which others have towards them. Sadly enough, society seems to mistakenly believe that where one lives and what one has obtained defines one's character." She concluded, "If neighborhood schools would instill

pride (self-respect and respect for others) and a belief that “all children will succeed,” then our low income African American children will become successful (See Appendix E).

Two interviewees (African American mothers) briefly summarized the alternate or second position concerning racial segregation and economic isolation, “I feel now that we are aware of past distribution problems, we can now make sure that our community is no longer discriminated against.” “We constantly hear the phrases ‘excellence in education’ and ‘the mind is a terrible thing to waste.’ The state of Oklahoma and the OKCPS District need to reexamine these issues and financially commit to these words of truth” (See Appendixes C-G).

Although the participants in this study appeared somewhat divided in their perspectives, their recommendations were collectively cohesive. Regardless of their position, the African American community in Oklahoma City clearly recommended that equity; teacher training; higher education; racial and/or socioeconomic integration; family/community involvement; and funding be addressed to improve education for low socioeconomic African American children.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Introduction

During the past fourteen years the Oklahoma City Public Schools Board and District has implemented a neighborhood schools plan, which has met with legal challenges and public criticism. Evidence provided by the Oklahoma City Public Schools District, higher and lower Courts, and scholarly research indicated that the OKCPS Board adopted and implemented the NSP/SRP to avoid increased busing burdens on African American students, protect schools in the northeast quadrant from closure, and increase parental and community involvement (Thomas, 1990). Nevertheless, Oklahoma City administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders continue to question the effectiveness of the plan and debate the plan's impact on low socioeconomic African American students and their community.

Evaluation of Findings

Evidence in this study revealed that two extreme positions have resulted concerning the Oklahoma City Public Schools NSP/SRP. The first position embraces the belief that the NSP/SRP has provided low income African American students and community members with a sense of pride, community cohesion, and racial identity. The

second position argues that the NSP/SRP has perpetuated resegregation and racial and economic isolation in low socioeconomic African American schools and communities.

Although all individual and group interviews varied in context, the content was similar. There is no doubt that all the participants in both the interviews and focus groups believed that equity is a continual problem in the Oklahoma City Public Schools District. All participants collectively recommended that four areas be examined and implemented. They were equity; teacher training and higher education; racial integration and family community involvement; and funding.

Concluding Remarks

The participants in this study eloquently reflected the positions and issues that are currently being debated nationally concerning neighborhood schools. This heated debate exists between proponents who are willing to risk resegregation in hopes of recapturing community involvement, identity, and cohesion vs. opponents who argue against cultural imprisonment and promote the development of a global (integrated) society.

Occasionally, I question the definition and futility of integration in a racist society. In fact, many ask, "When will African Americans become fully visible and empowered to move from the margins of society to the mainstream of society?" When will their contributions as a race and a culture finally be validated and appreciated in both American educational institutions and society?" In sum, today's question for African Americans ultimately becomes, "Do we continue to voice our perspectives and concerns to those benefiting from an apathetic, insensitive, and discriminatory system, or do we attempt to pool together what little resources we have and empower ourselves."

African Americans in Oklahoma and throughout the nation have historically survived the pain and hardship of slavery, fought against the injustices of segregation, and endured the trials and tribulations of integration. Yet, despite constant struggles and strife, African Americans continually remain in the margins. Three differing perspectives have emerged in this two-sided debate.

The first (inactive) perspective, represents several members of the African American neighborhood/community who have unfortunately lost the zeal, drive, ambition, and direction to continually fight for “their piece of America’s pie.” These are often the parents and community members who mistakenly appear lazy and apathetic and who are often criticized for not supporting and participating in the schools. They ultimately feel marginalized, powerless, and invisible.

The second (reactive) perspective, represents many African American neighborhood/community members who fight for separate, but equal educational experiences for their children. Middle class African American parents can afford separate, quality education for their children, however, low socioeconomic African Americans are not afforded that luxury. The schools in their neighborhoods/communities are the schools that were thoroughly discussed in this study. These schools were characterized as outdated, dilapidated facilities with substandard equipment, supplies and resources. These problems quickly surface and the questions ultimately become, “is equal enough, and is equality truly equitable?”

Finally, the third (proactive) perspective, represents numerous African Americans who fight for the dream of becoming a totally integrated society. They realize that African Americans will not and cannot politically, economically, and academically achieve or

succeed in a segregated general society. They argue against resegregation, while fighting for equity and inclusion.

True, our previous attempts at integration have ultimately failed. Nevertheless, neighborhood schools plans in urban districts have only perpetuated cycles of poverty and ignorance in low socioeconomic African American neighborhoods/communities. These precious children and urban youth are looking to administrators, educators, parents, community leaders, African Americans, and/or concerned citizens for the solution/solutions.

In conclusion, the participants in this study have successfully outlined a comprehensive list of recommendations which need to be supported and implemented. Educators and their communities need to join forces to transform knowledge and take action to reconstruct and change society.

Recommendations for Further Studies

While the researcher remains confident that this study accurately represents the perspectives of the participants interviewed, several related topics are suggested for further study to expand the literature in this area.

Oklahoma City Public Schools

The following four topics are recommended to the Oklahoma City Public Schools District for future research.

- Equity among schools, examining facilities, equipment, supplies, funding, and resources.

- The characteristics of successful and unsuccessful magnet schools.
- Evaluations of the NSP/SRP and the District's magnet schools.
- Studies investigating the attitudes of administrators, teachers, parents, and students concerning urban education and multicultural education.

Scholarly Research

Further recommendations for future research follow:

- Successful strategies to implement transformative curriculum in urban school districts.
- Successful methods to integrate urban schools beyond the traditional reliance on vouchers and magnet schools.
- Educational funding reform that addresses the needs of the socioeconomically challenged.
- The perspectives of African American students (or students of color) concerning urban schools and communities.
- Evaluating program effectiveness in teacher education programs: preparing teachers to become successful urban educators.
- Successful strategies and practices in reversing underachievement among urban students, African American students, and/or students of color.

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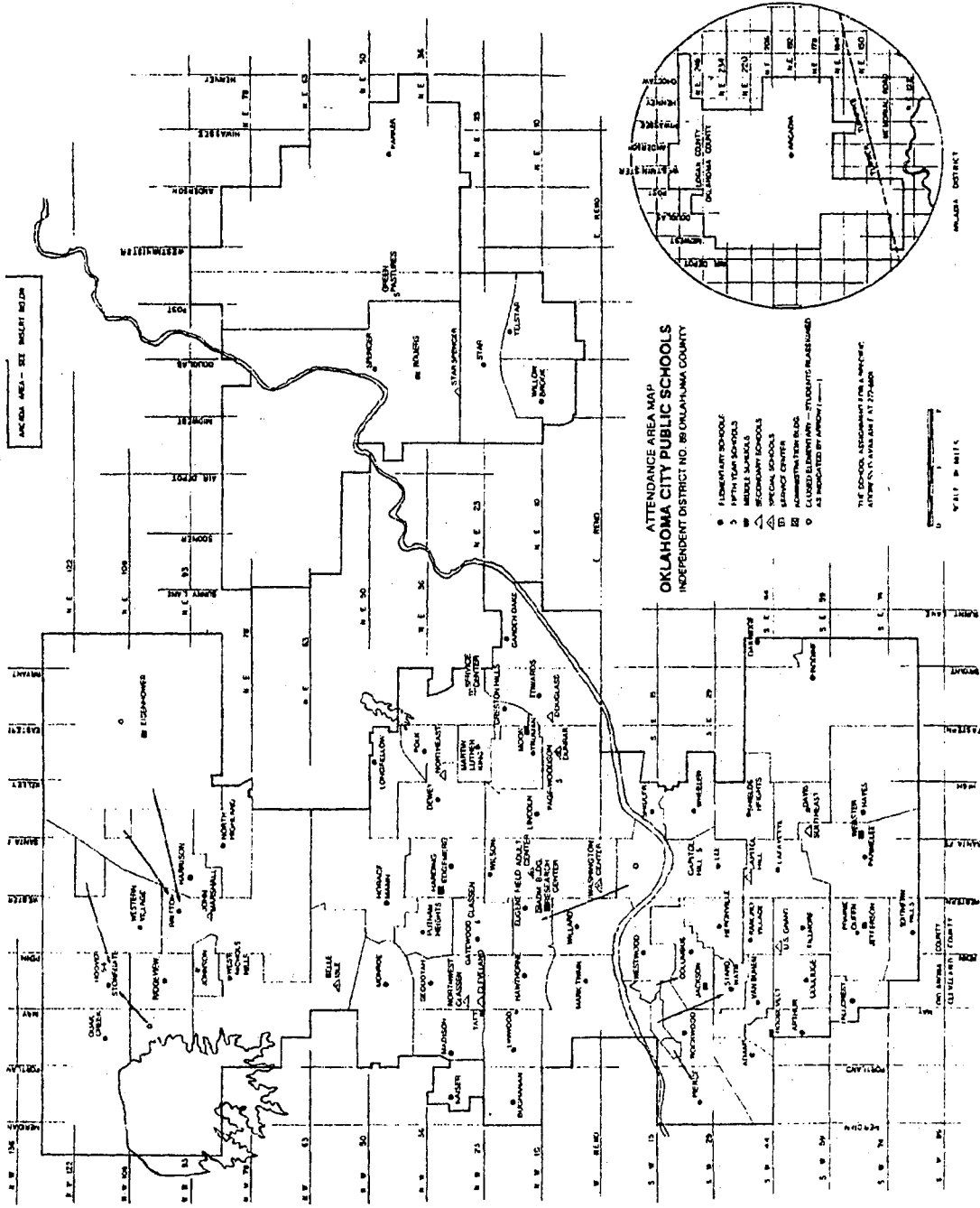
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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

**NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS PLANS/STUDENT
REASSIGNMENT PLAN**

ELEMENTARY ASSIGNMENT PLAN



Jim Crow laws and restrictive covenants allowed the schools in the Oklahoma City Public Schools District to remain segregated from 1907-1977. In 1961, Black students and their parents sued the Oklahoma City Board of Education in an attempt to end de jure segregation. In 1963, the District Court ruled that Oklahoma City had intentionally operated a “dual” school system-segregated by race. Later in 1965, the District Court found that the Oklahoma City Public Schools neighborhood zoning efforts unsuccessfully desegregated its schools. In 1969, Robert L. Dowell (a Black parent of a student in the Oklahoma City Public School District) Black students, and their parents presented their desegregation case to a Federal District Court in the court case of *Dowell v. Board of Education*. But, the U.S. Supreme Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit, granted relief of the District’s desegregation plan despite *Dowell v. Board of Education*. Finally, in 1972, the District Court ordered the Oklahoma City School Board to implement the “Finger Plan” (see attached maps) -- a desegregation plan which allowed kindergartners to attend their neighborhood schools, bused 1-4 grade Black students to former White schools, and bused White 5th grade students to former Black schools. In 1977, the Court ruled that constitutional requirements had been achieved and the case was closed.

In 1984, the Oklahoma City Public Schools Board claimed that demographic changes led to greater burdens on young Black children. They argued that Black students had to travel long hours on school buses to suburban White areas. Finally, the Board created and implemented the Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan. The Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan (SRP) reassigned K-4 students to their neighborhood schools and continued to bus 5-12 grade students (see attached plan). In 1985,

a motion was filed to reopen the *Dowell* case claiming that the SRP failed to achieve “unitary” status and argued that it was a return to segregation. The District Court refused to reopen the case ruling that the District remained unitary and attributed residential segregation to private choices and economics rather than any fault of the Oklahoma City Public Schools District. In 1991, *Dowell v. Board of Education* again surfaced, only this time it asked if 13 years of desegregation was enough. The Court ruled that the desegregation decrees were not intended to be perpetual. Thus, U.S. District Judge Luther Bohanon dissolved the 1972 busing court order. Today, the Oklahoma City Public Schools District continues to implement the SRP.

Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools Plan/
Student Reassignment Plan

OF *ED. OF OKLAHOMA CITY* v. *DOWELL*

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89-1080 -- OPINION OF *ED. OF OKLAHOMA CITY* v. *DOWELL*

NOTICE: This opinion is subject to formal revision before publication in the preliminary print of the United States Reports. Readers are requested to notify the Reporter of Decisions, Supreme Court of the United States, Washington, D. C. 20543, of any typographical or other formal errors, in order that corrections may be made before the preliminary print goes to press.

No. 89-1080 – OPINION OF *ED. OF OKLAHOMA CITY* v. *DOWELL*

[January 15, 1991]

Chief Justice Rehnquist delivered the opinion of the Court.

Petitioner Board of Education of Oklahoma City sought dissolution of a decree entered by the District Court imposing a school desegregation plan. The District Court granted relief over the objection of respondents Robert L. Dowell, et al., Black students and their parents. The Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit reversed, holding that the Board would be entitled to such relief only upon " nothing less than a clear showing of grievous wrong evoked by new and unforeseen conditions. . . ." 890 F. 2d 1483, 1490 (1989) (citation omitted). We hold that the Court of Appeals' test is more stringent than is required either by our cases dealing with injunctions or by the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

I. This school desegregation litigation began almost 30 years ago. In 1961, respondents, Black students and their parents, sued petitioners, the Board of Education of Oklahoma City (Board), to end de jure segregation in the public schools. In 1963, the District Court found that Oklahoma City had intentionally segregated both schools and housing in the past, and that Oklahoma City was operating a "dual" school system -- one that was intentionally segregated by race. *Dowell v. School Board of Oklahoma City Public Schools*, 219 F Supp. 427 (WD Okla.). In 1965, the District Court found that the School Board's attempt to desegregate by using neighborhood zoning failed to remedy past segregation because residential segregation resulted in one-race schools. *Dowell v. School Board of Oklahoma City Public Schools*, 244 F. Supp. 971, 975 (WD Okla.). Residential segregation

had once been state imposed, and it lingered due to discrimination by some realtors and financial institutions. *Ibid.* Court found that school segregation had caused some housing segregation. *Id.* at 976-977. In 1972, finding that previous efforts had not been successful at eliminating state imposed segregation, the District Court ordered the Board to adopt the "Finger Plan." *Dowell v. Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools*, 338 F. Supp. 1256, *affd.*, 465 F.2d 1012 (CA10), cert. denied, 409 U.S. 1041 (1972), under which kindergartners would be assigned to neighborhood schools unless their parents opted otherwise; children in grades 1-4 would attend formerly all White schools, and thus Black children would be bused to those schools; children in grade five would attend formerly all Black schools, and thus White children would be bused to those schools; students in the upper grades would be bused to various areas in order to maintain integrated schools; and in integrated neighborhoods there would be stand-alone schools for all grades.

In 1977, after complying with the desegregation decree for five years, the Board made a "Motion to Close Case." The District Court held in its "Order Terminating Case":

"The Court has concluded that [the Finger Plan] worked and that substantial compliance with the constitutional requirements has been achieved. The School Board, under the oversight of the Court, has operated the Plan properly, and the Court does not foresee that the termination of its jurisdiction will result in the dismantlement of the Plan or any affirmative action by the defendant to undermine the unitary system so slowly and painfully accomplished over the 16 years during which the cause has been pending before this court...."

"... The School Board, as now constituted, has manifested the desire and intent to follow the law. The court believes that the present members and their successors on the Board will now and in the future continue to follow the constitutional desegregation requirements."

"Now sensitized to the constitutional implications of its conduct and with a new awareness of its responsibility to citizens of all races, the Board is entitled to pursue in good faith its legitimate policies without the continuing constitutional supervision of this Court...."

Jurisdiction in this case is terminated ipso facto subject only to final disposition of any case now pending on appeal." No. Ci-9452 (WD Okla., Jan. 18, 1977); App. 174-176.

This unpublished Order was not appealed.

In 1984, the School Board faced demographic changes that led to greater burdens on young Black children. As more and more neighborhoods became integrated, more stand-alone schools were established, and young Black students had to be bused further from their inner-city homes to outlying White areas. In an effort to alleviate this burden and to increase parental involvement, the Board adopted the Student Reassignment Plan (SRP), which relied on neighborhood assignments for students in grades K-4 beginning in the 1985-1986 school year. Busing continued for students in grades 5-12. Any student could transfer from a school where he or she was in the majority to a school where he or she would be in the minority. Faculty and staff integration was retained, and an "equity officer" was appointed.

In 1985, respondents filed a "Motion to Reopen the Case," contending that the School District had not achieved "unitary" status and that the SRP was a return to segregation. Under the SRP, 11 of 64 elementary schools would be greater than 90% Black, 22 would be greater than 90% White plus other minorities, and 31 would be racially mixed. The District Court refused to reopen the case, holding that its 1977 finding of unitariness was res judicata as to those who were then parties to the action, and that the district remained unitary. *Dowell v. Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools*, 606 F. Supp. 1548 (WD Okla. 1985). The District Court found that the School Board, administration, faculty, support staff, and student body were integrated, and transportation, extracurricular activities and facilities within the district were equal and nondiscriminatory. Because unitariness had been achieved, the District Court concluded that court-ordered desegregation must end.

The Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit reversed, *Dowell v. Board of Education Oklahoma City Public Schools*, 795 F. 2d 1516, cert. denied, 479 U.S. 938 (1986). It held that, while the 1977 order finding the district unitary was binding on the parties, nothing in that order indicated that the 1972 injunction itself was terminated. The court reasoned that the finding that the system was unitary merely ended the District Court's active supervision of the case, and because the school district was still subject to the desegregation decree, respondents could challenge the SRP. The case was remanded to determine whether the decree should be lifted or modified.

On remand, the District Court found that demographic changes made the Finger Plan unworkable, that the Board had done nothing for 25 years to promote residential segregation, and that the school district had bused students for more than a decade in good-faith compliance with the court's orders. 677 F. Supp. 1503 (WD Okla. 1987). The District Court found that present residential segregation was the result of private decision making and economics, and that it was too attenuated to be a vestige of former school segregation. It also found that the district had maintained its unitary status, and that the neighborhood assignment plan was not designed with discriminatory intent. The court concluded that the previous injunction decree should be vacated and the school district returned to local control.

The Court of Appeals again reversed, 890 F. 2d 1483 (CA10 1989), holding that an injunction takes on a life of its own and becomes an edict quite independent of the law it is meant to effectuate. *Id.* at 1490 (citation omitted). That court approached the case "not so much as one dealing with desegregation, but as one dealing with the proper application of the federal law on injunction remedies." *Id.* at 1486. Relying on *United States v. Swift & Co.*, 286 U.S. 106 (1932), it held that a desegregation decree remains in effect until a school district can show "grievous wrong evoked by new and unforeseen conditions," 286 U.S., at 119, and "dramatic changes in conditions unforeseen at the time of the decree that ... impose extreme and unexpectedly oppressive hardships on the obligor." 890 F. 2d, at 1490 (quoting T. Jost, *From Swift to Stotts and Beyond: Modification of Injunctions in the Federal Courts*, 64 *Tex. L. Re.* 110 1, 1110 (1986)). Given that a number of schools would return to being primarily one-race schools under the SRP, circumstances in Oklahoma City had not changed enough to justify modification of the decree, The Court of Appeals held that, despite the unitary finding, the Board had the "affirmative duty ... not to take any action that it would impede

the process of disestablishing the dual system and its effects." 890 F. 2d, at 1504 (quoting *Dayton Board of Education v. Brinkman*, U.S. 526, 538 (1979)).

We granted the Board's petition for certiorari, 494 U.S. ----- (1990), to resolve a conflict between the standard laid down by the Court of Appeals in this case and that laid down in *Spangler v. Pasadena City Board of Education*, 611 F. 2d 1239 (CA9 1979), and *Riddick v. School Board of City of Norfolk*. 784 F. 2d 521 (CA4 1986). We now reverse the Court of Appeals.

II. We must first consider whether respondents may contest the District Court's 1987 order dissolving the injunction which had imposed the desegregation decree. Respondents did not appeal from the District Court's 1977 order finding that the school system had achieved unitary status, and

petitioners contend that the 1977 order bars respondents from contesting the 1987 order. We disagree, for the 1977 order did not dissolve the desegregation decree, and the District Court's unitariness finding was too ambiguous to bar respondents from challenging later action by the Board.

The lower courts have been inconsistent in their use of the term "unitary." Some have used it to identify a school district that has completely remedied all vestiges of past discrimination. See, e.g. *United States v. Overton*, 834 F. 2d 1171, 1175 (CA5 1987); *Riddick v. School Board of City of Norfolk*. SUM. at 533-534; *Vaughns v. Board of Education of Prince George's Cty.* 758 F. 2d 983, 988 (CA4 1985). Under that interpretation of the word, a unitary school district is one that has met the mandate of *Brown v. Board of Education*, 349 U.S. 294 (1955), and *Green v. New Kent County School Board* 391 U.S. 430 (1968). Other courts, however, have used "unitary" to describe any school district that has currently desegregated student assignments, whether or not that status is solely the result of a court imposed desegregation plan. See, e.g. 890 F. 2d, at 14. In other words, such a school district could be called unitary and nevertheless still contain vestiges of past discrimination.

That there is such confusion is evident in *Georgia State Conference of Branches of NAACP v. Georgia*, 775 F. 2d 1403 (CA11 1985), where the Court of Appeals drew a distinction between a "unitary school district" and a district that has achieved "unitary status." The court explained that a school district that has not operated segregated schools as proscribed by *Green v. New Kent County School Board*, supra. and *Swann v. Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 402 U.S. (1971), "for a period of several years" is unitary, but that a school district cannot be said to have achieved Unitary status" unless it "has eliminated the vestiges of its prior discrimination and has been adjudicated as such through the proper judicial procedures. "Georgia State Conference, supra, at 1413, n. 12.

We think it is a mistake to treat words such as "dual" and "unitary" as if they were actually found in the Constitution. The constitutional command of the Amendment is that "no State shall deny to any person ... the equal protection of the laws." Courts have used the terms "dual" to denote a school system which has engaged in intentional segregation of students by race, and "unitary" to describe a school system which has been brought into

compliance with the command of the Constitution. We are not sure how useful it is to define these terms more precisely, or to create subclasses within them. But there is no doubt that the differences in usage described above do exist. The District Court's 1977 order is unclear with respect to what it meant by unitary and the necessary result of that finding. We therefore decline to overturn the conclusion of the Court of Appeals that while the 1977 order of the District Court did bind the parties as to the unitary character of the district, it did not finally terminate the Oklahoma City school litigation. In *Pasadena City Board of Education v. Spangler*, 427 U.S. 424 (1976), we held that a school board is entitled to a rather precise statement of its obligations under a desegregation decree. If such a decree is to be terminated or dissolved, respondents as well as the school board are entitled to a like statement from the court.

III. The Court of Appeals relied upon language from this Court's decision in *United States v. Swift and Co.*, supra, for the proposition that a desegregation decree could not be lifted or modified absent a showing of "grievous wrong evoked by new and unforeseen conditions." *Id.* at 119. It also held that "compliance alone cannot become the basis for modifying or dissolving an injunction," 890 F. 2d, at 1491, relying on *United States v. W, T. Grant Co.*, 345 U.S. 629, 633 (1953). We hold that its reliance was mistaken.

In *Swift*, several large meatpacking companies entered into a consent decree whereby they agreed to refrain forever from entering into the grocery business. The decree was by its terms effective in perpetuity. The defendant meatpackers and their allies had over a period of a decade attempted, often with success in the lower courts, to frustrate operation of the decree. It was in this context that the language relied upon by the Court of Appeals in this case was used.

United States v. United Shoe Machinery Corp. 391 U.S. 244 (1968), explained that the language used in *Swift* must be read in the continuing danger of unlawful restraints on trade which the Court had found still existed. *Id.* at 248. *Swift* teaches. . . a decree may be changed upon an appropriate showing, and it holds that it may not be changed . . . if the purposes of the litigation as incorporated in the decree . . . have not been fully achieved." *Ibid* (emphasis deleted). In the present case, a finding by the District Court that the Oklahoma City School District was being operated in compliance with the commands of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, and that it was unlikely that the school board would return to its former ways, would be a finding that the purposes of the desegregation litigation had been fully achieved. No additional showing of "grievous wrong evoked by new and unforeseen conditions" is required of the school board.

In *Milliken v. Bradley* (Milliken II), 433 U.S. 267), we said:

"Federal court decrees must directly address and relate to the constitutional violation itself. Because of this inherent limitation upon federal judicial authority, federal court decrees exceed appropriate limits if they are aimed at eliminating a condition that does not violate the Constitution or does not flow from such a violation" *Id.*, at 282.

From the very first, federal supervision of local school systems was intended as a temporary measure to remedy past discrimination. Brown considered the "complexities arising from the transition to a system of Public education freed of racial discrimination" in holding that the implementation of desegregation was to proceed "with all deliberate speed." 349 U. S., at 299-301 (emphasis added). Green also spoke of the transition to a unitary, nonracial system of public education." 391 U. S., at 436 (emphasis added).

Considerations based on the allocation of powers within our federal system, we think, support our view that quoted language from Swift does not provide the proper standard to apply to injunctions entered in school desegregation cases. Such decrees, unlike the one in Swift, are not intended to operate in perpetuity. Local control over the education of children allows citizens to participate in decision making, and allows innovation so that school programs can fit local needs. *Milliken v. Bradley* (Milliken I) 418 U.S. 717, 742 (1974); *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* 411 U.S. 1,50 (1973). The legal justification for displacement of local authority by an injunctive decree in a school desegregation case is a violation of the Constitution by the local authorities. Dissolving a desegregation decree after the local authorities have operated in compliance with it for a reasonable period of time properly recognizes that "necessary concern for the important values of local control of public school systems dictates that a federal court's regulatory control of such systems not extend beyond the time required to remedy the effects of past intentional discrimination. See *Milliken v. Bradley* (Milliken II), 433 U.S. at 280-82." *Spangler v. Pasadena City Board of Education*, 611 F. 2d, at 1245, n.5 (Kennedy, J., concurring).

The Court of Appeals, as noted, relied for its statement that "compliance alone cannot become the basis for modifying or dissolving an injunction" on our decision in *United States v. W. T. Grant Co.*, supra, at 633. That case, however, did not involve the dissolution of an injunction,

but the question of whether an injunction should be issued in the first place. This Court observed that a promise to comply with the law on the part of a wrongdoer did not divest a district court of its power to enjoin the wrongful conduct in which the defendant had previously engaged.

A district court need not accept at face value the profession of a school board which has intentionally discriminated that it will cease to do so in the future. But in deciding whether to modify or dissolve a desegregation decree, a school board's compliance with previous court orders is obviously relevant. In this case the original finding of de jure segregation was entered in 1961, the injunction decree from which the Board seeks relief was entered in 1972, and the Board complied with the decree in good faith until 1985. Not only do the personnel of school boards change over time, but the same passage of time enables the District Court to observe the good faith of the school board in complying with the decree. The test espoused by the Court of Appeals would condemn a school district, once governed by a board which intentionally discriminated, to judicial tutelage for the indefinite future. Neither the principles governing the entry and dissolution of injunctive decrees, nor the commands of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment require any such Draconian result.

Petitioners urge that we reinstate the decision of the District Court terminating the injunction, but we think that the preferable course is to remand the case to that court so that it may decide, in accordance with this opinion, whether the Board made a sufficient showing of constitutional compliance as of 1985, when the SRP was adopted, to allow the injunction to be dissolved. [n.1] The District Court should address itself to whether the Board had complied in good faith with the desegregation decree since it was entered, and whether the vestiges of past discrimination had been eliminated to the extent practicable. [n2]

In considering whether the vestiges of de jure segregation had been eliminated as far as practicable, the District Court should not only at student assignments, but "to every facet of school operations -- faculty, staff, transportation, extra-curricular activities and facilities." Green. 391 U.S., at 435. See also Swann, 402 U.S., at 18 ("Existing policy and practice with regard to faculty, staff, transportation, extra-curricular activities, and facilities" are "among the most important indicia of a segregated system").

After the District Court decides whether the Board was entitled to have the decree terminated, it should proceed to decide respondent's challenge to the SRP. A school district which has been released from an injunction imposing a desegregation plan no longer requires court authorization for the promulgation of policies and rules regulating matters such as assignment of students and the like, but it of course remains subject to the mandate of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. If the Board was entitled to have the decree terminated as of 1985. The District Court should then evaluate the Board's decision to implement the SRP under appropriate equal protection principles. See *Washington v. Davis* (1976); *Arlington Heights v. Metropolitan Housing Development Corp.*, (1977).

The judgment of the Court of Appeals is reversed, and the case is remanded to the District Court for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

It is so ordered, Justice Souter took no part in the consideration or decision of this case.

Notes

1. The Court of Appeals viewed the Board's adoption of the SRP as a violation of its obligation under the injunction, and technically it may well have been. But just as the Court of Appeals held that the respondent should not be penalized for failure to appeal from an order that by hindsight was ambiguous, we do not think that the Board should be penalized for relying on the express language of that order. The District Court in its decision on remand should not treat the adoption of the SRP as a breach of good faith on the part of the Board.

2. As noted above, the District Court earlier found that present residential segregation in Oklahoma City was the result of private decision making and economics, and that it was too attenuated to be a vestige of former school segregation. Respondents contend that the Court of Appeals held this finding was clearly erroneous, but we think its opinion is at least ambiguous on this point. The only operative use of "clearly erroneous" language is in the final

paragraph of subpart VI-D of its opinion, and it is perfectly plausible to read the clearly erroneous findings as dealing only with the issues considered in that part of the opinion. To dispel any doubt, we direct the District Court and the Court of Appeals to treat this question as res nova upon further consideration of the case.

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APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Glossary of Terms

In this study the following terms shall be defined as follows:

Busing - A method for remedying segregation by transporting students to schools that have been racially or ethnically unbalanced, either voluntary or mandatory (Johnson, J., Collins, H., Dupuis, V., & Johansen, J., 1991).

De facto segregation - Separation of people by race, which has arisen in custom or tradition rather than enacted by law (Segall/Wilson, 1998).

De jure segregation - Separation of people by race as mandated by law (Segall/Wilson, 1998).

Desegregation - Attendance by students of different racial backgrounds in the same school and classroom (Ornstein/Levine, 1993).

Dual School System - Maintaining two sets of schools in a single school system deliberately operated to carry out a governmental policy to separate pupils in schools solely on the basis of race (Thomas, 1990).

Euroamerican - The first Europeans to settle in North America in large numbers were the English and Welsh (Bennett, 1995).

“Freedom of Choice”/Parental Choice program - A plan to offer parents options in the selection of schools for their children, regardless of where they reside. A controversial aspect of choice concerns whether or not private schools should be part of the choice option (Ryan/Cooper, 1995).

Independent Schools - A nonpublic school that is unaffiliated with any religious institution or agency (Johnson, J., Dupuis, V., Musial, D., Hall, G., & Gollnick, D., 1996).

Inner city schools - One sited in a central district of a large urban city (International Dictionary of Education, 1977).

Integration - The process of mixing students of different races in school to overcome segregation (Johnson, J., Dupuis, V., Musial, D., Hall, G., & Gollnick, D., 1996).

Neighborhood schools - Schools that encompass a specific geographic area within a community (Segall/Wilson, 1998).

- Perspective** - A view of a visible scene or of facts and events (Oxford American Dictionary, 1991).
- Redistricting** - Process of reorganizing and consolidating school districts to form larger, more efficient units (International Dictionary of Education, 1977).
- Resegregated schools** - A term that describes the increased separation of students in society and schools based on color, ethnicity, and culture (Segall/Wilson, 1998).
- Resegregation** - A situation following desegregation in which segregation returns (Johnson, J., Dupuis, V., Musial, D., Hall, G., & Gollnick, D., 1996).
- Separate but equal** - A doctrine that holds that equality of treatment is accorded when the races are provided substantially equal facilities, even though the facilities are separate (Johnson, J., Collins, H., Dupuis, V., & Johansen, J., 1991).
- Suburban school district** - (US) School district serving a suburb of a major city (International Dictionary of Education, 1977).
- Urban education** - Education provided at inner city schools and colleges (International Dictionary of Education, 1977).
- Unitary** - Once the affirmative duty to desegregate has been accomplished and racial discrimination through official action is eliminated from the system (Thomas, 1990).
- White flight** - Sometimes a response to public school racial integration efforts in which White citizens move out of the central city into the suburbs so their children can attend neighborhood schools (Ryan/Cooper, 1995).
- Writ of Certiorari** - The device used by the Supreme Court to transfer cases from the appellate court's docket to its own. Since the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction is discretionary, it need only issue such a writ when it desires to rule in the case (Data Research, Inc., 1993).

APPENDIX C

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTION #4

QUESTION 4

4. What do you know about the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools/Student Reassignment Plan?

ADMINISTRATORS

4. I know the courts decided that the district was sovereign and could assign students to their “neighborhood” schools for elementary grades which eliminated massive busing for that age group of students. African American students, previously, had been bused from their neighborhoods in order to integrate predominately Caucasian schools. Prior to the above mentioned concept, the district was involved in the Fifth Year Center Concept, which was called the “Finger Plan.” This created a situation that virtually closed all of the Northeast Quadrant Elementary Schools and reopened them as Fifth Year Centers. This plan would cause non-minority students to be bused, for one year, into a minority neighborhood. After which, students attended one of the districts nine middle schools.

Although many still consider the district as having and working under the “neighborhood” schools concept, we actually have what is called an “Attendance Zones Concept” -- which was started this school year. It created a situation where all middle schools and high schools would have the same feeder schools, i.e., elementary students in attendance zone A go to the corresponding neighborhood middle school and high school.

4. I have only superficial knowledge of the OKCPS NSP/SRP. I did not pay attention when the plan was put into effect. The district announced what they were going to do. I heard about it from staff members at school.
4. I know that the “Finger Plan” was instituted ten or more years ago to alleviate segregation through busing.
4. I understand that the OKCPS NSP/SRP reassigned all students to attendance areas where they live.
4. I believe the OKCPS NSP/SRP is designed so all students attending OKCPS can now attend the schools in their neighborhood. Students are no longer required to attend a specific school to achieve a racial balance
4. I understand that the OKCPS NSP/SRP is a natural feeding plan from elementary, junior/middle school and high school according to district approved boundaries.
4. I know that under the OKCPS NSP/SRP students are assigned to neighborhood schools at all levels and that they can apply to go to non-neighborhood schools, magnet schools and specialty schools.

4. I know the plan intimately. I know new attendance area boundaries and the criteria used to establish new attendance area boundaries.
4. Students are attending their neighborhood schools without mandated busing.
4. My own children went to school at Monroe with students bused from the northeast side of town under the Finger Plan. They experienced no difficulties or problems that they would not have had otherwise. It provided my children with a diversity and natural acceptance of people that I otherwise could not provide, given our location and circle of friends.
4. When I was teaching at Sequoyah, the children were returned to their neighborhood elementary schools. I liked this part of the return to neighborhood schools because of the young age of the children and the difficulty of getting parents involved when they lived so far away.
4. I taught some general information regarding the plan as it related to my situation. The first phase began while I was at my former school. I'm not certain what you are asking.
4. I was principal of one of the schools receiving reassigned students. I think the district had no choice. The fifth year centers no longer served the purpose of their creation. Brief History: A minority parent filed suit against our school district because his child needed a science course in a White school that was not offered in his minority neighborhood school. The child was refused enrollment. As a result the district was ordered by the court to integrate schools.
4. In 1991, I was principal of Lakeville Elementary School (kindergarten through grade four) when fifth year students were reassigned to Lakeville. Lakeville was one of the schools to feed Twain Fifth Year Center. The district was returning to neighborhood schools. With the return of students to the K-4 schools, making them K-5 schools, space was provided at Lakeville over the next few years. We were overcrowded and using the stage as a classroom along with three annex buildings. Teachers were added to the staff along with fifth year curriculum and materials. This was also taking place at the other fifth year center feeder schools. There was an open enrollment in any school in the area prior to the return to neighborhood schools if the parent provided transportation. Open enrollment had to end. Some schools with predominately White students were increasingly becoming over-run with minority enrollment. To relieve these schools of students who were being transported by parents, a large elementary school was opened to accommodate the enrollment of approximately 650 students, 95% minority. Strict transfer policies were established.

EDUCATORS

4. I do not know much about the OKCPS NSP/SRP. It is a good plan in my opinion.
4. I understand that the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools/Student Reassignment Plan was instituted in the 1970's to achieve racial integration in the district.
4. History truly repeats itself. It's amazing that as we approach the 21st Century Oklahoma City Public Schools is back where we started in the early 1900's.
4. The Student Reassignment/Neighborhood School Plan was put into effect in order to close down the Fifth Year Centers and bring back all (or most) fifth graders to their neighborhood schools.
4. I know that students were assigned to their neighborhood schools with the OKCPS Student Reassignment Plan.
4. My first teaching experience was at a "predominantly White" school. Shortly later, OKCPS began the Finger Plan, which included busing students to integrated schools. This lasted for a few years. The strength of the plan was that all students had equal opportunity to the best education. The weakness of the plan was that very young children stood on the bus stop early in the dark morning hours in hot, cold, and bad weather. Sometimes teachers did not understand the culture of the opposite race of students and could not adequately teach nor adjust the curriculum to the needs of those students (especially Black students). Afterwards, the district moved students' back to their neighborhood schools.
4. I know that parents in the district were promised a neighborhood school for their children so they supported the bond issues. In some cases neighborhood schools were changed to specialized schools without informing parents. Students were accepted by application only with strict requirements. Thus, leaving neighborhood parents and children frustrated with the new plan. The discussion of the neighborhood schools plan promised assistance from businesses in their communities (sponsors & adopters).
4. I recall that A.L. Dowell (a Black parent) felt that White students were receiving a better education than Black students, so, students were bused to schools to provide equity in neighborhood schools. Parents disliked having their children transported across OKC to schools, and wanted their children attending schools closer to their homes. Ultimately, it was decided that if the staff members were diverse in culture, then it would be beneficial to the students and students would not have to be bused.
4. The OKCPS NSP/SRP was designed to place the students in schools close to where they live.

4. I understand that busing was stopped with the NSP/SRP and children were reassigned to their neighborhood schools.
4. I know that the OKCPS NSP/SRP moved students back to schools in their neighborhoods.
4. I know that the OKCPS NSP/SRP was implemented in 1991.
4. I attended school in an OKCPS fifth year center under the Finger Plan and now I teach under the OKCPS NSP/SRP.
4. I don't know much about the OKCPS NSP/SRP other than it allows students to attend some schools with other students in their community.
4. I know that the district moved all elementary students back to their neighborhood schools by implementing the neighborhood school plan/student reassignment plan. I feel that the NSP/SRP is to the minority's advantage.
4. I know only what was in the news concerning the OKCPS NSP/SRP. Basically the NAACP first fought against the district's plan because they felt it would segregate the city.
4. The OKCPS NSP/SRP is intended to allow students to attend schools in their own communities.
4. I know in 1991, the district moved all elementary students back to their neighborhood schools by implementing this plan.
4. I understand that the OKCPS NSP/SRP caused the schools in our district to become neighborhood schools.
4. I know that the OKCPS NSP/SRP helped to change the racial and socioeconomic composition of Telstar Elementary. I was teaching at Telstar when I was suddenly reassigned to Star Elementary (three blocks away). These two neighborhoods drastically changed as a result of white flight.
4. The Finger Plan was created to bus children to integrated schools. The NSP/SRP later moved these children back to their neighborhood schools.
4. I don't know a lot about the OKCPS NSP/SRP except that it was implemented during the early 1990s.

PARENTS

4. I was teaching at one of the OKCPS when the OKCPS NSP/SRP went into effect. The plan reassigned all OKCPS students to schools in their neighborhoods.

4. My knowledge of the OCKPS NSP/SRP, is very limited. However, I do know the NSP/SRP reassigned students back to their neighborhood schools.
4. I understand that the OKCPS NSP/SRP was implemented to eliminate busing.
4. I went to school during the era of public school busing. I was one of the students who participated in the integration pilot program. I was in middle school when they bused me across town to school. This busing experience made our parents aware of how they inadequately equipped our neighborhood schools. They started the SRP to put our children back into neighborhood schools.
4. I grew up in OKC and attended OKCPS as a student. We attended neighborhood schools then. The school was the strength of our community. We knew our neighbors. There was more community support. Even the athletics were supported better. We could walk to school. And the district did not have to run as many buses. Community schools were more cost efficient. The Finger Plan was implemented around 1972, after I graduated from high school. I remember there was quite a bit of dissention between the races at that time. The athletic programs also suffered. Academically, I felt it hurt some of our Black students because there were quite a few Black teachers in the high school where I attended. These Black teachers and Black students had a special bond between them. Black teachers also better understood and coped with Black students. The teachers really knew the parents and the teachers were more like extended family. The OKCPS NSP/SRP went into effect during the early 1990's.
4. The OKCPS NSP/SRP was implemented to abolish mandatory busing/integration in the district.
4. My children will attend the school in the community that they live in.
4. The OKCPS NSP/SRP was designed to save the district money by using fewer buses and allowing children to attend schools in their neighborhoods. It was falsely assumed that all neighborhoods were racially balanced.
4. The Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools/Student Reassignment Plan because of legislation has revealed balance in school. There is no need for busing back to neighborhood schools.
4. My knowledge concerning the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that we have ample community schools in our neighborhoods for our students to attend, but the school buildings and facilities in most of these communities are inadequate due to the many years of neglect by the OKCPS district. Therefore, the OKCPS NSP/SRP is not an equal opportunity plan.

4. This plan was basically a return to neighborhood schools after busing students (mostly African American) in order to integrate the schools here in OKC. After much debate as to the effect this plan would have on the African American child and their neighborhood, many felt that the return to neighborhood schools would be better. Many also felt that parents would feel more attached and at ease with the NSP. This idea was an attempt to recreate what schools meant to the community in the fifties and sixties...separate, but this time equal.
4. I don't know a lot about the OKCPS NSP/SRP except that it was implemented during the early 1990's.
4. I attended OKCPS before integration and the Finger Plan. The OKCPS NSP/SRP was suppose to strengthen the community, bring about community cohesiveness, and increase parental involvement.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

4. I'm not sure.
4. The OKCPS NSP/SRP allowed students in the district to attend schools in their neighborhoods and eliminated mandatory busing.
4. I know that the OKCPS NSP/SRP was implemented to allow students to attend the school nearest their residence, thereby, eliminating mass cross-town busing.
4. The OKCPS NSP/SRP was originally designed to bring neighborhoods back together and improve parent involvement.
4. I believe the OKCPS NSP/SRP went into effect in 1991 – before that we had the Finger Plan. I know in 1975, under the Finger Plan, Oklahoma City schools had busing where certain boundaries and kids went to different schools usually outside of their neighborhood. This entailed getting up early and catching a bus and sometimes being bused across town quite a distance from your neighborhood. I guess in 1991 they did away with the busing and kids started going to schools that were located in their neighborhoods.

One of the things that is pretty glaring in the neighborhood school plan are the economic situations; by that I mean the situation that is commonly known as White flight, although in some circumstances there can be Black flight also. I guess it is kind of tied to economics too, where individuals with the higher income are able to leave the inner city and move out to the affluent suburbs where they have higher property value and so forth and higher property taxes. This of course means more funds are being generated for the suburban school districts and because of that, the children that attend the schools out in the suburbs end up getting quite a bit better education than those in the inner city.

One of the main things that people talked about is the problem that the kids would have to wake up early and catch buses to travel great distances from the neighborhood. That was quite a bit of the problem. The OKCPS NSP/SRP eliminates the busing dilemma.

4. I am not an education expert but, I will say for the record that I probably have a hundred percent voting record in the House of Representatives for supporting education for the past eighteen years in the House of Representatives. We cannot pass legislation that effects just one school district or maybe two school districts. Whatever we pass applies to all school districts. I firmly believe that we should leave all the decisions to the local school board. I don't promote or support micro managing school districts. Again, I would have to say that I am not an expert other than what we pass here as far as state legislation.

As far as I remember, Thelma Parks, is our representative on the school board in Northeast Oklahoma City and a very good friend of mine and I support the OKCPS district. The reassignment plan for the high school is very important to me. Back when I was in high school we did have segregated neighborhood school. Douglas was all Black, Dungee was all Black, Northeast for all intentions perhaps was probably 95-96% Black and when I graduated from high school in 1968, from a Catholic School because I was a Catholic, Bishop McGuinnis, they went to the Finger Plan, a busing plan to achieve racial integration. It was very, very rough on our kids at that time. I believe the mood of the community and also the community leaders was that we had to integrate some kind of way to try to get our kids integrated into the system where they are going to be living and working and living in the future. Although it was tough on the children, standing out in the rain, in the extremely cold and hot elements, catching a bus and sometimes the bus would run, sometimes it wouldn't. Sometimes they would have problems on the bus. All of this – really put a burden on our children. Today, twenty years later, there is a question mark on if it was really effective and successful. I know we have integrated and I promote equal employment opportunities up here. I have introduced several bills and passed bills dealing with affirmative action, equal employment opportunity and minority businesses. But I am not really sure if the busing, the Finger Plan, got the net effect that was intended. I believe that so many people resented it that it hurt our kids. I think the teachers in other schools resented it. I think the parents and patrons of other schools resented it. I think the administrators resented it. And as a result, a lot of our kids graduated from high school unable to read, write and count their money. I have reflected back, and although I did not go to a Black school, I participated in many Black organizations as a child, i.e., Jack and Jill, the Links, the Alpha's youth program, and the Kappa's youth program. I participated in all of those; and we learned parliamentary procedure, we learned manners, we learned what to do and what not to do. In retrospect, we lost a lot of culture and quality education by busing our kids to schools where they were not wanted.

4. I was not in the district when the OKCPS NSP/SRP initially started. They had just begun to move back to neighborhood schools and that, of course, was a controversy. Many people were very much concerned that we would participate in the process of re-segregation because of moving back to the neighborhood school concept.

Many issues were being debated at that time. One of the debates was whether or not the dismantling of the de-segregation plan would also dismantle gifted education, and a lot of people thought that putting gifted students into centers was a plus. Another one of the debates was that we would go away from the massive effort that was being made to close the gap between minority students and non-minority students, between advantaged and disadvantaged students. There was also a concern about equity and the resources that would be provided for the schools. Many believed that again we would go back to giving the affluent and the European Americans all of the goodies; and have the less than desirable materials and resources provided for those schools that were historically segregated schools.

4. Well I know that there was a lot of controversy concerning the OKCPS NSP/SRP. There was a lot of discussion about it and I kept up with it by reading the evening newspaper and just hearing concerns from teachers. They were debating whether or not the plan would work in the district and about what was going on. They were concerned with whether it was going to hurt or help our kids, particularly the African American students and what was the rationale for doing it. I think the district pushed the OKCPS NSP/SRP because I know the NAACP was against it. Many argued that if you return to neighborhood schools then you have segregated schools once again because the neighborhoods are basically segregated for the most part. It would simply turn us back to all Black and White schools.

It seems as though every year there is a debate about some OKCPS school, whether they are going to reassign the students to another school or change the border lines/boundaries. Then they ask whose going to attend this school, they just did this with the high school. So every year it seems like they have a debate going on.

On the other hand, I did not agree with the Finger Plan at all. I visited several of the fifth year centers and I felt that they were not effective for fifth grade students. Fifth grade students should not have been isolated. I just did not agree with it. Number one, I don't think they were mature enough to be in a center by themselves. Number two, I don't think the plans were developed enough for them to actually make it effective. I mean I could see sixth graders being sent to junior high, but it was not developmentally appropriate to send fifth grade students to fifth year centers. I would have never sent my child to a fifth year center school.

APPENDIX D

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTION #5

QUESTION 5

5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the plan?

ADMINISTRATORS

5. The major strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is it allowed students to remain in their community and possibly connect with a school as a focal point for that particular community.

The major weaknesses of the OKCPS NSP/SRP are that low socioeconomic students continually are deprived of equal access to various programs funded by more affluent parent groups who have personal connection with the business community; lack daily interaction with students whose worlds are different from theirs; lack the opportunity of obtaining experienced, master teachers.

5. One strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that it allows students to remain in their neighborhood schools from grades K-5. Another strength is that the plan allows for the development of a sense of community at an early age so that self-esteem and confidence can be built. These skills must be gained in order for the students to be able to handle what they will encounter in the "real world" when they leave their neighborhood school (integration).

A weakness of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that the composition of the K-5 grade schools do not reflect the composition of the society in which the children must live as they grow. The plan also prevents interaction among races at an early age when children are more accepting of others' differences. Another weakness of the plan is quality teachers were not sent back to the African American schools. In addition, the composition of the teaching staff does not reflect the composition of the school. There are far more White teachers in predominantly African-American schools. These White teachers are often young teachers who will transfer to other schools as soon as the opportunity arises.

5. The strength of the plan was the attempt to stop mandatory busing in the OKC Area. The weakness of the plan was that people decided to re-segregate their neighborhoods despite the school sanctions imposed by the earlier court ruling.
5. The strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is it allows for neighborhood participation. Racial isolation is its weakness.

The results of this plan have left the schools in our district racially isolated. The plan has significantly affected community and parental involvement, morale and student achievement. A large negative shift has occurred.

5. The strengths of this plan are stability, consistency, increased parental involvement and natural integration for most areas. Racial isolation is a possible weakness of the plan.

5. The strengths of the plan are increased parental involvement/participation and easier access to home (i.e., taking a child home from school). The weaknesses of the plan are segregated schools in segregated neighborhoods and the fact that students generally stay with the same group of students throughout their education.
5. The main strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is its ability to strengthen the bond between the school and the community. The main weakness of the plan is that it is not equitable.
5. The strengths of the OKCPS NSP/SRP are:
 - students are able to attend schools geographically closer to their residence
 - increased opportunity for parental involvement
 - increased opportunity for student participation in extracurricular activities

The major weakness of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that some schools become somewhat racially and economically isolated.

5. The obvious strength of planned integration/diversity was accomplished on the backs of young children who had to leave their neighborhoods in order to receive their education. The fifth grade centers were a great idea as far as programming was concerned. The major drawback was the lack of commitment of parents, due to the fact that students attended only one year. A strong parent support component is essential to the success of any school.
5. In my opinion, there are different strengths and weaknesses for each of the three school levels, elementary, middle and high school. I can only speak to the strengths and weaknesses in two schools with which I have been associated.

The strengths of the OKCPS NSP/SRP:

Children enjoy the benefits of staying in one school for six years. This allows most children to walk to and from school with their friends and older brothers and sisters. It allows students to form strong associations with other students and staff. In my school, volunteers can work with young children identified for extra help. This early identification allows continuous help, sometimes by the same volunteers, that makes a significant difference for the student. I also see strong parent participation. Parents find it more convenient to have their children in the same school. We have extremely high participation in Parent/Teacher conferences, open house, and PTA membership.

I can't identify any weaknesses of the plan at my school.

5. Students could walk to school if they lived within one and one half miles of the building. Transportation is provided for those living beyond. The plan allows parents to be close to their child's school, helping individual school parent community relations. The most

impressive contact that the parents can have with a school system is at the neighborhood school. There are more personal experiences for parents with teachers and principal at the neighborhood school. The fifth year student returned to an elementary classroom organization rather than a middle school organizational plan.

The major weakness of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is it limits social and cultural interaction among youth at an early age.

EDUCATORS

5. The strengths of the NSP/SRP are that it allows for more parental involvement and community cohesiveness.

The weaknesses of the NSP/SRP are White flight and re-segregation. Students attending neighborhood schools often are not exposed to students from different cultures. They in turn do not get a chance to learn each other's culture and appreciate and enjoy cultural differences.

5. The major strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is the fact that children attend school close to home. The major weakness of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is it does not provide equitable educational experiences.
5. The major strength of the plan is that students are not required to be bused all over town. I do not see any weaknesses of the plan.
5. The strengths of the plan are that it helps the parents get their children to school everyday. I also believe that it "evens out" the level of education in each school. The students get to be placed in the community. I believe the students' negative behaviors have decreased due to the OKCPS NSP/SRP. The weakness is that the students do not get to interact with other cultures.
5. The strengths of the OKCPS NSP/SRP are that students and parents usually feel that they are more a part of the school since the school is located in their neighborhood. Most importantly, it is usually very difficult to get parents involved as the students get older.
5. The strengths of the plan are close proximity for home visits and neighborhood participation. The weaknesses of the plan are its segregated schools and limited culture exposure.
5. I believe that segregated schools are okay. Minority students can develop a better sense of pride and community with neighborhood schools. Children in K-4th grade need motherly love to get through these foundational years. Neighborhood schools provide this type of nurturing. However, the weaknesses of this plan are that not all teachers can

successfully teach minority students. Likewise, all minorities can't teach Black, Hispanic, and Asian children. Unfortunately, many teachers are teaching solely for a paycheck.

5. I see the following disadvantages and advantages of the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan.

Disadvantages:

- Few or no after school programs
- Less parent involvement (PTA, parent conferences, and volunteers)
- Racial segregation because of expensive busing costs
- White Flight - the white population in the district dropped by nearly 50% and moved to private and suburban schools

Advantages:

- Students who move a lot can still be bused to the same school if they stay in the neighborhood
 - Extended families are utilized more for example some students are dropped off at "Grandma's" house so they can attend a certain school.
5. There are definite advantages and concerns of the Neighborhood Schools/Student Reassignment Plan. Time will only tell to the adverse effect it will have on the various African American communities.

Some of the advantages of the plan are:

- Students will not be bused across town in dilapidated buses and have to stand in the dark on the street corners before and after school.
- Interested parents will be able to become more involved with their child's education and participate in PTA, booster clubs, etc. and not have to spend a lot of time getting to school.
- Businesses in the community can become more involved.

Some of the concerns of the plan are:

- Staff allocations should have provided more African American teachers and administrators because we have less problems with communication with parents and are less intimidated by the students.
- We need fewer discipline problems.
- Equity is also another issue. Do the schools in African American communities have updated books, materials, equipment, and building facilities? How do these schools compare with schools found in other areas of the district?
- Do our schools have adequate security and good maintenance of the building and the school grounds?
- Will we be able to recapture the respect, confidence, and support of the parents and leaders in the African American community?

5. There are several strengths to this plan. For one, the children are no longer bused across town to school. This reduces their unproductive time on the road and puts them at home earlier. The fifth graders are also able to interact with younger children and in many cases help them educationally and socially. The fifth graders can be excellent role models for the younger children and are generally used as peer mediators with both younger children and other fifth grade students.

The weaknesses may be that many schools did not have room for all the children coming back to their school. This either caused the necessity for portable classrooms or changing school boundaries. New school boundaries were the reason for making Eisenhower an elementary school, which is not truly a neighborhood school. Another weakness may be that of retention. Some fifth graders are much more mature physically and hormonally than the rest of the population. This can sometimes be a problem.

5. My greatest enjoyment was teaching in the fifth year centers. The strength of the Student Reassignment/Neighborhood Schools Plan is its positive effect on location and availability. Also, the plan provides a sharing of culture. The plan alleviated the added expense of school busing for the district. One weakness of the plan is that it does not lend itself to the great diversity of cultures. Another weakness of the plan is its inequity of resources (Example, African American schools and lower income schools are last to get air conditioners, programs, materials, and supplies, etc.).
5. Moving back to neighborhood schools also had strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths:

- Increased the feeling of family and community
- Increase in educational/school involvement (Example, Parents without transportation are able to walk to school if they choose)

Weaknesses

- Less qualified teachers in predominantly Black Neighborhood schools
- Inequity of funding -- monies not put into schools for computers, facilities, materials, etc.
- These problems are not monitored by the district as they promised

5. Strengths of the OKCPS Neighborhood Schools/Student Reassignment Plan: Neighborhood schools bring back opportunities to build support and involve parents in PTA's, etc. They also help to establish a sense of pride in their school. Weaknesses of the OKCPS Neighborhood Schools/Student Reassignment Plan: Some parents and teachers feel that neighborhood schools do not receive the same amount of funding as other schools within the district; resulting in poor quality equipment, fewer supplies, and total neglect.

5. The major weakness with the present plan/system is that to appreciate other cultures, students need to be involved with other cultures. They need exposure to diversity to truly appreciate sameness and differences. The only strength to the current plan is the fact that students do not have to ride across town to school.
5. The strengths of the OKCPS NSP/SRP are:
 - A decrease in the amount of time the children ride the bus.
 - Enhanced parental and guardian participation in activities.

The weaknesses of the OKCPS NSP/SRP are:

- Decreased exposure to cultural and racial diversity.
 - Increased chance of inequitable resources and allocations.
 - Lack of valid research to support the plan.
5. The low socioeconomic African American schools are not the major problem. The lack of parental involvement is a major problem.
 5. The strengths are children can attend school within walking distances from there home, and it is suppose to increase parental involvement.

The weakness is that in most schools there are very little if any different cultures in the schools in Oklahoma City. Our school has several different cultures, but I believe that we are the exception to the rule.

5. The major strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that it eliminated the mandatory busing of students that often took an hour or more for transportation. The major weaknesses of the plan are that children miss the socialization with other cultures. Also, depending on the location of the school, the funding and resources are different.
5. I believe the strengths of this plan are that the children get to be in their own community. They live closer to other children that attend their school enabling them to possibly engage in more extracurricular activities with their friends at school. The main weakness of the plan is that it does not give the children much experience to interact with other cultures.
5. The main strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that students no longer have to be bused. The main weakness of the plan is that students are limited to the cultures in their own community.
5. The main weakness of the plan is that it does not give the children much experience to interact with other cultures.
5. The greatest strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that it allows our children to attend their neighborhood school(s) and allows the parents and the community to fully support the school(s) in their neighborhood.

The greatest weakness of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that students attending their neighborhood school(s) may not be exposed to a variety of cultures because of the segregated housing patterns of the city.

PARENTS

5. I believe in the OKCPS NSP/SRP. The weaknesses of the plan are that neighborhood schools

- do not receive the resources, equipment, facilities, and materials that the more affluent schools receive.
- have less parental involvement because of working parents and “young parents.”
- have teachers that are typically white, middle class, females who do not understand Black culture and the needs of low socioeconomic African American children.

I believe the strengths are that...

- These children feel closer to one another and they grow up together.
- parents get to know one another.
- children are more protected in neighborhood schools because families with students in the neighborhood watch the children.
- parents become more familiar with the teachers.
- the children are not bused and can walk to school.

5. The weaknesses are that the low socioeconomic parents were generally bused out of their neighborhoods and attended schools across town. As a result, they fail to realize the importance of parent participation in neighborhood schools.

I believe the strengths could be positive ones if the plan could be fairly implemented and/or negotiated but, because of racial preference in our society, I find this plan a difficult one to support. The weaknesses reflect the results of segregation and White flight.

5. The strengths of the OKCPS NSP/SRP are:

- Convenience and closer proximity
- Familiarity/reduction of stress
- Neighborhood safety for the children
- Improvement of on-site physical structure being carried on throughout the district to provide some equalization of plant sites
- Same curriculum, materials, and instruction available for all sites if utilized by personnel

- School serves as a after school meeting place involving neighborhood activities (for example, little league, scouts, neighborhood association meetings, etc.)

The weaknesses of the OKCPS NSP/SRP include:

- Attitudes which always existed because some people's perception are hard to change, so their efforts, race and socioeconomic levels effect expectations. The way a neighborhood is perceived from the outside and inside can and usually is, totally different. People in African American neighborhoods often see themselves as hard working people who are trying to make a decent living for themselves and their children. They are aware that people from the outside cannot get past how someone looks or carries him/herself.
 - Separate but unequal educational experiences between races and classes. Teachers used to integrate schools -- we have provided a poor quality of integration.
5. The major strengths of this plan are that children are closer to home and parents are more likely to visit school more and offer community support. The weakness being that if the schools they attend are inadequate, the students will receive a substandard/ poor education.
5. Strength
- Students spend less time on buses.
 - Parents without transportation can be involved more easily.

Weakness

- All neighborhoods are not racially balanced, therefore, segregation exists in schools.
 - Schools in certain neighborhoods enjoyed better equipment and adequate supplies due to their higher socioeconomic status.
 - The decline of test scores and/or more at risk schools are in the lower socioeconomic areas.
5. Strengths: I'm not sure. Weakness: I'm not sure.
5. The main strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is its opportunity to unite and embody our African American community. The plan is designed to harmonize our communities.
5. The strengths of the OKCPS NSP/SRP are that it provides us an avenue to rebuild our community support systems. The weaknesses are that it does not offer students that are unable to attend magnet schools or students who do not live in integrated neighborhoods the opportunity to attend schools with students from other races. This in turn limits the equal educational opportunity.
5. a) The strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that it allows our children to be close to home.

- b) This new plan also eliminates the danger of putting them on buses and traveling across town. Caucasian parents often felt that their children were at a disadvantage because they were so far away from home during our school integration period. I agree with these parents that busing our babies across town wasn't always safe and it made me feel a little uneasy. However, I feel that they knew that our schools were not as equipped as their neighborhood schools were with such things as equipment, materials, and supplies (i.e., computers). They also knew that their children were getting new books and sending their old books to the students in our neighborhood schools. Allowing our children to be bused exposed our children to a better educational facility.

Weaknesses:

- a) Additionally, equality is still an issue with the new OKCPS NSP/SRP.
- b) The main weakness of the plan is the lack of exposure to children of different races and cultures.
5. The major strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is it keeps children from long bus rides across town to school. The major weakness is that the plan creates segregation in some areas of town.
5. The major strength of the plan is that students can attend school with kids in their neighborhood. The major weakness of the plan is that low socioeconomic students are always with the low socioeconomic students and are not around other students from differing socioeconomic levels.

The weakness of the Finger Plan (and strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP) was having the elementary students bused across town when there may have been a school right around the corner. On the other hand, the strength of the Finger Plan was that our children would have an opportunity to learn other cultures and possibly a better education depending on where they were bused.

5. The strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is increased neighborhood and parental involvement because of close proximity. The weakness of the plan is that Students are limited in their exposure to children of varying racial and socioeconomic groups.
5. The strength of the OKCPS NSP/SRP is that fifth grade students are generally given more leadership and responsibilities. The weakness of the plan is that students larger than other students in their grade level often become bullies. Both of these factors are due to the fact that students in a neighborhood stay together throughout their education.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

5. Parental involvement has seen a steady rise. The plan lacks diversity, forethought and vision for the future of all children.

5. Strengths:

- Parents have ownership in their schools again
- No busing across town
- Builds school and community pride within student

Weaknesses:

- Less funding for predominant African American schools
- Lower average income for families in the community
- Schools are isolated in their communities by race and socioeconomics

5. The major weakness of the plan is it does not strengthen the school. For example, The OKCPS NSP/SRP does not improve or provide additional resources for the school and/or community.

I believe the plan will save the school system money by cutting transportation costs. It also has the potential to reduce school violence by grouping children from common neighborhoods into the same schools, thus fostering a “common community” within the schools themselves. However, because this city has distinct racial neighborhoods, I believe this will have some negative social affects by reducing the opportunity for children of different races and socioeconomic backgrounds to interact. History has proven that this interaction is crucial to the elimination of the ignorance associated with racism and other biases.

5. Many argue that the NSP is effective and that it gives parents an opportunity to participate. They also argue that it gives them a sense of community by being in close proximity to the school. By being in closer proximity, they can participate in the school functions and so forth. I kind of tend to disagree with that. What it seems like it does is, it allows the kids that don't want to learn, the kids that don't have two parents in the house and/or that are undisciplined to congregate at the schools in such large numbers and cause so much trouble that the teachers just give up and don't really want to try to teach the kids. Ultimately these teachers spend most of their days handing out discipline referrals and are not able to actually teach the children. So again, I don't think that it actually helps them. I am sure that there may be a few parents that take advantage of the fact that they are in close proximity and they can go participate in the schools. But, if they are really interested, they will go wherever their kids are going to school to participate.

5. So I really don't count this as a strength. It is also a weakness, in a sense that these kids nine times out of ten are going to be from low socioeconomic backgrounds and so they don't have any opportunity to face any competition from any other kids because the more

affluent kids have left and gone on to better schools. As a result, you are stuck with this false grade curve where you may be an A student in your neighborhood school, but, really cannot compete with the other kids who have gone out to the suburbs and are at a school with their peers from more affluent environments. Additionally, I really don't think that this isolation is an advantage because in today's society, you have to be able to deal with all different races. I just don't think that it is advantageous to grow up for the better part of your life not having to deal with children of other races and other economic backgrounds. I don't think that this is an advantage at all. In fact, I think that it is a hindrance to their continued intellectual and social growth.

5. I would say that in the last four or five years I have become definitely in favor of neighborhood schools. I am positive that I am for neighborhood schools where our kids are living close to the school that they go to. The teachers are cognizant of that fact, there is some self-worth and pride into going to a neighborhood school. I also think that your parental support and participation has increased with the neighborhood schools plan. The kids are willing to identify that I am going to Douglas, I am going to Northeast, I am going to Star Spencer. I am telling you from experience as being a state representative listening to complaints. Also, you are going to have less vandalism in the schools, less graffiti in the schools, you are going to have more kids walking to school and participating in extra curricular activities. Now if any parents have to work or lets say, the parent has to work, how is a child going to participate in extra curricular activities if that bus leaves the school right after school to bus them back home to their neighborhood. So all of that is a detraction from what I call a well-rounded quality education.

The weaknesses are that we are no longer technically integrating our students here in Northeast Oklahoma City with the students in Northwest Oklahoma City, Southwest Oklahoma City and Southeast Oklahoma City. That is a definite weakness. When you get to college there are no neighborhood schools. When you get to a job whether its working at a fast food restaurant, whether its working an entry level position, at the department of human services or administrative level in a Federal Building, you are going to have to work with everybody. It is going to have to be an integrated situation, as a result, we need to be able to work with everybody, and the other races need to be able to work with us. So that's a weakness. It definitely is a weakness. And that's not going to go away. The only thing that makes me comfortable with the neighborhood school is that our kids are now living all over Oklahoma City. People are renting apartments all over Oklahoma City. People are buying affordable homes all over Oklahoma City. Also, people are building your more expensive homes all over Oklahoma City, so it tends to integrate naturally. I think that is what the court saw and what probably our school districts have seen.

5. The strength of the plan was its hope of improving parental involvement in the schools. The assumption was that if we went back to neighborhood schools, then more parents will become involved in their children's education and be more interested in education; they will join PTA, they will come to school on a regular basis and as a consequence our schools would profit greatly. Another proposed strength was that the plan was supposed to save the district money with the assumption that we would

not use all these buses and have to pay for the gasoline and repair on buses and so forth. We could reduce the amount of transportation, and as a consequence, save money that would be transposed into instructional purposes. However, none of this transpired.

I think the weaknesses of the plan is that we got away from the focus on closing the gap in student academic performance and it may be rather than narrowing academic performances, it actually widened. As far as parental involvement in the schools, I don't think that it has changed substantially and certainly with the number of students that we are getting on the low performance list, at least it has not worked out to effect student performance. As far as saving money, I am not to certain that we have fewer students being bused across the school district now than we had before. In fact, the number may be equal or more. We are still busing a substantial number of students but for a different reason. Rather than for the socially desirable cause of integration; we now say that it is socially desirable to integrate students by putting them in magnet schools. I think magnet schools are wonderful. And I think that the magnet schools, if you have enough of them, can be a great catalyst for academic performance/ improvement for the students. However, if you only have one or two pockets of excellence, it does nothing for the school district and as a consequence, only a small population of the very fortunate gets to be well educated. And on too many occasions, those very small fortunate ones get into those schools and they are the fortunate ones that would have done well in education anyway.

5. Well, I think the schools are real close to the parents, they can get to the schools quickly if the school is in their neighborhood. Hopefully, this will encourage more parental and community support. This will hopefully help the school to get things done that you could not get done if your child was way across town in another school or whatever. The closer proximity should cause more parents to visit the school and they need to get up to the schools more for various activities and see what is going on there. So I definitely see the proposed strengths of the plan.

The weaknesses are once again, the plan takes us back to segregation. Additionally, the plan isolates our lower socioeconomic schools and our Black neighborhoods. Generally, the parents in that particular socioeconomic class do not have the particular money that they need to financially back the school or their child. And the way that the city is laid out, I don't feel like rich families give financial backing to the inner city schools either. So our low socioeconomic students are faced with one problem after another.

APPENDIX E

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTION #6

QUESTION 6

6. How does the plan effect low socioeconomic African American students?

ADMINISTRATORS

6. The plan did reduce the amount of busing that African-American students were doing in order for the district to be in some compliance with the law. African American students may not receive a quality education because the prejudices that prevented them from doing their best job and which caused a deterioration of the self-esteem of our children. Low expectations also resulted. Poorly managed classrooms prevented maximum learning from taking place. Staff may have treated them with disrespect, which decreased the children's respect for them.
6. The OKCPS NSP/SRP allows low socioeconomic African American students to attend schools in their own neighborhoods.
6. The SRP limits the social interaction of low socioeconomic African American students with other students.
6. The plan effects low socioeconomic African American students in several ways:
- decreased parental involvement
 - fewer role models
 - lower expectations of students, parents, and community
 - poor educational experiences due to delayed and deprived environments
 - short-term commitments and limited resources
6. Low socioeconomic African American students are often not able to develop interpersonal and social relationships with other races or ethnic groups under this plan.
6. Under the OKCPS NSP/SRP low socioeconomic African American students are not exposed to other socioeconomic groups unless they attend magnet and specialty schools.
6. Support to the family in areas of need is available. The African American students' culture, learning styles, and issues are not lost by those students attending schools in their neighborhood.
6. Low-income African American students, for the most part, are positively affected by being assigned to schools close to their residences.

6. Neighborhood schools are obviously more accessible to low socioeconomic parents, regardless of race, due to the proximity to the homes. By being physically closer, the school can become identified with the home and can offer more opportunity to parents and students to become involved. The problem comes when the neighborhood building does not receive the same attention that one would in a higher economic area. The advantages of working in a high-income area are clear to me. The parents and neighborhood can provide the things that the school district cannot afford. The lower the socioeconomic level, the more likely the building will not receive the same level of funding from outside sources...UNLESS someone or some group takes a personal interest in the school. This can come in the form of a committed principal and staff who write for grants and additional programs, community partners who take a personal interest in the success of the school, or parents who decide that they want a better place for their children. Usually, it is a combination of the above that spells success for the children. Lower socioeconomic parents often feel powerless in the school setting and must be encouraged/empowered to make a difference.
6. My school has a 30% African American population. The African American student test scores have improved greatly over the last 5 years. They are in heterogeneously grouped classes with academic opportunities unavailable before then. We have extra-curricular activities to use that were unavailable before.
6. In most cities of the United States, segregation results from factors other than local laws, and for this reason, clear patterns of segregated housing continue to exist. Black neighborhoods have expanded dramatically in the OKCPS District. As a result, other residents moved out, often to the suburbs (White flight).

EDUCATORS

6. Again, low-income African American students are isolated in low income neighborhood schools.
6. I see this plan positively affecting low socioeconomic African American students.
6. African American students suffer because they generally get the leftovers. For example, old books, raggedy buildings, broken desks, outdated computers, inadequate playground equipment, etc.
6. The NSP/SRP has increased parental involvement. Many parents in the low socioeconomic bracket have to work two jobs making it difficult to be involved in the schools especially if their children are split-up. For example, the previous Finger plan (integration plan) caused the parent(s) to split their time between the different schools or drive across town to the school(s) their child/children attended. I believe the plan effects the low socioeconomic African American students by isolating them within their neighborhoods. The plan forces families in this class to remain in their culture and not have many chances to learn about and experience other cultures.

6. Low socioeconomic African American students attend their neighborhood school and possibly do not venture out of that community. They often do not get the opportunity to better themselves or their community and remain in that socioeconomic class.
6. Low income African American students do not get the interaction or exposure to different cultures and/or socioeconomic classes.
6. The plan seems to effect these children like it does in our school, these children are only around other low economic children, and they have no experience with the higher socioeconomic children. Children need these different experiences to learn from and to be exposed to a different outside world other than their own neighborhoods.
6. Since there is a higher percentage of Black families in the northeast area of Oklahoma City, and these families are from the lower socioeconomic group, the schools in this northeast quadrant will have more African American PTA officers, homeroom parents, and volunteers in schools than they did before.
6. Students attending low socioeconomic neighborhood schools will experience little to no interaction with students from other cultures. Often students are not integrated until middle school or high school which may lead to a distortion of their perceptions of people who are different.
6. Schools which offer advanced educational and special programs are not located in minority neighborhoods which would therefore require African American students to qualify to attend a school outside of their neighborhood to participate in the desired academic and curricular programs. Additionally, students must undergo a rigid application process which is not always democratic. After acceptance, the students must travel to these schools by bus or parental transportation.
6. I believe that the OKCPS NSP/SRP shows low-income African American students that they may not grow outside of the community they have been placed in. I believe that the students' goals are set lower due to the socioeconomic level/status of the community.
6. I personally feel that the OKCPS NSP/SRP keeps African American students from realizing their full potentiality. I feel that these students are expected to perform lower and that less is expected of them educationally. These students cannot truly become academically successful in this type of atmosphere.
6. If tax monies are ever allocated by neighborhood schools only the African American students will suffer greatly. Many families in lower income areas are on assistance and the average income is much less than in other areas within the district.
6. The OKCPS NSP/SRP allows low socioeconomic African American students to attend school with their neighbors.

6. The OKCPS NSP/SRP has again stripped African American students of opportunities to succeed in areas other than sports.
6. I am not sure how the plan effects low socioeconomic African American students.
6. This plan put the students back into their neighborhood and schools, which are in some cases not as racially mixed as the fifth year centers would have been. Therefore, these students are not experiencing the diversity of cultures and ideas.
6. I am not sure yet.
6. The plan has not truly benefited low socioeconomic African American students because it appears that it has not improved standardized test scores or achieved racial integration.
6. This in turn fails to provide outside stimulus or understanding of other cultures.
6. The plan greatly effects the low socioeconomic African American student. State funding needs to be reallocated so those low socioeconomic African American students are able to receive an equitable education.

PARENTS

6. Not Sure.
6. The plan keeps low income African American children confined in their area. This in turn keeps low income Black people poor. This inequitable situation leads to lower dignity/poor self-esteem on the part of our students.
6. Again, low-income African American students are isolated in low-income neighborhood schools.
6. Studies have shown that students who come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds usually do poorly in school. As a result, I feel that low income African American students may not do as well academically as students from a middle class background. Sometimes when students are taken out of their comfort zone, it could cause problems. For a few years because of the Finger Plan, neighborhood schools were literally non-existent in the Black community. Meanwhile, in the middle class communities schools were pretty well held together.

6. The OKCPS NSP/SRP keeps African American students isolated in their neighborhood with a poverty-stricken student body.
6. a) Low socioeconomic African American students are definitely effected by the OKCPS NSP/SRP because the neighborhood schools are always the last schools to be equipped with new books, computer labs, air conditioning, staffing, and equipment.
b) Our schools seem to be the schools upgraded last.
6. a) Low socioeconomic African American students in the OKCPS district often attend school in older buildings with fewer supplies.
b) I see no adverse effects of the plan.
6. Low socioeconomic African American students attending neighborhood schools often receive an inequitable and unfair education.
6. The plan will affect low socioeconomic African American students by not giving them the same opportunities as their peers in other neighborhoods.
6. In our African American neighborhood schools before integration and the OKCPS NSP/SRP, we received undivided attention and affection (hugs) from our teachers. Today's lack of understanding, affection, and attention affect the motivation and self-esteem of our African American children, especially Black boys.
6. Being bused across town and placed in a school district unfamiliar to the child could cause some resentment, but I don't feel at the elementary level the students really understand the situation.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

6. The attitudes of those who instruct low socioeconomic students can be cloudy and defective. Also, the attitudes of many African Americans about themselves and their race have become quite destructive. People seem to think where they live and what they have obtained determines the character of that person. Also the fact that we as African Americans are no longer confined to a certain neighborhood seems to make some think that they are defined according to their financial capabilities. Money does not create total potential. If neighborhood schools would instill pride (in the form of self-respect and respect for others) and an attitude that "all children can and will learn," then our African American children can and will become successful.
6. Children living in the inner city, where property values are generally lower, will be left behind when it comes to providing equal access to funds for upgrading facilities, equipment and other educational advances. This has already been demonstrated with the creation of the Putnam City School District, which was developed to exclude those living

in lower income areas of Oklahoma City while including those fortunate enough to live within its district boundaries -- White flight (not city limits, because Putnam City is not a municipality as is the Village, Spencer, and Warr Acres.)

6. The OKCPS NSP/SRP effects low socioeconomic African American students by locking these children into inferior schools based on inequitable resource allocations.
6. The plan will affect low socioeconomic African American students by raising the level of self-esteem among them.
6. The plan does not provide low socioeconomic African American students with opportunities to "see how other people live and work together." The master plan is transportation. For example, your bus system, your taxi system, streetcars, maybe trains, also your main thoroughfares are very good with wide streets. During inclement weather you have the city come out and clean the main thoroughfares off where your people can continue business as usual. And I think the same thing occurs in neighborhood schools where a kid doesn't have to depend on some mode of transportation. If you are totally dependant on the school bus to take you to school across town and you miss the bus and cannot get to school, where are you going to stand on the grading scale? If you miss the bus and can't get to school where are you to stand on trying to catch up? If you miss the bus and cannot get to school where are you going to be on your extra curricular activities such as band, speech, drama, and also athletics? These are very important to our young kids. At least athletics were to me. I think it's very good that the neighborhood schools are close in proximity to the student's home, so a child can walk or ride his bike, or catch a ride with a neighbor easily to get to school and back. If the student has to go home during the day because he has forgotten something; he can get home and back quickly, or if he is not going to take a full day of classes because he does not have a full schedule that semester; he can go home or he can go to work and then come back for his extra curricular activities. So I think this is an enhancement for the low socioeconomic African American student.
6. I think the statement, "You have the have and the have-nots of African Americans" addresses my concern for our low socioeconomic African American students. We are very much concerned with, and in the capacity that I have now to look specifically into, various students and their achievements. We don't see that there have been substantial gains in their performance overall across the board. So we are not certain that it has done anything as far as to enhance the performance of African American students. Now as you look at these schools, one school has a multicultural population that resembles the population of America. It looks like a little United Nations. We have another school that looks like it has been deliberately designed to be certain that the overwhelming majority of the students in that school were European Americans when the large majority of the students in the entire population in this school district are not European Americans.
6. I think that our low socioeconomic Black students are isolated socially and economically. These students are aware that their schools are in worse shape than the students that they

know are in higher socioeconomic brackets. For example, if you want to compare Martin Luther King Elementary to Quail Creek Elementary, they are both in the same district, but, when you walk into Quail Creek it's like a totally different world as opposed to walking into Martin Luther King. Obviously you know that the socioeconomic level is definitely effecting them because it is apparent that the monies are just not there for Martin Luther King. So the students see this and become cognizant of this all the time in the predominantly Black schools. In my research for my dissertation, when I asked low socioeconomic Black students what they thought about this they replied that it is totally unfair that their schools are run down and the district claims that money is not available to do this or repair that, and provide other activities. Whereas, other schools in other school districts have what is needed. This really effects our low socioeconomic Black students. It effects their motivation, it effects everything in their world. They eventually get the message that they are not important and it ultimately effects their learning. I think there are some students who are inwardly or intrinsically motivated, but just looking at their surroundings and environment doesn't make them feel good about their school. Other students feel like "hey that's okay, that's fine, but, I'm going to get mine." Thus, the psychological aspect of the individual student is significant as well. I also found in my interviews that it kind of depends on the parents, their background, what their parents were saying to them and if they discussed how to overcome it.

APPENDIX F

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTION #7

QUESTION 7

7. How has the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools/Student Reassignment Plan effected the African American community in OKC?

ADMINISTRATORS

7. After segregated schools were declared unconstitutional in 1954, most school districts in the U.S. trying to achieve racial balance in schools have chosen busing to move students from one area to another. It succeeded in some areas but caused White flight and strained racial relations in others. In the Oklahoma City District, the student population was around 75,000 when busing began. Now, there are hardly enough Whites left to integrate each school in the district. Many people of all races in OKCPS have argued that children should be able to attend local neighborhood schools. The OKCPS Board of Education returned to the neighborhood school concept.
7. This plan has allowed every child to go to their neighborhood school if they wish.
7. From my perspective, I see a resurgence of power and energy and the desire to make a difference for the children. The Spencer area controversy is an example of this. The community came together and made their position clear to the school officials. There is no question that their presence altered the future plans for schools in that area.
7. The OKCPS NSP/SRP plan has geographically aligned schools with communities throughout the district.
7. The OKCPS NSP/SRP has strengthened the community, increased parental involvement and promoted a sense of ownership.
7. I don't really know how the OKCPS NSP/SRP effects Oklahoma City's African American community.
7. The OKCPS NSP/SRP has eliminated transportation back and forth from neighborhood to neighborhood.
7. The OKCPS schools found in Oklahoma City's African American community cannot compete with the rest of the district's schools.
7. In short, the SRP has returned those community schools into African American schools.
7. The new plan attempts to quell the desire of the communities to attend schools that are in a close proximity to where patrons live. With the development of magnet schools, OKCPS is trying to attract White students to historically or traditionally Black elementary schools.

7. The OKCPS NSP/SRP has created a division among the community between those who oppose and those who support the plan. It has increased the gap between the low and middle income groups. African-Americans who could afford to move out of the lower income African American neighborhoods did so. Thus, role models and entrepreneurs in African American communities were not readily accessible to assist in the growth of the community.
7. The OKCPS NSP/SRP has significantly effected the African American community in OKC by causing constant discussion/forums for the NAACP to act as a "watch dog" in trying to make sure schools, which are racially identifiable (specifically African American) are treated equally as those which are not.

I am not sure the community as a whole understands the magnitude of what is taking place. Some have only focused on the fact that students are closer to their homes – whether or not the education closer to home is inferior to that of other students throughout the district.

EDUCATORS

7. It hasn't hurt our community because without these neighborhood schools, some of our students are just on the streets involved in drugs and gangs and they don't go back to school. These students often will become involved in drinking, stealing, and killing. This is why many of our young Black men find themselves in prison. We need to get our Black pride and community back. Our priorities are in the wrong places. Neighborhood schools can help us to accomplish this.
7. Our African American community often becomes isolated.
7. The OKCPS NSP/SRP limits the multicultural and economic experiences that are available to each race and class of people.
7. Again, I believe the OKCPS NSP/SRP segregates and isolates African American communities.
7. Perhaps African Americans now feel that they have a larger stake and more influence in their neighborhood schools.
7. I believe the OKCPS NSP/SRP has isolated the African American community from other cultures in the Oklahoma City area. Again, the students only see one way of life and never get to face or see other cultures or communities outside of their own.
7. The OKCPS NSP/SRP allows parents to get involved with the school without it being an inconvenience. Additionally, this can build a strong sense of community.
7. The OKCPS NSP/SRP has caused more separation of the races in Oklahoma City.

7. I really don't know how the NSP/SRP has effected the African American community in OKC.
7. The community must also examine the strengths and weaknesses of the plan and work toward a positive end or solution.
7. The Finger Plan often caused people to become strangers in their own community. When time was already limited, they rarely saw their neighbors at any one sc function, thus neighbors became strangers. The OKCPS NSP/SRP helped to rebuild community cohesiveness.
7. It has strengthened it in ways but overall the weakness is that the district is not providing for the African American schools like they do for the EuroAmerican schools.
7. I don't feel I can speak with authority on this matter, but, I feel that there must be a growing rift between the African American community and the other ethnic groups because of the neighborhood schools plan. Separateness does not breed tolerance or community.
7. Another issue effecting the education of African American children and in their community is charter schools. Schools designed to accept students who score above the 50th percentile on a standardized test and not accepting students who are so called discipline problems. This creates a situation where our best and brightest move to charter schools and our neighborhoods are left with the students who did not qualify or had no chance of competing.
7. It is hoped that this plan will have a positive effect on the African American community and give us a chance to get back to the basics in educating our African American students and taking pride in our schools and community.
7. The Neighborhood Schools Plan has had positive effects on the African American community by providing a closeness both in proximity and shared culture. Community resources are also more available with the NSP.
7. At present, the results are vague. I have yet to determine if the patronage from businesses have increased. Nor am I aware of monies given to the schools by businesses. Some neighborhood schools have very supportive sponsors and adopters and others have very few.
7. These low expectations and low levels of academic achievement consequently affect our African American community.
7. Minority neighborhoods traditionally do not have the economic resources for critical classroom expenditures that are not provided by tax dollars, school board allocations, and community resources.

7. Schools, which are located in majority neighborhoods, have been renovated and have received more funding than schools located in minority neighborhoods. The building of new schools in minority neighborhoods have been limited, whereas, more new schools have been built and renovated in non-minority neighborhoods.
7. It has isolated them from other children of different cultures, and it has kept most of these children only going to school with mostly other African American children.

PARENTS

7. If this trend continues, our Black community will have OKCPS graduates who lack the confidence, skills, knowledge and resources to compete. Therefore these same students will not become quality parents, citizens, employees and role models.
7. According to data compiled, neighborhood schools are struggling. Low test scores and negative attitudes toward these low-income neighborhood schools within the city result.
7. The choice to bring the students back into their familiar surroundings was a good one. Parents now have the choice to send their children where they would like.
7. a) I am not sure how the plan effects Oklahoma City's African American community.
b) The OKCPS NSP/SRP has increased parental involvement in the schools.
7. This plan has created several schools with virtually all Black student bodies. Those particular schools are plagued with low-test scores.
 - a) Both the OKCPS Finger Plan and the NSP/SRP has significantly impacted the African American community in Oklahoma City. The busing era (Finger Plan) opened our eyes to the fact that they did not equip our neighborhood schools with the things necessary to run our schools adequately. I feel that now that we are aware of past distribution problems, we can now make sure that our communities are no longer discriminated against.
 - b) Though we may be left out often, I feel that the teachers in our neighborhood schools work especially hard to give our children what they need to be successful in their education.
 - c) I agree, teachers in our neighborhood schools tend to care about the welfare of our children far more then the teachers in schools to which they were/are bused.

7. The Finger Plan split the communities but academically exposed students to materials and facilities that were not available in low-income areas. On the other hand, it seemed as though the only students being bused were the Black students and low income White students. The OKCPS NSP/SRP has limited the academic exposure and has virtually eliminated busing.
7. Some schools under this plan are all Black (resegregation).
7. The plan also effects our African American community by providing a safer environment for our children (when compared to busing), parental involvement, and improved communication.
7. Not Sure.
7. The African American community seems to have made one of three decisions: 1) stay in the community and fight to make it better, 2) stay because no other resources are available, or 3) leave the community in search of opportunities and better schools in other communities.
7. The African American community in OKC is also effected because low socio-economic African American students will not be able to leave this socioeconomic class without receiving a good education.
7. As stated earlier, the OKCPS NSP/SRP is not fair because it perpetuates the division between wealthy and poor African Americans, as well as, Blacks and Whites.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

7. The plan has brought the community closer together. There are now all kinds of programs for children to participate in after school. Several area churches also provide tutoring, mentoring and athletics for all children. There are other programs that charge fees on a sliding scale for other types of activities. The community is trying to send out a message for kids to stay off the streets, off drugs, away from illicit physical activity, and especially away from gangs.
7. I have mixed emotions regarding the OKCPS Neighborhood School/Student Reassignment Plan. The community is in support of the plan, but are skeptical about the funding for our schools.
7. I'm not sure.
7. As of this date, I believe it is too early to determine whether or not there has been a change in the rate of school violence. It is also too early to see a real difference in the expenditures.

7. The solution towards this is complicated. If we are going to go with the plan then what we are going to have to do is figure out a way to keep the affluent African Americans from leaving the community and encourage more affluent EuroAmericans to attend schools in the district. This might be the intention of the magnet schools plan, although I do not totally understand the concept of magnet schools. The real questions become...
- Do magnet schools draw students from all over the city?
 - Are these programs being adequately funded?
 - Do they have top-notch teachers?

Another concern is that Oklahoma City Public Schools are in pretty bad shape, usually the buildings are not as glorious as the suburban buildings. But as for the quality of education, the teaching staff and curriculum are suppose to be comparable. Again, we are going to have to put the burden not on the government, but, each individual parent in the African American Community. Each individual parent needs to instill into their children the importance of education, true self-sacrifice, and stick-to-itiveness. We need to let them know the importance of giving back to the community once they have obtained all of their education and their place in society.

7. In conclusion, I think the neighborhood school plan would be just what it says – neighborhood. I firmly believe in going to church every Sunday. I go to my church every Sunday, St. John's Missionary Baptist Church, where we say, "we're the best church this side of judgment." With the neighborhood schools, the neighborhood churches, teachers that are from the neighborhood, and parents close by, we provide almost all that is needed to encourage a well-rounded student. And that is what we are trying to promote. To get our kids a well rounded education in our community and keep them out of jails and prisons. So I do believe it has effected the African American community in a positive way, for they see their classmates in church, they see their teachers in church, they see their classmates and teachers in stores, they see their classmates and teachers in community based organizations; it all promotes a healthy environment and teach our children to work in an integrated system. When I make my speeches to young people, I always remind them, "You can say what you want about the majority of the population, but there is not a Black man's picture on the dollar bill yet! And it probably won't be." We must teach our young people to be able to function effectively and efficiently in an integrated society. But I do believe that it starts with a quality education. And I think that the quality education comes out of our neighborhood environment for our young kids. Although I believe that this is an advantage.
7. Despite our hopes, parents still have not fully participated in these schools regardless of it being in their neighborhood. The discussion continues that parental involvement hasn't really increased and then like I said earlier, the monies and everything else haven't increased either. This is easy for many Oklahoma City residents to not worry about because it's not in their particular neighborhood. This is why I think they are not discussing those schools that are in the worse shape. They are constantly tearing down these low income Black schools and converting them into magnet schools. The media constantly shows neighborhood schools on the news and shows you what the schools

look like. These schools look just terrible.

7. The truth is that we are probably as segregated as we ever were with a sprinkling of minorities all over the city in many neighborhoods. But with a heavy concentration of African American students on the northeast side. We still have schools that are largely African American and indeed there are five to seven schools that are possibly 9.9 % African American. If integration was designed to change the social make-up of our community and as a consequence begin to create a level playing field as far as opportunities are concerned, I don't think it happened. We are still a very, very stratified and segregated society. The whole process of integration now disillusioned African Americans because African Americans see integration as something on their backs. The burden of responsibility was on the backs of African Americans with only a few European Americans having to carry the burden responsibility of moving from one place to another or being inconvenienced for a social purpose.

Given where we are politically and socially, I don't think that integration is any longer on the American agenda. I think that we have to get on with the business of being certain that minorities and disadvantaged students of all complexions are well educated and that we stop allowing parents, students, and educators to make excuses for themselves. Hold them accountable for the results that we get and say that through education, as has always been the case, the opportunity structure is there. Because, indeed, we have enough laws on the books. The opportunity structure is there, but the question is if the doors are open, do you have the credentials to walk in. And given that 90 or 91% of the teachers across America are European Americans how can we teach European teachers to teach minorities and disadvantaged in such a way that they achieve and achieve commensurately with their abilities. It is not impossible for low socioeconomic African Americans to learn. The question is do we have the will and can we hold people accountable for teaching these children and say you are not going to make an excuse.

I was honestly frightened to death of the neighborhood school plan. I wanted no part of it because I believed what would happen did happen, and as a consequence I was never for it. Of course, no one ever asked me whether I was for the plan or not. My dreaded predictions came true and our children are still at the bottom of the rating scale when it comes to student academic performance. The vision was that by having the resources, sitting beside White children in the same environment that in some way something magical would happen and our children would begin to perform up to their capacity. We never took into account the fact that in a hostile environment with a hostile person standing before you that it could have a powerful influence on your performance. And that the kids read adults very, and when they know that you are hostile towards them, they automatically become hostile. Or in the sense, they make a truce, you don't bother me and I won't bother you...of course, I'll eventually leave your class unprepared and I'll work at McDonalds the rest of my life, but at least I'll go through school peaceably. That's the kind of truce, we have with some of our teachers. I also say to you that I need to do some research on finding out who these European American teachers are who teach these kids and teach them well and refuse to let them fail. We need

to see if we can find out why these people uniquely, among all the others, have success with these kids. We need to investigate what they do and ask can we train other people to do the same thing.

APPENDIX G

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTION #8

QUESTION 8

8. What are your recommendations?

ADMINISTRATORS

8. I recommend that the district put the money where the need exists most:
- Provide those schools with low parent participation with extra funding to offset those areas where other groups are “pitching in.”
 - Mandate parent support by constantly placing articles in public publications about schools with little to no parent support or business community support.
 - Pay extra money to master teachers who are willing to work in inner city or low income schools.
8. I prefer the Student Reassignment Plan even with its weaknesses. I like the direction the district is taking by establishing magnet schools in the African American community.
- I recommend that the staff reflect the students’ population in all schools.
- I encourage the availability of grant money to fund neighborhood growth projects and social projects in the African American community. Members of the community must be a part of the planning, implementation, and maintenance of any project proposed and/or developed for the community.
8. My recommendations are that the district continue in its efforts to redesign the educational program formats to be conducive to the patrons that it serves. An additional concentrated effort should be given by the district to continually add more magnet schools to the district. These efforts will be beneficial in recruiting White students to traditional Black schools with specialized curriculums and materials.
8. I recommend that more objective procedures be established for equity of services, materials, and the like.
8. Parents should continue to have the right to send their children to neighborhood schools. The school district should be held responsible for providing all students the same competitive opportunity for an education. The district should provide for what the schools, students, and/or community lack. The district should have an alternate plan to address the needs so African American students can have and maintain high academic achievement. This means incentives for the students, parents, and community.
8. I have no recommendations at this time.

8. I have no recommendations at this time.
8. I have no recommendations at this time.
8. With "neighborhood schools" in place, now begin to provide more school options/choices for parents throughout the district.
8. Each area should continue to demand equal, quality treatment from the district and the state. Neighborhoods should claim the power that they have to make a difference for their children so that, regardless of the location of the school, all children are receiving a world class education.
8. I feel all students should be allowed to go to school in their neighborhood. I also believe there should be many magnet schools available for students who want a different curriculum than their school offers.
8. I recommend that the OKCPS district provide programs of assimilation. Assimilation is a long-term cultural process by which values and ways of thinking are exchanged and shared between a minority and the majority. We need programs that constantly emphasizes the need for neighborhood integration and citizen rights. Reassignment alone does not guarantee racial interaction.

Additionally, the district needs to recondition all schools in Black neighborhoods and where student enrollment is predominantly minority.

I also recommend that the government provide national reparations to minority neighborhoods, neighborhood schools in particular. There can be no even playing field for African Americans until this is done. Native Americans and the Jewish communities have received reparations and we have yet to even with affirmative action. Affirmative action was only a small form of reparation to all minorities that has been eliminated.

EDUCATORS

8. I believe there has to be some kind of compromise without busing children across town, but at this time I don't know what that would be. I like neighborhood schools but I also miss the excitement from African American children. I am lucky this school year because I have three African American children in my classroom and I really enjoy having three different cultures in my class. It makes teaching more exciting.
8. My recommendations are to continue to use the OKCPS NSP/SRP despite its weaknesses. People move where they want to and associate with whom they live near. Why not let the students go to school with their friends?
8. I recommend that we address the equity issue.

8. I believe every situation has potential problems but the OKCPS NSP/SRP is fine.
8. I have no recommendations.
8. I have no recommendations.
8. I have no recommendations.
8. Although I believe in multicultural education and I advocate diverse groups of students in schools, I also believe in families being happy in their own community and environment. I feel that parents should have the right to choose where to live and place their children. I also feel that the voucher system would be a great plan for the district. I understand this system would allow students and their parents to choose the school they would want to attend and also be happy living in the community that is comfortable for them. This would help both scenarios - parents being happy in their communities, as well as, being provided a free public education at the school of their choice.
8. First, I recommend that we find a new district superintendent and state superintendent. Our school board members can also be replaced. Secondly, we need to place at least three strong "Black teachers" in each building. Thirdly, we need to better screen teachers and their abilities to work with urban and minority youth. Everyone in education is not dedicated, compassionate, and understanding enough to deal with the needs of this unique population. Finally, I honestly believe that prayer and corporal punishment are both still needed in schools.
8. My recommendations are to terminate programs if there is validation of success that students are allowed to go to schools outside their neighborhood upon request of their parents to the board with appropriate rationale for transfer. Conduct a survey to determine the neighborhood desires for continuation of the OKCPS NSP/SRP that should include surveys for students, parents, teachers and communities in which these schools reside. The school board should not accept this type of bond mandate again without providing adequate public notification in an effort to prevent repercussions. These repercussions can have a profound affect on the educational process of minority students in becoming life-long achievers in a global society.
8. In education, everything seems to cycle about every 10-12 years. I really am unable to find a solution to this problem, but I sure wish someone could resolve this issue.
8. I recommend that the OKCPS Board of Education stop misusing bond money as they recently acknowledged. All schools should receive proper funding in order to meet safety requirements. I also recommend that they end the neglect of neighborhood schools resulting in building closures and leaving communities without a neighborhood school.
8. I prefer the OKCPS Finger Plan, which integrated our schools.

8. My recommendations would be to have more inter-school sports events and academic events within geographic areas in the city. Then once or twice a year there could be championships for those geographic areas.
8. My recommendations are that African American schools be staffed with a larger number of African American teachers. Low minority representation in the staff of low socioeconomic minority schools causes a lack of parental involvement, community cohesiveness, and poor communication because of cultural differences.
8. I recommend that all schools in the district become charter schools. For example, designate one middle school to become a pre-vocational school or a trade school for students that work better with their hands, another school for students who demonstrate talent in the arts, etc.
8. We need to integrate the schools, neighborhoods, and churches in OKC. We need to realize that when we choose to racially segregate ourselves then we are responsible for segregation.
8. I truly believe in neighborhood schools and agree to continue using with the OKCPS NSP/SRP.
8. I truly believe in neighborhood schools and agree to continue using the OKCPS NSP/SRP.
8. I recommend that we don't mandate the attendance zones. Every community is different. We need to let the families make the choices and inform us of their needs.
8. Since I work at Classen School of Advanced Studies, a truly integrated magnet school, I recommend the creation of more magnet schools. I also wish more volunteers could be recruited to work one hour or more per week with students. I would raise money for schools and build new ones which are better suited to the academic needs of today's students. I would make music, art, and PE mandatory in all grades three times a week to increase student interest in school.
8. I recommend that more funds be made available to schools with low socioeconomic populations so the staff has the needed extras other schools get from parents. This will help provide more equal education.

PARENTS

8. In my six years with the OKCPS district, I have repeatedly heard the phrases "excellence in education" and "the mind is a terrible thing to waste." The state of Oklahoma and the OKCPS district need to reexamine and financially commit to these

words of truth. My recommendation would be that the district absolutely support the OKPCS NSP/SRP by providing low-income neighborhood schools with the resources to realistically promote “excellence in education.”

8. I think that the neighborhood schools are a good idea, so long as we make them equal to the other schools, which I think will take constant monitoring.
8. My recommendations are:
 - Make all schools in the OKCPS district magnet specialty.
 - Utilize the same curriculum in all buildings (when involvement occurs there is no loss of instruction).
 - Modernize all schools tear down all buildings and replace them. This can happen over several years.
 - Continue in-service training programs.
8. I recommend that we support neighborhood schools.
8. Segregation and poverty are “twin evils.” Equity definitely needs to be addressed. Our low-income African American students/schools do not receive adequate books, supplies, sports equipment, and buildings/facilities, etc.
8. We started busing kids for integration (Finger Plan). Integration is important because America’s work force will be integrated.
8. I recommend in order to save money and stop unnecessary busing, the school system bring all schools up to the same standards. Even though we have specialty schools being organized today, the majority of our African American students will attend neighborhood schools in low-income areas. These lower income areas often provide a lower quality of education. I believe that all students can excel in something. Black students are effected because the level of expectations is not as high in neighborhood schools that do not have specialized programs.
8. My recommendation is that we as parents come together as a unified body working with our teachers and administrators to insure equality to all Oklahoma City Public Schools. We need to stay involved with our children’s education and insist that they will always treat our neighborhood schools fairly. We need to be aware of what is going on in our schools and help make them successful by offering our support when necessary.
8. I recommend that we continue to find ways to integrate the student body population at all schools. Children need to learn in a multicultural environment.
8. I fully recommend this plan remain a thing of the past, and let the parents decide what’s best for the children.

- 8 Although it's going to take some time to reestablish pride in our neighborhoods, I am in favor of neighborhood schools because they offer familiarity and stability in a child's life. Today's world is one of mass confusion, fast paced, and constant change. The school along with the church have always been foundations that served as a nucleus for communities. You can usually measure a neighborhood's feeling of self worth through these institutions.

I recommend that...

- If school administrators and staff commit to attempting to encourage, strengthen, support, and educate the children of these communities, then neighborhood schools will become successful.
- we teach the kids to depend on neighborhood resources and themselves. Busing (children to schools outside our neighborhoods) has fostered the attitude that success can only occur outside the neighborhood. But, when the children begin to see potential within their communities (example, school choirs, dance teams, sport teams, debate teams, drama groups, etc.) then they will see and understand that although finances can serve as a form of protection, potential can exist everywhere.

8. My recommendations are that...

- we quit labeling our children. (All children really can learn regardless of the A.D.D., L.D., and/or Slow Learner labels that we attach to them.) These labels encourage our children to quit trying.
- administrators need to become more involved in their buildings. Principals need time to get to know their community, teachers, staff, parents, and students. Less mandates and paperwork needs to be mandated from the central office. Our administrators spend way too much time in meetings and other requirements that take them away from their building.
- teachers teach using alternate teaching styles (using the blackboard and overheads). Thus, reducing the amount of ditto paper being used.
- teachers need to walk around the classroom and help students one-on-one. They also need to stop and really listen to what the children have to say.
- parents need to become informed about what is going on in school so that they will regularly attend PTA meetings. PTA meetings need to be more interesting as well.
- open communication and positive relations be a top priority of the school and district. Teachers frequently talk amongst themselves, to other parents, and with other students about delicate and/or confidential information that need not be shared (gossip). In short, the teachers' lounge should not be used for student and/or parent gossip. This gossip generally leads to low student and parent expectations.
- teachers avoid putting down students. Teachers put students down too much and fail to praise enough.
- educators realize that low socioeconomic African American parents are often

victims of the system and have had bad experiences in public schools. Therefore, they can be very defensive, apprehensive and hostile.

- parents fully support the dedicated and caring educators who are working with their children.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

8. I believe property taxes from each district should contribute to a statewide general education fund to be regulated by the state. This will be the only true way to ensure that each child receives or at least has equal access to an equal education regardless of their socioeconomic status.
8. My recommendations are:
 - close/consolidated schools.
 - allocate “critical core” resources to low socioeconomic students
 - send the best teachers and best resources to the critical core unit schools.
8. My recommendation is to support neighborhood schools but financially make them equal.
8. A task force should be created for each quadrant of the district to specifically address that area’s needs.
8. African American communities will have to bear the burden of improving themselves. We have to demonstrate that just because you are at the poorer schools you can still learn. We have to instill a sense of discipline upon the students at an earlier age and let them know that this is something that is important and will effect them for the rest of their lives. Again the magnet schools will probably help, but, the whole thing is tied to economics. If you don’t have the money, if you don’t have the tax basis, if you don’t have the property taxes and you don’t have the people there to make sure the property values keep going up, then no matter what you do you will be behind. I don’t think that it is the Federal Government’s responsibility to make sure we are equal to the affluent suburbs. I think that it is up to the individuals to do everything they can to instill in their children the discipline and the ability to stay with something and to do something worthwhile; give back to the community and not move away to the suburbs. That’s the only way we can stop inner city problems.
8. My recommendations would be that we would promote the success of neighborhood schools. This means that we cannot afford to say “Okay, I am in my neighborhood school and I do not have to participate as a parent. I do not have to look over my kids as a parent. I know the teachers are there and they love my kid and they are going to take it from there.” I would advise anybody that we make this deal work. It’s not a whim, it’s

not an ideal anymore, it is the law. It is what it is, and the test case is what are our kids going to be when they get out of school. I recommend that we make sure that our parents of the kids participate in our PTA and PTO wholeheartedly. I think the teachers have to take a second look at just doing a job. Our community and community leaders also need to become more active in the school and the community. For example, I am a Shriner, among other organizations and we paid for the new sign in front of Douglas High School. The Shriners have adopted Douglas. Also, my fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi, has adopted Douglas and we paid for five young people to take the ACT test that did not have the money. We also had a nationally mandated program in our fraternity called guide right. And we have had a guide right program here in Oklahoma City for fifty-five years. And what we do is take young men and guide them right. It use to be only young men without total family – mother and father together, but with the situation dealing with our young men today – we take all young men- no matter what and they meet at our fraternity house every first Sunday of the month for the guide right program. The guide right program is very effective. We mentor our subject matters like health education, we discuss sexuality, and we provide qualified information and presenters in these areas. In our fraternity we do have doctors, lawyers, social workers, teachers, principals career service men, and retired people. We come in on a monthly basis and provide mentoring in one of these areas to let young men see what can be achieved in the Black community. We try to show them that the gang situation and the drug situation are not the only alternative. So, I do believe this neighborhood school program is good because organizations are coming forth and adopting our neighborhood schools. I would go out on a limb to say probably the AKA's, Delta's, the Alpha's, have also adopted Douglas and/or Northeast. I will say that I am also a Mason, we have adopted Douglas and also Edwards Elementary School. As for the equity issue, I cannot say that I am an expert in that because like I say, that is up to the school board. When I vote on a deal, I make sure that it is not prohibitive against the Black community. When I vote on a bill I make sure we are included. When I vote on a bill, I make sure that it does not have any hidden agenda where we are left out of the group. So on the equity situation, I would have to say that once a state law is passed it applies to all schools. And equally it is almost impossible for a piece of legislation to pass that would include one school and exclude the others unless it was specifically put in there – something like charter schools or enterprise schools. Therefore, the equity situation is up to the local school board. You know people and organizations believe that the squeaky wheel get the grease. I do believe all of the Oklahoma City schools in the inner city are very old and are in very dire need of repair and renovations and equity is part of that. The questions become when it is going to get done and who is going to do the job? I also believe the money should be split or divided for schools equitably. Because when we passed that eighty-nine million dollar bond issue they did not say Douglas and Northwest Classen only; they said the Oklahoma City Public Schools. So I would have to say that I would have to put my trust in the Oklahoma City Board to make sure that all the schools are equitably funded. I also know that as soon as you make a repair on one building there is another repair needed. I referee high school ball games. I have done it now for the last twenty-five years, and a bunch of times when it is raining outside there is water leaking from the roof on the gym floor and we have to stop the game to wipe up the water. So all the schools are in need of repair.

I don't think one school should get more money than the other. Additionally, I don't think that one school is able to get it if it came through the school board in an open meeting or the open meeting act, where it is discussed and voted on by the full board.

APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP #1 – ADMINISTRATORS

Focus Group #1 - Administrators

Facilitator: I just have four questions that I want to ask because I know that you are limited on time. First of all, I want to thank you for participating in my study. For those of you that don't know me, I am an Oklahoma State University student and graduate assistant.

The first question, What do you know about the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood School Plan Student Reassignment Plan and/or the Finger Plan?

Ashley: I remember the Finger Plan quite well.

Facilitator: Okay, we will start over here and go around the table.

Ashley: Go ahead (motioning to another participant) because I was working with you when that all started.

Kizzy: It has been about 7 years ago. I think it started with some concern from parents saying that they didn't want their children bused all over the district. Their concerns basically had to do with safety and the fact that the children were having to get up so early in the morning and be transported to schools that were a long distance from their homes. The parents felt like it would be better if the children could go to school in their neighborhood and they could walk to school. The other concern was the distance that the children had to travel; the parents were not able to participate in the different activities. The parents claimed that they didn't feel that they were really a part of the schools that their children were attending.

Facilitator: Good. Would someone like to elaborate more on that?

Ashley: One of the other things I have heard parents express was that they felt like the burden of busing was placed on the minority population students, namely African American students.

Facilitator: So was that the group that was very vocal about the change?

Ashley: That was part of it. They felt that the burden was placed upon them to integrate the schools and they wanted their children to go to their home schools.

(Butch motions to speak)

Facilitator: Butch, do you have anything that you want to add?

Butch: Grades 1-4 would be bused and then the others would bus basically to the fifth year centers.

(Number One motions to speak)

Facilitator: Number One?

Number One: I think when they first went back to elementary neighborhood schools it really was designed to make the neighborhood school the center of the community and to cause/foster more involvement from parents. However, when it happened, it did create racially identifiable schools. And place kids in a certain socioeconomic group within a school.

In short, the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan (OKCPS NSP/SRP) separated our students by race and class.

Facilitator: How many of us agree with this comment? All, good.

Can you think of some other weaknesses of the plan? I heard someone mention that parental involvement was one of the goals of the plan. Do you see more, less, or about the same amount of parental involvement since we have implemented the NSP/SRP?

Mary K. At my campus, parents are more eager to come because it is a neighborhood school and they know that they can drop in at any time when they have the transportation. They all can come, whereas when the children were bused, that was not possible. So I see an increase in parental involvement.

Facilitator: Okay, good so how many of you do see more parental involvement with the plan? I see Gregory shaking his head; do you agree that you see more parental involvement at your school?

Gregory: Yes. Our PTA membership has increased considerably and more parents are involved.

Facilitator: Mary Katherine, I know that Gregory is at a low socioeconomic African American school. How would you classify your campus?

Mary K. Well, I was one of the schools that was identified in the district as being racially impacted, probably one of the top 5% of non-Black students.

Facilitator: For those of you that haven't made a statement. What are you thinking? Do you see more, less, or the same amount of parental involvement?

- Kizzy: I basically saw about the same. The parents who were really interested participated and it didn't matter where their kids attended school. They would go. While, the ones that weren't participating, you couldn't get them even if they lived next door or across the street. You would knock on the door and they wouldn't even open the door. Or you could hear them cussing, "The blank, blank principle is on the porch." I was in a school, which was mixed with probably an equal number of Black, White, and Hispanic students.
- Facilitator: Was it low income or middle income?
- Kizzy: Low. Very low and in a high crime area. And the only thing was better for us was we frequently had to take children home in the neighborhood. It was better for school personnel to try to get them home than to drive across town.
- Facilitator: Can you think of some factors that might contribute to the lack of parental involvement?
- Kizzy: Oh, probably their parental skills. Some of the kids having kids, didn't know enough to even care. They didn't think that it was important at the time. Some parents are interested in quitting school and didn't really have time to come up and spend time at school because they had a job and had to work to get paid.
- Facilitator: Lindsey, you were going to say something?
- Lindsey: I was just going to say I see a marginal increase. I have real good participation when we have some major event, like the Christmas Program. We don't have enough space to accommodate all the people that come. But when we have other types of things, like PTA meetings or even award assemblies, you don't have a whole lot of people that come. But, when the children perform, both of our (inaudible) programs, those kinds of things, you have a lot of people attending.
- Facilitator: So, if the children perform, the attendance increases?
- Lindsey: Yes. Say, for instance, one of our major events is at the end of the year, we have a carnival. You have a lot of people that come at that time. But otherwise I don't see a whole lot.
- Facilitator: Lindsey, describe your clientele at school?
- Lindsey: I would say 98% African American, a few other students interspersed throughout the population.

Facilitator: Warren, you were going to make a comment.

Warren: I am located at a middle school and this is the second year for us as neighborhood schools. The first year the parental involvement was fairly high, increased probably by 50%. This year it is probably down by about 50%. What I am experiencing is that I am in an extremely low economic area, probably the poorest in the state according to the last records that we had. Predominately Hispanics are in our area. Basically what I am finding is that if kids perform they will come out and participate, but we are having to take a look at different ways to get parental involvement because the culture states specifically that the education of the people are the authority.

So when they come in, they will listen, but they don't want to give advice about how to educate my child because they leave that up to the "educators." So we are having to be very creative in finding ways in which we can involve them.

Facilitator: Do you agree with Kizzy and Lindsey or with the general consensus, that you find more participation if the kids perform?

Warren: Right. And I also find that the neighborhood concept where I am is that before this we had problems but they were diluted now they are concentrated. So you have a very high level of students who run away from home, who think about committing suicide, who are into gangs, who are abused, and it is very concentrated now. So that is one of the differences I am seeing now also.

Facilitator: Several people have mentioned throughout the interview process that they felt parental workshops were needed. Have you held any parental workshops on parenting skills and if so, what were the results?

(Lindsey motioned to speak)

Lindsey: I tried to have parental workshops but the attendance was not very good. I had two one time and maybe four another time. For whatever reason they do not see the need for being a part of a group. We really tried to talk about things that they would be interested in, even tried to do a polling to see what they would be interested in, what you feel like you really need, and there was really very little response to that. And even less response where attendance was concerned.

Facilitator: Has anyone else offered parent training?

Kizzy: If you don't offer like a dinner or something of that nature, you are not going to get good participation. If you have a bean dinner or something of that nature, a lot of them will leave early.

Gee: Yes, you were talking about the advantages that are provided by the neighborhood schools. Although my experience in the district hasn't been so extensive, I see something that should be an advantage that really in fact works out as a disadvantage, and that is I think familiarity breeds contempt. I think the patrons that we deal with become so accustomed to our efforts and we try to make them so accustomed to us, that they just naturally feel that we are going to take care of them and that everything is okay. Such things as children not being picked up on time after school and even what we are talking about now, not responding to a program that is geared towards helping them. This is kind of puzzling to me, because it should be a strength. I can recall growing up in the inner city neighborhood and the school was the focal point and involvement was high. Familiarity really made the community stronger and more involved. I am wondering in my mind why that is so.

Facilitator: Good, I am going to, if you don't mind, pick on you for the next question. How does the neighborhood schools plan effect low income African American students? You were saying that it was supposed to provide a stronger sense of community, are you not seeing that? You stated that it is puzzling to you as to what dimensions are going on here. Would you like to elaborate more on that?

How has the Oklahoma City Neighborhood Schools Plan effected low income African American schools, the greater Oklahoma City area, and the Black community in general?

Gee: Well, thinking back to my experience when I first came to education in 1994 at a particular low income African American school; the kids did not have the advantages of language. Just being able to talk and understand the language of their world was difficult for them. Language skills and experiences that go along with having these skills were limited. I think that is a big factor in having the neighborhood schools. You don't have the interactions with different groups of people. You are not able to share their experiences.

Facilitator: Would you like to comment on that Thelma?

Thelma: Yes, I visit all of the schools and I don't sit there every day. But, I do go and I remember when I was there. I liked the neighborhood school concept simply because some parents are involved with their children. And it depends on the area that you are talking about as to whether the parents are really going to get involved. Where I used to work, they were definitely involved. That depends on the teacher also. If you are involved with the family, that parent

is going to be involved with the school. So I had very good success. I had great success with my parents and my kids. So the plan has its good points and it has its bad points, but basically I think it is good. I am against busing kids all over town just for the sake of integration.

Facilitator: That brings us to question number 4. I am going to poll our group; we have 9 participants/administrators present. How many of you are for the neighborhood school plan? Five. How many are against the neighborhood school plan? Okay, no one. Who is undecided? That leaves four that are undecided. Okay, good. You gave some valid points. I want to hear from Mary Katherine and Ashley again.

Ashley: One of the strengths that I see in neighborhood schools is the extended families and the ability that if someone is sick, or injured, or you need to contact a parent or a family member, there is always someone nearby that you could contact. I find that is not true in the situation that I am in now, relatives are not in close proximity.

--Well, this is a middle class neighborhood. Sixty-five percent of the population of students are African American and the other is completely mixed. It is very diverse. We have five bilingual-lingual assistants and five languages spoken in our school. But I find that I don't have an extended family to contact anymore. Someone is always out of state, in another city, or another country, they are often gone. There is not someone right here for us to connect with. But let's see one of the disadvantages of being in a neighborhood school in a lower socioeconomic area would be the school itself. Let's be truthful about this, our buildings have been neglected for decades and my building was one of the worst buildings that I have ever seen in my life.

Facilitator: How many of you agree with Ashley that the schools that you work in have been neglected? At least eight out of nine and the one that did not vote works at the administration building.

Ashley: It had definitely deteriorated, the building itself, the grounds, the books, the library, the equipment, the materials, everything. In the length of time I was there, about five years, I don't care how much money we spent, it wasn't going to be enough to put back in equipment, take care of the facility, textbooks, and library books. I couldn't believe the age of the books in the library when I got there. I couldn't believe that children were allowed to check them out. I would have thrown them out, they were terrible, they were old. They weren't even diverse. They looked as though they had been there for years. I guess that has been eight years ago now. But, equity is still a major problem in our district.

Facilitator: So all of you would agree that equity is a problem. Right? Is it a weakness that we need to address?

Group: Yes.

Ashley: It certainly was a weakness and still is, even with our district's emphasis and their efforts to do some other things in the schools. Mary Katherine can speak to you about some changes that are currently taking place.

Mary K.: We have had drastic changes at my school in the last year through the bond issue, trying to get things up to par, promised things, things that were supposed to have been done several years ago, from what I understand. I wanted to speak on parental involvement again for just one second. I had two meetings last year on Saturday in conjunction with Oklahoma Excellence through the University of Oklahoma, and my school has been trying to practice the democratic process. We had parents in and we had a wonderful turnout of parents. Probably 60 or 70 parents on a Saturday morning from ten to twelve, very informal.

Facilitator: What do you think was the key factor?

Mary K.: My teachers. The efforts that they made to call the parents and to get them there. We were looking at the direction that my school was going, and we knew some changes needed to be made. Since we were a community school, we wanted the community to have a voice. We had parents from the neighborhood association come and parents whose children were already grown but they still wanted to know what was going on at the school. We had four very simple questions. One question was "How did you learn best while in school?" Then we related it to today's child. None of the questions were threatening, there were no answers given. Everybody just shared. And there was good response to that.

Facilitator: How has the plan effected the African American community?

Number One: In the community I work, it really hasn't effected us because the situation in the high school is basically upper middle class Americans. Ninety percent of the students are transported by bus, so busing is (inaudible). And even though we talk about busing, today somebody is bused somewhere, basically everywhere.

--Just to elaborate on that even further, as you go back to neighborhood schools your busing costs for every school that you are going to put into a neighborhood school is probably going to increase by twenty percent.

Facilitator: I haven't heard a lot from Lindsey.

- Lindsey: I think that the administrators and the teachers make the difference in the neighborhood schools program for African American students. Because a lot of times it is hard to attract the top of the line teachers and you get applicants who just want a job and a lot of them have not had the experience of working with African American students. And it really is a culture shock for them and they are afraid of the parents because of the way that the parents present themselves and so these teachers back off. Then the kids are running the classroom. So, if you get an administrator with that same background they are running the school and nobody is learning, and it is just a big problem. So the administrator and the teachers that he or she selects make a big difference.
- Facilitator: What would you advise, this is a good point. What would you advise that we do to ensure that our teachers are prepared and avoid culture shock?
- Kizzy: Well, I don't really know what they are doing at the university. But what I do in my interview process is I ask all my nice little cutesy questions, then I ask "What are you going to do when a kid calls you a B--ch?" And I have had an interviewee get up and leave. If they continue with the interview, I ask, "What are you going to do if the kid hits you?" I ask questions about these types of situations. We need to let them know that these scenarios are possible. I make it sound a lot worse than it really is. Then when they get there they say, "Its not as bad as you made it sound." But if you were willing to come, as bad as I said it was, and worse, then the interview process was worth it. Also, starting last week, I invite them to leave if they are not interested in teaching kids in this area. I said go find you a principle who thinks you are wonderful and go. They have to be able to have some sort of control over the students. And you find with African American students they can identify in no time soon, who is boss. And once they know who is boss, they will test you, and if you are not it, forget teaching them anything.
- Ashley: Kizzy, weren't you formally at a merit pay school? What did you think about merit pay? This is a point I would like to make, and I think these types of schools are in areas where the teachers and the principle are constantly challenged. It is high task, constantly. It is very draining. I think to keep and attract good teachers and good administrators at these schools we need to have merit pay. There was merit pay in our district and that is how Mary Katherine was able to attract and keep some of those teachers that she was just talking about. I left the school that she is working at now.
- Facilitator: How many people would agree that in order to offset teacher and administrator burnout, that merit pay should be implemented?

(A couple of hands were raised.)

- Lindsey: I think there needs to be master teachers in those schools, not beginning teachers. And that is what you frequently get, very beginning teachers who don't have any experience and who don't have all of the repertoire of all these skills.
- Mary K.: When my school implemented merit pay the teachers were paid ten dollars per counsel.
- Thelma: But I don't think that merit pay is going to keep a teacher from burnout. No, not merit pay. I think that sometimes your sorry teachers will work to get that pay, and they still are sorry teachers. So we have to find something else. I see them everyday when I go out into the buildings. They are still out there doing nothing and I don't know how we can get rid of them. But they need to be handled and identified. It is terrible, and it is getting worse, and I need to shut up before I call a name or two. But it is bad.
- Lindsey: I just want to speak to this point. You talked a few minutes ago about what can you do to get the teachers to know what they need to do. I really think I would like to go back and look at the universities just for the fact that I was in that setting not to long ago. I know that a lot of the teachers that come out of these teacher preparation programs are not prepared, they don't have a clue as to what they are going to do. One reason, is the professors haven't spent any time in public schools for years, so they tell the students that everything is going to be beautiful and rosy. And as soon as they walk into a classroom and one of the kids tells them where to go, then in two years, if not immediately, they are ready to go to another school or district. I think there needs to be an awakening or a marriage between the university and the public schools and there needs to be more interaction. I think these people really need to be put in field positions where the rubber meets the road, instead of going to some of these districts where they don't have to deal with constant discipline problems or parents coming in and cursing personnel out, etc. Because I tell you what, they are ready to have a nervous breakdown when they encounter things like that. And that goes back to what Kizzy said that these unprepared teachers just kind of back up into a corner and the children just have a field day taking over. So I think these are issues that we need to really address.
- Facilitator: Good point. Warren?
- Warren: I just want to elaborate on that because to me the teacher preparation programs at some universities do a pretty good job and at others it is not taken very seriously I don't think. We hire teachers from a lot of schools, a lot of colleges and you can tell the ones that come in from the program that really prepared them well. One thing that could possibly help in that regard too is that when they get ready to assign student teachers to a school, it might

behoove the university and the school to have those two meet first and actually teach the teacher how to teach the student teacher. Sometimes student teachers are not utilized like they should be. That would help. Exposure to cultures and those types of things would also be beneficial.

Facilitator: Good.

Gregory: I think that the teacher preparation program now is inadequate. It needs to be changed. It really needs to be more along the lines of what a doctor has to go through in terms of internships and that kind of thing. I think that is the only way we are going to really identify the types of schools and the types of children that they are actually going to have to deal with when they graduate. Also going back to the neighborhood schools in terms of community involvement. I found that I get more involvement from individuals when churches have gotten involved with the school because they feel the (inaudible) from the community, they have programs (inaudible) and things like that. So they are real sensitive to the needs of the school.

Facilitator: That is a good point. I know we are short on time.

Thelma: I just have to say one more thing. We are talking about getting good teachers. I don't think anybody at this table is less than thirty. But you are not going to get the same kind of teachers today that we were. When we came out we had a different attitude about what we were doing. We wanted to succeed and we knew we were good. You are not going to attract that kind of person anymore because you don't pay, and the kids coming out today that would normally come into the teaching profession go elsewhere. I know because my daughter wants to teach, and she is teaching, but she got a law degree first. She became a lawyer so that she could eat. And that is what is happening to the good college students.

Facilitator: So, your recommendation is that we need to increase salaries?

Thelma: Right, we do and I looked at the board for mayors in this country today, and one of the mayors, a female, said we need to pay more money to teachers. Everybody is talking about all of these wonderful things we need to do, but that is the answer. You pay for what you get. And we are getting what we are paying for, nothing.

Warren: One last remark, when you talk about resources that would make schools better, social workers should be at the top of the list. The teachers and the administrators have to do a lot of social work, and there are some models in some other states where they have social workers assigned to a community so they can help to do the social work so that the principle can then be the instructional leader and teachers can instruct. This needs to happen more

often. We spend so much time doing other stuff that you don't have time to teach, and that has to come first. That is one of the basic needs right along with the shelter, the food, and feeling secure. If you don't have these things, you can't even begin the other.

Lindsey: There are a couple of factors that our schools need to be successful. I think that the type of child that is coming out now (there are so many kids that are foster kids, drug kids, abandoned kids) comes in defensive. And it takes a long time just to win that kid, just to build a rapport with him/her. Sometimes you have to take a teacher that is real strong and move that kid with a strong personality with that teacher. I mean you have an overload now because you have so many of those type of individual students there, but, that is the only way that we are going to be able to save them. So, we often need teacher assistants to help. This is no easy thing.

Facilitator: Good point.

Gee: I hear the word identification coming out the last few times and I think one of the advantages of the neighborhood school, is it does allow for a sense of identification. We are talking about businesses and churches coming in and willingly helping because the children are right there in the neighborhood. Then parents should assist in the education of their children. You would think that this wouldn't be a problem. But even in terms of bringing in student teachers, in terms of getting the best qualified teachers, if there was a sense of identification with a particular school it would add to the commitment and dedication on the part of its community members. Perhaps this sense of identity would ease some of the things you are talking about. I would say that our community needs to create this type of identity.

Lindsey: I feel that we should not lock step our quality administrators and teachers into these low income African American schools. Once they have become successful in these types of schools or in working with these children, they are often lock stepped into staying there. I recommend that we avoid lock stepping our teachers and/or administrators.

(Timer rings)

Facilitator: Well, time is up. I thank you for participating in today's focus group session.

APPENDIX I

FOCUS GROUP #2 – EDUCATORS

Focus Group #2 - Educators

- Facilitator: Okay, I want to thank you all for participating. I have five questions. The first, "What do you know about the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood School Student Reassignment Plan?"
- Vicky: In the late 1970's, the district started desegregating Oklahoma City Public Schools and we started the Finger Plan. In 1986, we went back to neighborhood schools.
- Suzanne: I don't like the neighborhood schools plan at all.
- Vicky: I agree, I think neighborhood schools hurt the children.
- Facilitator: How does it hurt the children, Suzanne?
- Suzanne: Children attending neighborhood schools don't get the same education. The supplies and materials are not the same at the Black schools. We don't have the same books and opportunities that White kids have. We always come up short. The concept of going back to the neighborhood school is fine, but I don't see where we really brought our kids and community any closer, our schools and our education has not improved.
- Facilitator: Okay, good. Now I want to hear from Mary, Jesse, Vicky, and Rosie. Mary, what do you think?
- Mary: We don't have support because we have younger parents now than when we were in school. Parents raised children differently then. But it is best to let our children venture out into another neighborhood school because somebody there is going to reach out and touch that child.
- Suzanne: We don't have adequate support because a lot of the parents haven't had good experience at school. I am saying, it's not the kids, it's the parents.
- Facilitator: Okay, I want to hear from Jesse, Vicky, Rosie and Mary.
- Vicky: I want to say something. They had all the Black and White students mixed together under the Finger Plan. Afterwards, surrounding districts created Edmond Schools and the northern suburban schools. All of the Whites from Oklahoma City moved because of that. Then we started Charter Schools. That is the real problem. The neighborhood schools concept

sounds good, it sounds really good, ideally, but the education in neighborhood schools is not the same.

Suzanne: Yeah, and neighborhood schools are segregated and isolated.

Rosie: Exactly.

Facilitator: How are they segregated?

Vicky: By race and by class.

Suzanne: Many students going to Black schools, like she said earlier, don't have the same kind of facilities and resources. I hate to say it; but, the White schools even have more activities.

Mary: However, when we were integrated we still had problems.

Facilitator: Right, that's a good point. Jesse do you have a comment?

Jesse: I think the reason we have so many problems is because of the past. It is still hurting us because the people that are in the low income areas right now didn't obtain a good education. If we don't help the kids here now, and provide them with a quality education, they are going to remain here forever.

Facilitator: So, the cycle perpetuates?

Jesse: Yeah. I have been a substitute in Norman, Putnam City, and Oklahoma City. And Oklahoma City is definitely the lowest.

Suzanne: It is. And that is why our students are doing so poorly, especially with our testing. They don't receive the same kind of instruction either.

Jesse: I am against neighborhood schools and for integration.

Facilitator: Okay, I want to hear from Rosie.

Rosie: I am too.

Facilitator: Did you comment yet, Mary?

Mary: I agree with the neighborhood schools plan.

Facilitator: Why do you like the neighborhood schools plan? What are the benefits?

- Mary: I like the plan because everybody knows each other and they can look out for one another. We have a better or a real good PTA now.
- Facilitator: Okay, good. Rosie, I see that you want to comment, go ahead.
- Rosie: Our PTA is slightly more visible, but most of our parents don't work and they should become more involved. But what I didn't like about busing then and busing now is one thing, and one thing only. Those poor children have to stand outside on that dog gone bus stop for 30, 40, maybe 50 minutes every morning waiting for the bus. And often it is snowing and raining, and those kids come to school wet.
- Suzanne: Now, if our neighborhood schools were to get the same things, and all of our schools looked like Nichols Hills, we wouldn't have had to bus our children.
- Facilitator: So you want equity?
- Suzanne: Yes. And the thing is, look at Nichols Hills. When the parents wanted to go back and reopen Nichols Hills, the district fell on their faces trying to rebuild a neighborhood school over there. They got everything in the world over there to work with and it's not fair to the other schools.
- Facilitator: Now let me ask you why you think that happens? Why is it that Nichols Hills, Quail Creek, and some of the other more affluent neighborhoods in our district have/receive more?
- Suzanne: It's the leadership.
- Mary: Yes, administration.
- Vicky: Administration. That's right, because of the things that they request and acquire.
- Suzanne: The parents are also more resourceful.
- Mary: They generally receive more donations and have successful fund-raisers. Our low income communities are not that resourceful.
- Jesse: Mr. Smith told me that Quail Creek recently raised \$15,000 for their school. They have an abundance of parent and community involvement.
- Suzanne: Let me interject. When I first came to this district in 1980, I worked at Western Village over here, and Western Village was a middle class Black,

as well as, White neighborhood then. And I really didn't see the difference in the children, until I came here, I really didn't. We had parents there that would have garage sales on Friday and run them through Sunday evening, and every dime went into Western Village. The parents we had then were active like the parents in more affluent schools. Edmond would donate to Western Village; Putnam City would donate to Western Village because we had middle class White and Black families. But when they turned Western Village into a neighborhood school, all the Whites moved out and went straight to Edmond. However, the most important element, is the leadership. Before we became a neighborhood school, we had somebody that was a good leader. Mr. Roy was our principal. He was a white guy from Edmond. Mr. Roy taught us how to be neighborly, friendly, and professional. But when you mixed the arrogant in with the uneducated and violent, you've got yourself a real problem (a volatile community). So, today I wouldn't want my child to go back to my neighborhood school, Western Village.

- Facilitator: Let me ask you the next question. Knowing the strengths and the weaknesses of the plan, how does it effect our low socioeconomic African American students.
- Jesse: Bad. It's a viscous cycle. It puts them right back into an unsuccessful environment.
- Mary: All we are doing is recycling poverty.
- Suzanne: We are recycling, but do you want to know one thing? This recycling of resegregation is not going to be like it was when we were coming out of school. No, it is going to be more violent. See, when we were attending Douglas, all Blacks went to Douglas back then, if you heard that a child went to Central, he was the exception. He went to Central only because he crossed the color line. Because, before you were born there wasn't a Central for Blacks. Segregation was for everyone back then. Now, resegregation truly impacts low socioeconomic minority students.
- Rosie: That is why everyone is scared to make home visits now. Very seldom do you want to go step into someone else's home.
- Facilitator: Let me ask you this then, what about the students? Now we know that there are African American students that attend Quail Creek and Nichols Hills. How does their education compare to the education of our children?
- Suzanne: Okay, we have really two types of Black students being educated. The poor, and the ones that are going to make it.

- Vicky: That's right.
- Suzanne: Some of them want to get into better schools, some of them don't. They are stringing many kids along.
- Rosie: But we've so many that are trying.
- Jesse: When you say that you are from Lakeville or another low income minority school, people automatically have lower expectations and treat you differently.
- Vicky: But why don't we have parental support here at Lakeville?
- Suzanne: Yeah, why don't we have it?
- Rosie: Because look at them.
- Jesse: Well, the parents aren't educated enough?
- Rosie: Yes, they aren't educated, they don't want to work, they want to watch television all day long while the kids are taking care of themselves.
- Suzanne: One thing about it; these parents are children having children.
- Rosie: That's right. That's what I say, babies having babies.
- Vicky: They are not prepared. They can't help themselves, how are they going to help the child.
- Rosie: That's right.
- Suzanne: Luckily, they are talking about welfare reform and stuff. Maybe that will help.
- Jesse: Yeah, parenting skills are definitely needed in these low socioeconomic schools.
- Rosie: But they won't attend these classes.
- Suzanne: They will go if you go out and get them.
- Suzanne: You have to pick them up and provide them a free lunch.
- Mary: That's a lot of work.

- Rosie: Many of these children don't have two parents in the home.
- Suzanne: But when these children get in trouble, they should make it mandatory for a parent to go to a special class.
- Mary: They should, but they don't.
- Suzanne: That's how some of the schools in Chicago work.
- Mary: Now, she is bringing up a good point.
- Vicky: Yeah, I have heard that they have parenting programs in their schools. There are all kinds, you can't believe it, and there are counselors and everything in schools like ours.
- Suzanne: But we had that at Western Village back then.
- Mary: But we don't have it here.
- Rosie: They say grade school kids don't need counseling.
- Vicky: Our kids and community are really confined and restricted to this community.
- Suzanne: Yeah, we are.
- Jesse: Our children are also limited in their experiences because they don't know what is outside of this neighborhood.
- Rosie: Sadly, nobody in our community is reaching out, not really.
- Vicky: Unfortunately, the ones that are venturing out with their parents; eventually move out of the neighborhood.
- Jesse: Some parents move out of the neighborhood, when they are able. Most of them aren't able. Many of them are not able to move out of their apartments. They need adequate jobs to move out of their situations. -- They need training.
- Facilitator: Jesse brought up a good point. What are your recommendations? What do we, as a focus group, recommend that the district do to rectify the situation?
- Vicky: Provide parenting skills.

- Mary: Yeah.
- Facilitator: Okay, parenting skills is number one on our list. Good, something else?
- Rosie: We have got to have an active PTA too, we don't have an active PTA.
- Suzanne: You don't have concerned parents, so you don't have an active PTA.
- Facilitator: What do we do to get an active PTA?
- Mary: Equalize resources.
- Rosie: Go out and bring the parents in. Everybody is going to have to go out and get a parent.
- Suzanne: And grandparents too.
- Vicky: Whoever, the parents, a grandfather, whatever it takes.
- Suzanne: I think we should turn all of our low income minority schools into magnet schools.
- Vicky: I think that would be an excellent idea.
- Jesse: The kids will certainly benefit from magnet schools.
- (inaudible conversations).
- Mary: Yeah.
- Vicky: You know that race is not the real issue, it is more about class.
- Facilitator: How many of you agree that it is more about socioeconomics than it is about race? (Facilitator counts hands.) Wow, everybody.
- Jesse: I think that goes back to what I said before. It goes back to the mistakes that have been made in the past. And you are still going back to it today, it's a cycle. That is why there are low income parents who didn't receive a quality education sending us their children and we are failing to successfully prepare them.
- Rosie: We need to fix it.
- Mary: Yeah, this cycle is still continuing.

- Suzanne: You have got to provide these kids with opportunities to get out of this unsuccessful environment.
- Vicky: Yes, you have to show them that there are other means and ways and that they do not have to live or exist in this type of condition. You have to offer kids a variety of positive experiences.
- Facilitator: Can we honestly do that in the Neighborhood Schools?
- Mary: Yes, you can. It takes money, but it can be done.
- Vicky: We should have money to take our kids to the liberal arts theater, and to the opera. We are restricted because of limited monies.
- Rosie: Also, all of the low income schools need to have big business corporations adopt them. They need to adopt our schools and really become supportive and active. And not just say that they will. It always sounds pretty, but they never do anything.
- Jesse: Yeah, really commit to the schools. Put dollars behind their promise.
- Rosie: Our schools need money, manpower, and volunteers.
- Facilitator: Rosie, I see that you want to add something.
- Rosie: I am going to tell you something. I tried to get Southwest to adopt us. You know what they told me, they said that we were too far out.
- Vicky: Yeah, I have heard that same excuse as well from other businesses. I asked a few companies to adopt us and they replied that we are not in their community. That was an excuse.
- (inaudible)
- Facilitator: Oh good, Jesse just brought up a good point. She asked what businesses are in our neighborhood.
- (inaudible)
- Jesse: The real problem is that we do not have any businesses in this community to adopt us. So therefore, we have to venture outside of our community to solicit adopters. The majority of these adopters refuse because of neighborhood preferences.

- Suzanne: Excuse me, hold up, and let me tell you something about the few businesses that we have around here. I am going to tell you what they said. Ms. Cosburn, the music teacher, came to me one day and said that Channel 4 called her and asked her for the choir because they heard about our choir. She said that they heard that our choir was really good. She said that they asked, "well how many of them are White?"
- Rosie: Oh no.
- Suzanne: Yeah, that's right. And she replied, "Well the majority of them are Black." And they replied, "Well can't you put some Whites in there to blend in?" Then she replied, "Well my best choir is Black." They responded, "Sorry then, we can't use them."
- Mary: Uhmnmn.
- Suzanne: She shouldn't have let them off the hook that easily. I would have publicized their actions. That's not right.
- Rosie: And if you read the newspapers, they never have a kind word to say about teachers.
- Vicky: That is the problem. The media perpetuates it.
- Rosie: They are always talking about what the teachers are doing.
- (Timer rings)
- Facilitator: Well ladies, I appreciate your participation. Time is up. I am going to stop today's focus group and thank you for your time.

APPENDIX J

FOCUS GROUP #3 – PARENTS

Focus Group #3 - Parents

- Facilitator: First of all, I want to thank you all for participating. I have five questions. The first, "What do you know about the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools Plan/Student Reassignment Plan?"
- Facilitator: Bubba, tell me what you know?
- Bubba: The Neighborhood School Student Reassignment Plan, I ain't never heard of it until last year.
- Facilitator: Okay.
- Bubba: I didn't even know they were doing it. But, I don't think it is worth it. I don't see what it is doing.
- Donna: I like the plan because it helps the neighborhood.
(inaudible) No, but it never...(inaudible)
- Donna: The plan helps the neighborhood as people get to know each other.
- Sue: Yeah, but that is what desegregation is for.
- Donna: I understand that too. But I still like the plan.
- Bubba: The concept was fine but really I don't think that is why they went back to it. But, it's not that way now.
- Sue: No, it ain't like it used to be when you went to school or when I was growing up. You know, everyone would watch...and if there were fights in the community they would come and break it up, or somebody would spank you for fighting and send you home. Or they would call your momma, and she would come up there and spank you, and all that stuff, and it ain't like that no more.
- Donna: No, they might not put their hands on the children, but I do know that the neighbors, especially retired neighbors, see these children walking by. I know because I see it every morning; the kids that walk to Martin Luther King and the retired neighbors that watch out for the children. For example, there is supposed to be a crossing guard at 23rd and Jordan, and if that crossing guard is not there, an old gent that lives right there at Jordan and 19th comes down every morning to see if that crossing guard is there. And if the guard is not there, he gets out and helps those kids cross the street.
- Sue: Okay, but...

- Donna: In the evening time when it is time for those kids to come home, he is sitting on the porch, its almost like he is counting them to make sure he sees everybody that is supposed to be there in that neighborhood.
- Bubba: I can understand where you are coming from, but, as far as I am concerned, I like the way it was when schools were integrated.
- Donna: I don't.
- Audrey: Okay, wait. (inaudible discussion)
- Sue: Neighborhood schools ain't helping our kids, you know.
- Audrey: That is not it. I went to segregated neighborhood schools too. I attended a segregated school one year, in Arkansas. Then I went to all integrated schools throughout my education. I like integrated schools because they better prepare our children.
- Bubba: I want to say something. They put us back in neighborhood schools in order to segregate us.
- Audrey: Exactly.
- Sue: That's what they are doing. I would never go back to segregation.
- Bubba: I like the concept; don't get me wrong. For example, take our PE classes. Quail Creek's kindergarten children have PE and our kindergarten children don't have P.E because they have our PE teacher pulled over there for their PE classes. That is a White neighborhood school and this is a Black neighborhood school. Right there you can see the injustice.
- Audrey: Exactly.
- Bubba: Another thing; other schools which are located in more wealthy communities have mothers that don't work and they can be at the school tutoring kids. But when you have low income students in your school, parents are working jobs that are less flexible and they cannot take off from work to attend school events and/or volunteer.
- Sue: My grandmother had 13 kids and all of her kids went to school everyday, and half of them went to college. So that is a cop out.
- Bubba: I don't care as long as they get a good education.
- Audrey: Right.

- Donna: But before then, we had parents that would watch the children. We had parents that could whip the children. But if you touch somebody's child now, I don't care if they are in your neighbor, you are already in trouble. Because we have uneducated parents. We have parents that are babies raising babies.
- Bubba: You have parents that will go to somebody's house talking crazy.
- Donna: --And want to kill them for touching their child.
- Bubba: We also have Black students that are trying to succeed and Black families supporting them. Its like if you have certain ones, you pick them out. You've got so many that want to do good, so many that want to do better, but, you have the majority of them that society pushes back.
- Sue: Let me tell you, I lived in this area for years. I pulled my grandchild out of here, before I hurt someone. Y'all know my grandson. I pulled him out of here, and I put him right back into Nichols Hills. The first thing that principal over there said to me on the phone was, "He is from XXXXX and we are going to have a discipline problem?" I said, "But holy sister, let me tell you something, you are fixing to have a discipline problem on your hands with me. I live in the Nichols Hills area myself." "I know it sounds funny for a Black woman to say this, but let's face it, my grandson, like it or not, is going to go to your school." She replied, "Well, he has to take a test." "Give it to him," I said. "We have so many children in the class-room," she wined. I said, "Put him in there, you can make room for one more." They gave me all kinds of excuses because they heard he was from XXXXX and they read his discipline record. But let me tell you something, I put him there and that leadership is great. He is a 4.0 student and has been on the honor roll ever since he enrolled there. You know why, because the principal will not blink an eye if I walk in there with my belt. She will just shut that door and go on her way.
- Bubba: I know what you are saying. I didn't believe it when I was a child. But it is support. Parent support is a good support.
- Audrey: We don't have parent support here.
- Donna: No, there ain't no parent support.
- Sue: Let's face it, 90% of the parents we have right here aren't more than 25 years old.
- Donna: Hold it, they got welfare reform. I know several girls that have gotten themselves \$150 to go get them a car. Some of them take the money and get a car, but some of them don't. They have to try and do better.

- Facilitator: So you are saying that welfare reform should maybe have a parenting component so that they will participate in the schools?
- Donna: We should hear from them. I believe that the government needs to get their behinds out of family business.
- Bubba: That's what they need to do.
- Donna: That's why come our teachers are the way they are today. They need to just back up off of people's parents. When I was coming up, the government didn't have nothing to say to nobody when my momma whipped my behind; nothing. The government and teachers need to just back out. Did y'all ever wonder why the government isn't in the churches, because they will tell you how to serve the Lord. Most churches have bond programs that will not borrow money from the government for that very reason. The government would say, "you can't serve the Lord today." Just like they are telling you that you can't whip your kids when they need it.
- Audrey: That's why kids are the way they are today.
- Sue: I have a good friend who is the head of the DHS Department and she told me that every time that they go into a home and remove a child out of that home, it is \$1,000 in that person's pocket. Now, that is why they are happy to go in there. See, the thing about it is, the parent doesn't have to be that wrong. They make an excuse in order to get that money. And it is unfair. For the same reason, when the welfare does come in they are going to tell you how to raise the children, because they are giving them a little food stamps and a little token for your insurance and things. My suggestion for the government and the DHS is when these mothers go out there and have these babies put them on a pea picking field. When we were coming up, momma raised 9 of us and there was never a government check. The only check we got was when my momma was washing floors and ironing and my daddy had gone on us and left my momma with all of us. We never, knew what welfare was.
- Facilitator: Let me ask you this...How does the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood Schools Plan effect the African American community in Oklahoma City? How is the plan effecting our community?
- Sue: You know, when you through a bunch of neighborhoods together, you know the problems that you have. This neighborhood is feuding with that neighborhood, and this other one. Today, this is what we have.
- Donna: We don't have a common community.
- Bubba: It's divided.

- Donna: Yeah, it's divided. Cause if you live out on 23rd, ain't nobody gonna come way out there and see you. They think you are beneath them.
- Audrey: And the South side is different from the West Side.
- Bubba: That is what they were talking about in the (inaudible) when we first went to the plan. That situation right there; and that is when I first woke up and was aware of it because they were right.
- Donna: We can turn our schools around. Yes, it can be done, because I have seen it; one school at a time.
- Audrey: We don't get to know each other. We know each other within our neighborhood, but, there is more to our community than our few neighbors.
- Donna: We need to educate the parents. We need to have something to draw the parents to the PTA. And, number one, I am going to tell you something else that parents don't like because I have heard them talking about it. You know, like every penny that is raised for the school, you have to write it down in the books because you know that the administrators are crooks. Parents know that they will steal. Everybody knows that. And they don't like to donate nothing because they know that the central office is stealing it.
- Audrey: Well, they can't see that.
- Donna: Yeah, but they know that they are stealing it. One thing we ain't, we ain't fools.
- Donna: So they want the money to come straight to the school. If they are going to donate stuff they want it to stay in the schools and they want the money to get to our schools. That is one of the reasons that you don't have nobody donating stuff to the schools either.
- Sue: Because they are worried about it walking away and going to other schools?
- Donna: Yeah, or walking downtown.
- Facilitator: Let me tell you the word for that concept, they call that "site-based management." For example...
- Sue: Do you remember, our schools used to be managed that way a long time ago.
- Donna: Yeah. Now we've got crooked principles.

- Sue: I know we did. You've got crooked people downtown that messed it up. I wouldn't give a dime now. If I am going to donate money to my child's school, I want that money to stay in my child's school. I don't want my money going into some general account that the board says it has to go into, you understand? A lot of parents know this, and they won't give a dime.
- Bubba: Then the money is going to be within the school. So, if the school runs out of money before the end of the year, they are on their own.
- Donna: And you know this, parents know this too. That is another reason. People being dishonest to folk. And they don't trust you once they find out you are crooked and that is the whole problem right there. And these private schools and all that; all that is about money, it is not about the child. And you live on and you will see that too. Everything is about money. It is not about the children, even this school right here. If we get the money we are supposed to have for our supplies and facility, then these kids can do anything that the other kids can do, because any child can learn. But we don't have it, because they feel that we are low income and you know what they expect of us.
- Sue: They aren't going to do nothing for us no way; it don't matter.
- Donna: That is what I am talking about. So that tells me nothing. Girl, you can ask until you turn as white as that woman over there, they aren't giving us nothing. Because that is the way they feel. And that is the reason why these people would not pay their kids fees, because the children don't even get the supplies they pay for.
- Donna: When I was a child, the community center took us everywhere. I went to the circus about six times. The community, as a matter of fact the policemen, took us on trips. We had the policemen support our school.
- Facilitator: So you are saying that even with the neighborhood schools plan, our neighborhood is still not picking up the slack. They are not meeting the needs of the kids.
- Donna: No they are not.
- Audrey: We need to get the entire community involved. The police, the fire department, and the churches all need to become involved.
- Choral responses: Yes, yeah, right.
- Sue: And the churches are not doing their part.
- Bubba: No they're not.

- Facilitator: Okay, in the last two minutes, tell me what you want me to address with these community members.
- Sue: Tell them to reach out to our families.
- Donna: The church is not going to help because they know they are going to take the money downtown and not issue it out to us.
- Sue: We are going to have to forget that state of mind and get a new one. We are going to have to wipe the slate clean.
- Bubba: Let the churches buy whatever it is.
- Donna: Yeah, we need the churches to adopt our schools.
- Audrey: But let me tell you, I know that Central Elementary, my son's school, the churches out in that area, like St. James and other Baptist churches, they have adopt-a-school programs. Every year they have an annual program and they raise money, and they give it directly to the school and buy the schools supplies and equipment. It does not go through the central office. The churches get the request list, what they need, and they go and purchase those things. Now I do know that there are some churches out there in my son's community that are involved and they have been like that for the last 2 or 3 years.
- Sue: Like Temple and McKay, they were the first people that Nichols Hills got to adopt them; real money makers.
- Donna: That is the problem. We don't go out and try to get anything; it is easier to sit back and gripe about it.
- Bubba: Yeah, that is what I was fixing to say too.
- (Timer rings)
- Facilitator: Well ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate it. I am going to stop today's focus group and thank you for your time.

APPENDIX K

FOCUS GROUP #4 – COMMUNITY LEADERS

Focus Group #4 - Community Leaders

Facilitator: The first question is what do you know about the Oklahoma City Public Schools Neighborhood School Plan? We can just start around this way, Mr. Scott.

Mr. Scott: I started working for the school district in January of 1980. Initially, I worked with the Chapter One program. After about a year, I started working with the Planning Team and was very involved in student reassignments. It seems that we reassigned students, the district had policies concerning school crowding, because of overcrowding and (inaudible) with regards to racial balance. So we were looking at each school in the district in light of both of those issues. We began the Finger Plan during the 80's. We were responsible for simulations to balance the school racially or to bring an end to overcrowding in the schools. The frustration for us was that the criteria kept changing and there were really no definitions. The definitions were kind of tested with the Office of Civil Rights because the demography of the city was changing.

We at one time had probably 76,000 students and dropped to about 36,000. However, the decline did occur after the implementation of the 68 cluster plan which proceeded (inaudible) the NSP.

Hope: The Neighborhood Schools Plan is another step that Oklahoma City Public Schools used to compete with the (inaudible) schools. It is a stand just like we did before 1954, when White America was really happy that we had neighborhood schools that were predominately White schools or predominately Black schools. Then we went to (inaudible) a busing plan and Caucasians had a "busing fit." I know that I was in Connecticut and this was an area where there were very few Black people and the kids, all they knew about Oklahoma City was that it was a place where a city councilman was bombarding a bus showing the people's dislike for busing. I think that they dressed it up in such a way, they cried out, "Who are these Black kids catching the bus?" and all of that kind of stuff. And it was, to me, just a hypocritical step that Oklahoma City Board of Education took because they knew these were all Black neighborhoods, and they told me, and I think Ms. Ford will tell you the same thing, that this was fought against. We fought against it; we believed exactly what those nine White men dressed in long black ropes told us in 1954, we believed that segregation was inherently unequal. Now we believed that and Thurgood Marshall told us. And when we were debating, when the Supreme Court was looking at the Dowell Plan, I was there, it was the last time I saw Thurgood Marshall. And I will never forget when he asked one of the board members, "Are the schools segregated?" He further added, "And when you have average Black children in an all Black schools, when will they come in contact with White kids? They won't ever." I am against neighborhood schools and I am against what the

Board of Education has really dressed up, because it sounds good, but it's degrading to Black people even today. Many Black parents I have talked to about neighborhood schools say, "Oh, yes, I am raising my child in the neighborhood." But if they only knew that their kids had a computer at school and that they didn't have anything to turn them on with.

Facilitator: So you are saying that inequity is an issue.

Hope: I'm saying that it is more than inequity. In the first place, they are telling me that they are going to have parental involvement. Where are the PTAs? How many people do we have participating? You should research it. He could tell you how many people we have involved in the PTA. (Pointing to Mr. Scott) What I feel that the Oklahoma City Public Schools District could do is to first admit that they have gone back to segregated schools. Now that would make me happy. I want to hear that group say that we are back where we started from, we are at point zero. Where do we go, now? We have a habit of taking care of the smart kids, but then when we look at things, who is really smart? Is high intelligence that kid that can score XXX on an ACT test? How smart is he? Where will he be in the next 10 or 15 years? We know what happened in Germany when they separated people and got all the smart kids together, we know what happened then. And the same thing is happening now. So, I am saying that I am against neighborhood schools today, I was against it yesterday, and will be against it tomorrow, because of the total package. Now in their community when the White folks have succeeded it was because they have been able to parasite off the English, the French, and the Czechs. But, in our neighborhood we are just feeding off of predominately one group of people. And historians will say that unless you know and understand history, you will always remain a child. And I think that the Oklahoma City Schools system is a child in education.

Facilitator: Thank you.

Mr. Smith: I don't know about the school curriculum. My kids have been out for a long time. (inaudible)

Facilitator: Okay. Thank you. Dr. Joy Jones?

Dr. Jones: My association with the Oklahoma City Public Schools dates back to when my first child attended school, in kindergarten, and that was back in 1977. Both of my children were under the Finger Plan and both of them have graduated from John Marshall High School. The second one graduated 5 years ago, and the first one, 10 years ago. It's been 10 years. So, I became very involved as a parent, and of course our children attended neighborhood schools until they were in 5th grade. They each attended different 5th grade centers because over time those things change in the district.

The problem was that we continued to have to adjust, under the Finger Plan. We constantly had to adjust and reassign students in order to keep the racial balance that was within the class. And because of that we had a lot of students being reassigned every year, to the extent that that was one of the reasons that many people left the district. Not White flight, because it was not all White people who left the school district. We had a huge number of Black students move. Almost half of the enrollment of the students that were in the school district moved. I was not on the School Board at that time when the Board of Education made the decision to go back to neighborhood schools. But I was on the Board and was a Board Member of the School Board for two terms, eight years, during the entire time that the plan was implemented. And I worked with Dr. Muse who was the chairman of the committee that decided to go back to the neighborhood schools and we worked on the plan and developed the plan. At that time there was enormous support to go back to neighborhood schools. This was coming from everyone in the community, although there were still those who opposed it and the NAACP was I think premiere among those who opposed the plan.

Facilitator: Can you remember some of the debates and some of the issues during that time?

Dr. Jones: You heard. And those were heard by the board of education and I can say that I know that Dr. Muse, Ms. Herman, and Ms. Hill were all very concerned about those issues. Those were the issues. And those were the concerns and continued to be the concerns for as long as I was on the Board, which was until 1993. I left the Board, my term was up and I did not run again. But I still have that concern. That always was a concern. But we also had the concern of continuing to not have support for what we were doing in the school system and I believe, we don't have anyone here who was on that committee who came up with the plan. I inherited it, pretty much like anyone else who worked with it inherited the plan. To have done anything other than what the Board did after that plan would have been to have to (inaudible) the Board's decision and the Board made it a reasonable decision based upon what the district at the time wanted. Yes, there were elements in the community at the time that didn't want it. But far more people supported it and continue to support it.

There had been two bond issues that had passed prior to the plan, but they were very, very small and did not meet the needs of the district. After those two passed, we weren't able to pass anymore. And I don't know why that was, it would be difficult to say. There were probably a number of factors that caused that to happen. But, certainly there was not any ground swelling support, I mean there was not only non-support, people were violently opposed to busing. There is just not any other thing to say about it. I believe that this is true of the Board that proceeded me and those who were on the

committee who came up with the plan, was that they wanted to find a way to address the achievement of the students in the schools. And the Board for thirteen years had not done that. You can say, well they should have tried this, but this constant juggling of students, and moving students, and trying to address achievement by moving the students had not succeeded in addressing the achievement issue. It also had depleted our parental support. We did not have PTAs then. When I came on that Board, I worked hard to try to start a PTA in every school. I had been the citywide PTA person and I had worked at the state level. We had done everything to try to get parents in the schools. We had fourteen PTAs at the time that I came on the School Board. I left in 1992, and it is in this book, I have the profile from the Oklahoma City Public Schools from the 1991/92 school year which was the last year this was available. When I left the Board, we had a PTA, a functioning PTA connected with the national PTA, these were not little groups that were isolated, and there was a PTA in every school in Oklahoma City. I had been involved in PTA and a lot of things in education before running for a Board position. But when the Board went back to neighborhood schools; and it was clear that they were going to do that, the plan was passed in December, 1984, and in that Spring I was concerned at the time, I was really concerned, that we were not addressing the needs of all students under the plan that we had. My children were getting a good education in their integrated school, in my neighborhood, but I knew that there were a lot of other children in that school who were not. The school at that time was 45% Black, and children were being bused in, their parents were not involved in the school, they couldn't get involved in the school. There were so many obstacles to the achievement of so many children that I ran for the School Board. And we were committed to trying to implement something different. We knew that there were concerns. And we knew all those things, and I think that people knew that we heard them. I believe that people knew that we heard, we just had a different idea about what we needed to do about it. We did hear the concerns. And those continued to be the concerns when we went through all of the court situation, the whole thing was replayed, we went back over everything. We continued to make the commitment to make sure that we were having equal opportunities for every child in every school, and equity was the overriding issue. I can assure you of that. I knew Dr. Muse quite well. There wasn't anyone who was more concerned about equity than he was and he established the first Equity Committee and I worked with him to do that. There were four or five of us, three board members and three or four staff members that developed the Equity Committee in the beginning. It was the intent of the Board to have that Equity Committee function in a very, very specific way to assist the Board to make sure that we knew what was happening and not to become a political thing and not to become something that people manipulated. We wanted the Equity Committee to give us information and to keep us on track. So I think that the Board's commitment was very good then. We established ways of making sure that we had good

teachers in every school, that we monitored the years of experience, and that we did not place a whole staff of teachers that did not have experience in any one school. We made sure that we had qualified teachers everywhere and that they were racially balanced, we definitely watched that. We continued to have our staff be integrated in every school. Those things continued. Of course, in the beginning only the K-4 schools stopped the busing, this was done gradually with the overwhelming support of the community. At every step it was supported by the majority of people in the community.

Dr. Jones: I think that the thing that we wanted to see was that we would have achievement of students and look at what we were doing to help those students that were not achieving. We did not have money in those days, those were also the days when the state experienced the first oil bust, it was nothing like today. We cut our budget \$10 million dollars the first year. I was on the School Board the second year as well, two years in a row we cut the budget. And we did not have the money to do some of the things that we did. We just went ahead and did it and cut some other places, we were short of a lot of things, we were short of a lot of needed maintenance. We couldn't pass the bond issue but we knew that we had to address what the children were learning. We were able to monitor what we taught with groups of children, and we knew that we had gaps in achievement. The gaps were greatest among socioeconomic groups. They were great among racial groups. The gaps were far too great. We set about narrowing those gaps and in the eight years that I was on the school board, I saw those gaps narrow considerably. They were not eliminated. They were still a challenge. I believe they will always be a challenge. Socioeconomic gaps are everywhere you go, and I think you would find that this is true in every country.

Okay, so what we were trying to do was to address the issues of education rather than anything else at that time. And at the time when we went back, when it was finally completed, we really did have a neighborhood school system. I do not believe that today, if you look at the Oklahoma City Public Schools, that it is exactly a neighborhood school district. Now, there is a different approach that has occurred that has changed the nature of what was the intent of having neighborhood schools because now there are magnet schools which is another way to address issues, and there are specialty schools which is yet another way. I don't want to get into addressing any of the other issues, and fail to address the neighborhood schools. The neighborhood schools were created with the idea in mind that every school would be a quality school. This is what I believe and what I think we had when I left the School Board. Why there was not a school in the school district that I would not have put either one of my children in. They were not in the best schools by a lot of peoples' ideas. No, they would not have thought my school was the best school, necessarily at all. But they were all good. And that was our goal, our goal was to have every school in the neighborhood closest to the

parent so that we could have the parent's involvement and the community support and the community would be responsible for the school and be involved in the school and the community. That is what we were doing.

Facilitator: Thank you. Reverend White?

Rev. White: What I know about the neighborhood schools is mostly confined to second-hand information. Actually, I know very little about the nuts and bolts of the plan. My information and my knowledge comes from my association with school administrators, teachers, and concerned parents. Conceptually the neighborhood school plan is a plan that seems to attack a certain problem, it seems to solve a problem because it seems to address the issues that we are all concerned about. However, from what I hear there are still some inequities. I think most of the conversations I have are about the concerns about the inequities that still exist. I think all of us realize that there are a lot of things that you can put on a piece of paper and it can look perfect. But when it comes to execution you start to find out where your weaknesses are. I believe that in the process of the development of this idea there have been some weaknesses discovered in the plan.

Hope: You talked about your equity committee.

Dr. Jones: Yes, I did.

Hope: An equity committee was sent out to evaluate the schools in this district. The report that was given by Mr. Kirby, then the Equity Committee Chairperson, was not accepted by the Board of Education and he and members of the committee were terminated. Ms. Jones, I would like for you to talk to me very honestly about the inequities that this committee found. And I would like to say this, I am serious, when White Oklahoma City says that the people are in favor of neighborhood schools, you have got to remember that we have a White, conservative newspaper and White owners of the press. So, you can make people believe anything you want and I think Mr. Gaylord has done a professional job in doing that.

Mr. Smith: Amen.

Hope: I feel that until we have a press that will tell the whole story; we will always be behind. You started behind and I have no respect for the Oklahoma City Board of Education.

Facilitator: Reverend J.P. Green?

Rev. Green: My knowledge of the plan comes from somewhat second-hand information as well. I have two children who are in Oklahoma City Public Schools and I attended OKCPS as a young student.

Facilitator: When did you attend Oklahoma City Public Schools?

Rev. Green: In the 1970's. I went to neighborhood schools in the district. And in 1972 I was bused from my neighborhood to the other side of town. I was able to come back to neighborhood schools in 5th grade. In 1975, my middle school years were spent in neighborhood schools. Having that experience, I am in favor of neighborhood schools, particularly because of parental involvement. One of the problems that I saw in retrospect, was that a lot of the parents were not able to be involved in the children's education because the students were bused clear across town and parents worked somewhere else. Even if the parents didn't work it was hard for them to get to the other side of town. So, with neighborhood schools, I see a lot more parental involvement even now. But also there is a great disparity between the schools. I have a child in the school now that is not just in the neighborhood schools, I guess it would be considered a magnet school, and it is supposed to be language specialty school.

The problem that I have with that is that I think that this grade school is a good school, but in 1991 the neighborhood school that my son went to, Stonegate, had more computers and more computer training for students than my child attending a magnet school has now. So there is a great disparity in what is offered at the school. I don't think that the answer is busing. I think that the answer is to have equality in all of the schools around the district. It doesn't matter what neighborhood you live in if you have the same access to the same equipment and the same quality of facility as a child in another neighborhood. Case in point, I have a youth that is in the 7th grade that never went to Oklahoma City Public Schools, but is a product of private schools. She made a 28 on her PPT, that score is much higher than some of the kids that are seniors in our public school system. And being a product of Oklahoma City Public Schools, after I got to the university, I realized that I missed a lot. So there is a lot of disparity in the school system, on the elementary level and throughout.

Rev. Webb: My connection to the Oklahoma City School District goes back a few years as a substitute. I think, now looking at it from the standpoint of the neighborhood schools, I have no problem if the equipment and everything else is there. It is just like it was when I was going to school down in Texas. I told the kids, "Hey, I never saw a brand new book until I left home and went to high school." So that is the real problem, you can have a good neighborhood school, if it is supplied with all of the equipment and resources needed. It is true that Stonegate does have plenty of computers, but that is

what we need to really focus in on. I hated to see those babies catching buses, I always felt bad about that. If they don't have to do it, then I think that the school board is obligated to put the equipment there that is needed. You go in a room, as a substitute teacher, and you have everything that you need, and you go in another one, and you have nothing. So they could have good neighborhood schools and they could be beneficial to the community, but they have to be equal in all areas.

Dr. Monroe: At the time, I was growing up in the Oklahoma City Public School District and teachers valued quality education. And I say that because it wasn't all about having new books, having new equipment, etc. But quality came from having caring teachers, administrators, and staff members who made you believe that you could succeed regardless of whether you had a book or computer. Failing was not an option. So it became a mindset that it wasn't what you didn't have, it was what you made of what you had. So, with that as part of my background and my foundation, I would teach with that philosophy. And I sincerely feel that I have exhibited a whole lot of that in my daily operations as an educator, as well as an administrator. I have had the opportunity to practice all of what I believe. Now, in terms of the effects of neighborhood schools, being a civil rights activist means that I was very active in the NAACP for a (inaudible) because my teacher, Hope, (inaudible) taught us to be very involved in studying and making history. And that is how we looked at history, being a part of, not just reading it. Also understanding the importance of integration because of our experiences. (inaudible) So, I am saying that all of that helped me to understand the importance of integration, yet understand the importance of neighborhood schools. (inaudible) I agreed with integration because integration had a message of "we all have to live together" and in order to do that, we needed to experience each other, you could not do that in a segregated mode. So that is where I was coming from, and where I come from, in light of knowing the importance of integration. Then I feel a little guilty when I find myself in support of neighborhood schools because as a result of having integration, I believe we have observed some of the negatives of neighborhood schools. Now, when I look at that, integration is more than putting bodies together. And I can say as an administrator, having students of all colors in a particular building, if they did not feel as if they knew each other they became segregated in the building, and that was a fact. So, then you start looking at, so what did integration mean? And you start looking at how we get along with each other, how we feel about ourselves, how we feel about society.

Now, the neighborhood schools to me lend itself to more parental support, and all of the positives that we want our schools to experience. That to me is the advantage of neighborhood schools. I can say that the same complaints we hear in the Northeast quadrant, I hear them in the Southeast quadrant. So

it comes back to me. We all want the best for our children, regardless of where they are. When you start talking about back in the segregated days, we did have inequities, and that is part of the conversation that you hear now. Now that we are going back, as some people say, to segregation, you can't put all of those factors back together, because in that first phase of segregation you had African American teachers, and of course there was a support group that you don't have in this new phase. Back then everybody was African American in the African American community, your churches, etc. etc. So now that we look at the new wave of segregation, if that is what you want to call it, you might have it in the schools but not necessarily reflected in the teaching staff. So, to go on the record, I see a true advantage of having neighborhood schools and I feel torn on integration. I want to believe in that strong foundation of mine that you can still have quality everything regardless of where you are. Then we had laws for segregation, now we segregate our children.

Equity is not I have this and you have that. To me that is my dream. If I have ten computers here and there you have ten computers, that is not necessarily equal. If I am denied the computers, if I am denied my books, and all of these things that I need to be successful in school then that is inequity. That's my excuse. In that first phase of segregation that was the whole issue. We were denied those things. Now, I blame it on poor administrators. If we need things and we don't get them, it is the administrator's fault.

Facilitator: Thank you.

Dr. Jones: I can't emphasize enough the difficulty in managing this non-neighborhood school district and because at that time the balance was Black/non-Black and the proportion of non-Black children was increasing. The burden of integrating those schools was on the Black children. And every year it was hundreds of Black children being reassigned out of their neighborhoods and to schools across town. And there just was not any stability. At the time I did not understand that. I think as a parent it is kind of my right and my expectation that I know where my child is going to attend school from now until high school. The questions, the issues that were of concern then, they are still a concern, and they never go away. We are talking a lot about the K-4 neighborhood schools, but you all have heard the complacency of this community whenever we implemented the neighborhood high schools. Hardly a turn out, hardly anyone even cared to come to a meeting to find out the facts or to express an opinion. Complacency is very dangerous. That is fertile ground for inequity, when people don't care they quit asking questions, they quit looking, they quit caring. I think that's real dangerous.

Rev. Green: I am active in school because my parents were active in school. Now, hat happened to a lot of parents in the seventies was they were forced out of

school activities. A lot of parents that were very active in the school when we were in the 3rd grade could no longer be active in school when we were in the 6th grade because we were way on the other side of town. And so what happened is that those kids grew up with inactive parents, so they became inactive parents.

Rev. Clay: I just want to interject something, I won't take long. Because I am a pastor, most of the time when I talk to people it is always the negative, I very rarely have the opportunity to have a positive conversation. But I think that I need to say from my experience, and my vantagepoint, what is sometimes called apathy and complacency has more to do with frustration. Lack of expectations. You see, if you keep telling me that "I'm gonna widen your street in front of your church." And it is promised every year, but nothing ever happens. Or you're telling me that "I am sending you a check," and I keep going to the mailbox and it is never there, I quit going to the mailbox. So, I think that somewhere in the process, I have a unique experience because I was in the generation that was the prototype for busing. I have been bused since I was in the 7th grade, 1961 I believe it was. I was bused the whole time, before busing was busing. Therefore, I have a unique experience. I had both the neighborhood schools, and then the integrated schools. But, back to the thing at hand. I have seen this whole process. What has been labeled, particularly by the media, as apathy, was not apathy, it was frustration and it was at times people who were left out of the formula.

Dr. Jones: I would simply say that equity is more than just books, it includes that. But I think that when the Board designed the Equity Committee the idea was that we would look at curriculum, the quality of teaching, and the quality of the leadership in the building. Those were the areas where we also wanted equity. We would look at student achievement, at whether or not we were achieving results that were equitable. In fact that became the most important thing. Looking at whether or not the students were learning. It might be that we needed to do something different from one school to another. The bottom line was that the school was for the students to learn. That was why the Equity Committee, and I want to respond to what was said earlier about the equity committee, the Board rejected the final report from the Equity Committee because it did not address those areas. Those areas were clearly defined in the charge to the Equity Committee, that is what the Board wanted them to do. They were to go and look at those things. They literally refused, and I was president of the Board during one of the years, but for two years they refused to look at the things that the Board worked on to have them look at. We wrote the (inaudible) so that they would agree to do what we were trying to do. And the problem that we had was the leadership of the Equity Committee and with the administrator in charge, (inaudible) Curtis. He ultimately was terminated from the school district for failure to do his job. And that has been upheld through several levels of appeal.

Facilitator: That is a good point. Let me ask you this...where do we stand with the Equity Committee now? Does anyone know what the Equity Committee is looking at currently?

Dr. Jones: Supposedly, it was reconstituted. I haven't heard anything about it. It is a concern, it was a concern that the Board at the time had. Certainly the Board for the next ten years knew it and we were concerned because I will tell you, in that equity report that we rejected, it was rejected because there were schools that the Equity Committee didn't even visit. Yet they reported in their report what they found in each school. One of those schools happened to be in the area I represented. And there was no way the Board could accept that report. It was an unacceptable report and it would have done more damage to the children, and more damage to equity.

It would have done nothing to establish equity. That does not mean that I am satisfied today. It is a difficult issue. But I do believe that the Board, for a long time, had a very significant commitment and the administration of the school district had an extremely significant commitment to developing equity.

Rev. Webb: Well, I disagree. I go in and out of many of the buildings, and being there all day long, I think the Equity Committee did assume correctly. For example, XXXXX last year was terrible. Sometimes, no hot water, sometimes no cold air. Everything needed repair. There were leaks in the building, so you have to move to the cafeteria. And there are others, another one I think that could have stood a lot of upkeep was XXXXX. Many of our facilities are in horrible condition.

Dr. Monroe: I would like to say that (inaudible) at least that year. And because of that we are going to have to do something. And not only do you have that concern here, but nationally as well. And the kind of funds that you need to really go into these buildings and bring them up to par would take bucks. A three million-dollar bond was not enough, I mean the bulk of that money was spent for air-conditioning. Now, we are talking about a potential bond election in June. If that takes place we are only talking 47 million dollars. To do what we need to do basically would take 200 million dollars and you cannot exceed your indebtedness to get that kind of money to do what we really need to do.

--You are limited on how much money you can ask for in a bond issue. And right now, because we are 93 million, and there is a formula, the most we can ask for in this next one is 46 or 47 million dollars. Now, each year if we were to ask the patrons to vote on another bond, for probably 10 of 15 million dollars each year, you just have a limit. Now, I will say that we have asked our legislator to examine what public schools need to be about. It is just look

your home. You can't live in it and not keep it up. So, what has happened is that we have gone so many years without taking care of our school, and as a result, we see a lot of decayed schools.

Dr. Jones: I have also some, the page from the very beginning. If you would be interested to compare what it was in 1992 to where you are today. Some of this has been achieved. But I would, here are also a couple of articles that were written that kind of answer, or actually address the issues. Lets talk about this bond and about the buildings and facilities because having had two children who graduated from the school district long before we had any air conditioning, they were all pretty equally hot. There weren't too many that were hotter than others, except I think sometimes the older buildings were cooler. They didn't get as hot. At least the bond issue did address one issue, and there is air conditioning available in every school. Now, whether or not it is maintained is a day to day problem, whether or not it is working is a day to day problem, that needs to be monitored. But at least the capability for equity is there. And I believe it was even when we didn't have things like.(inaudible). The reason why a school didn't have what it needed was usually simply because it couldn't be equipped with it. There were a few schools that did have air conditioning. Some of the schools had parents who paid for it themselves, in two schools, they just did it themselves. And we were hard pressed to tell them they couldn't.

Facilitator: So, how do you rectify this equity problem. If I were to give you funding and so forth, what would you suggest to rectify this problem?

Ms. Monroe: I recommend that you bring together the community. Bring the parents, the community leaders, the businesses, the churches, you have so many, when you really think about the neighborhood. Everybody really should actively become part of that school. The school is just part of the nucleus. So when you start bringing in those persons to help with those decisions, the money that you may give me will be well spent. Then we are all satisfied that we have at least identified what we want as a community, because this would vary from community to community. I can assure you that if your population was more Hispanic, then they would probably want to do something else with that money to assure quality and equity for their community and for students. So. I think that when you start looking at how we need to spend the money and what would one recommend, I would recommend that you start bringing in those persons in that area to help make decisions about what you would like to see in that school. Now we do know that there are some basic things that we all need, and we have to be accountable. We all have to make sure our kids learn. But again, the bottom line is that we want our children to be successful. But we also have identified in this business of education, what we may want here for our students may be unlike what another community may

want for their students. I am hearing this all of the time, we need this and that for the Asian and the Hispanic population, but when you pull those persons together to help make those decisions, you can't help but feel equity, those persons feel equity, regardless of what you might see.

Dr. Jones: What you just described is really what I think the position of the Board was in terms of equity. It was what we, when we had opportunities to just have conversations, discussed. It is what we hoped the neighborhood school plan would create the opportunity for. It was to allow the school to meet the needs of the children and the community it served. And that means they weren't always the same. They would all be great schools and if you are in that community you are going to love your school. We want the people to have the school that is what they want to have for their children, and to be a part of making it that way.

Dr. Monroe: Magnet schools are the real issue now. We have to follow so many guidelines to qualify for the magnet school. Right now schools that qualify, among the schools are Longfellow, Martin Luther King, Star Spencer, and Creston Hills. Some failed to qualify because you didn't have a large enough African American population in those schools. They look at that and they look at the number of reduced lunches in relation to the percentage of those students. And they are having to do things to attract the non-Black students to the school. Now that's what the magnet funds were set up to do. Now, the community may not know this. Additionally, they don't have the information to support why certain schools were selected for Federal magnet school funds. How do you think that we can explain that.

--The first step is to make sure that the administrators and all the principles understand this so they can explain to their parents because see they are the ones getting the questions. Your teachers need to know why and how it works. So we need to do a better job of explaining it to our own personnel because normally we are the ones who end up in the beauty shop, we are the ones being questioned and somebody is always criticizing us for not being a Federal school and we frequently don't have enough information. The reason you are not informed is because of the information that I just shared. So at any rate, we have got to do a better job of communicating to our colleagues and patrons. Yes, it's explained in the paper but you read over that. If we all know why certain schools are selected, then we can explain that to the public.

Facilitator: How do you think the neighborhood school plan is effecting low income African American students and schools?

Dr. Monroe: The one thing that might be real prevalent is the fact that the community itself is not totally familiar with what is supposed to be there now. Better

communication is needed. And understanding how schools qualify for this and that, which would give the parents more, or a better understanding, as to what is going on. Which might help that parent or encourage that parent to be a little more active in what the school is about and what it is supposed to be doing.

Facilitator: How is it affecting the students?

Rev. Webb: You know, my problem with the students is this. Of course, when I go into the classroom, I go in there to work and teach and I have to be honest. I think if any thing is effecting the school it is probably due to two things. The first one is, the student is not applying him or herself. And in some instances the teacher not getting it across. I think it might be other factors, I don't think it is a direct reflection of the plan itself. My recommendations would be to devise a method or plan by which the information that we just talked about is explained throughout the community. We need to have that information to get out. And since the pastors of the churches see at least over half of them, it just may become necessary some morning to say that "there is one thing I need to talk about this morning that relates to our neighborhood schools." If they are going to be neighborhood schools, we want more than just neighborhood buildings. Schools are ultimately communities where kids go and learn.

Rev. Green: I believe that the neighborhood school is good for the community. In fact, it gives a sense of community and you don't have people being bused all over the city. I think it helps create a sense of community and you see. I think it would help foster community and neighborhoods, something that I saw when I was a little boy and then I saw it dissipate as I get older because there were not neighborhood schools. I had a friend that stayed across the street from me that went to a different school, so you didn't have a sense of community. I think the neighborhood schools will help the students to learn.

I would also have the school system to raise money not only for facilities and books, but money for the teachers. To get good quality teachers in the schools. I think that would increase the value of the Oklahoma City Public Schools immensely. It might encourage some of the people that have left to come back to the school system.

Rev. Webb: I believe that a uniform, standard curriculum is needed.

Dr. Jones: I agree with you. A standardized curriculum. That's not a teacher decision. That should be a Board of Education decision.

Mr. Scott: That is right. And it needs to be.

Dr. Jones: Another thing I would say, because we talked about bond issues and I certainly would hope that we are working, a number of education groups are working to try to raise the bond indebtedness cap that currently is in state law. It is not real hopeful that anything will be done about that real soon so it is likely that it will continue to be smaller bond issues that districts can pass once they have a significant level of indebtedness. One thing that I would say, that I think was a mistake in Oklahoma City in the last bond issue that did pass was a 90 million dollar bond issue. The lack of planning that went into that bond issue. And that was a decision that was somewhat political and it was a terrible mistake because of all the money that was not well spent. So any time they are going to do a bond issue, and I certainly hope that if they are doing one in June that they are in the midst of a great deal of planning right now. One of the major areas of planning that needs to deal with the demographics and projecting into the future where those students are likely to be ten years from now, not just today. There was no facility study done in the last few bond elections. So if Eisenhower got air conditioning, it may have been the wrong kind of air conditioning for what was already in the building. And I can name schools where that happened, one of them was a school my child was in. I watched it happen because I wasn't on the Board anymore and there wasn't anything I could do. The work that was done was, a lot of it, not necessary. But one, and this is where they need to listen to the community or look at the building. One type of air conditioning may not be the best thing for every building. And whatever the district does, they have to consider each place as an individual site in ways that make sense in terms of spending money. You can't afford to waste a single dollar. Millions of dollars were lost in that last election because there was a decision made, a 4 to 3 decision, by the Board of Education at the time and those people are not there anymore. It wasn't this Board. We all tried to present it when I was there, there was a change and in the middle there were some decisions that were made that now we are living with. And we really can't go back and fix a lot of it. A lot of this is just going to be there. We took a problem that we had with the buildings that were old and needed to be modernized and we didn't do a very good job of ending up with modern buildings. And it didn't need to be that way. We turned down the opportunity to spend \$45,000 to plan and ended up wasting millions.

—And that was the other things, because there was a consistency for almost eight years there about where we were going and a huge part of what we were doing in trying to go back to neighborhood schools was to get to a point where we could look at the demographics of the students. We did one year in the plan, we had our planning department lined up to work with an outside consulting group to develop a plan that would tell us where our facilities were, what the facilities capacities were, what the condition of the buildings were, and what kinds of things we could do in them. What would we need to do, how would we do it, so that when we decided to do a bond issue we

would have a foundation for doing it in a sensible way. And that huge planning piece was just jumped over, and they went out and just got money, and it is what kills public schools more than anything else. To go out and simply ask for money without knowing for sure how to spend it first. And even then you are probably going to have some costs you didn't plan on. Every one will tolerate a certain level of costs that you didn't know about. But if you go in to do something major like spend 90 million dollars, you had better know exactly what kinds of things you are going to spend it on and what kind of places you are going to go into. You better know where the asbestos is, and I will tell you, they knew where every piece of asbestos was. And they did it anyway. The knowledge that was there, there was lots of information that was already available that they did not use. There was lots of information that people were prepared to go out and get. that they did not use and they were not unaware. The superintendent at the time wasn't unaware and she is a friend of mine and lived in my neighborhood, but she did not have the ability to buck three people who are no longer on that Board.

In addition, the media did not want to recognize that the scores had gone up. They wanted it quiet. We had people in legislature telling us we were cheating. The research department was just hounded by somebody. They were cheating, children were cheating, schools were cheating...

But the children were not cheating and the school district was not cheating. The children were learning more and from what I can tell here, and this was published in 1996, that achievement gap was being narrowed. That is the most important thing that the Equity Committee could do, is to continue to monitor the results of the gap and to make sure that every child is in a school and making progress, and making progress that is adequate for that child. That doesn't necessarily mean that that child's test score is going to be the same as some other child's test score. You have got to look at where the child started. There has to be significant growth. Every child should be growing significantly every year. And what we see, and we see it all over the country, is that for some reason as we get older, and as students get older, their levels of growth do not continue to keep up with what is really needed. And we see people who started out doing very well, not doing very well quite a bit later in their education. And there is something wrong there. And that is what we need to look at. If we are looking at that, then we aren't going to miss progress. If we have an Equity Chairperson, Committee, or whatever who constantly looks to see if what they are doing in every school is effective and improving, then we are doing the right thing. I am not so concerned about what they do, they may do one thing in one school and another thing in another school, but they darned well better be able to show that it works. If it is not working then they better quit doing it and do something that does. And they don't have very much longer to do it. We are either going to do it or not. And if we don't start doing it, I think we are going to have another

horrible thing imposed on us, and it's going to be vouchers, or charter schools everywhere and we are going to end up having a very good school for a very few students. The rest of them are going to be stuck in schools that are the worst we have ever had, and we won't be able to do anything about it and we will spend ten times more money. We will not spend less money on any of these plans we are talking about, every one of them will spend more money. And what we need to do is make sure that we do spend more money, in the right way, and we know how. We know every single thing we need to do. And in Oklahoma City it has already been done. They need to start doing the things that we were doing that were working.

APPENDIX L

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 10-05-98

IRB #: ED-99-022

Proposal Title: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING THE PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND/OR OTHERS WHO WORK WITH LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS BLACK STUDENTS CONCERNING THE OKLAHOMA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PLAN/STUDENT REASSIGNMENT PLAN

Principal Investigator(s): William E. Segall, Cathi L. Cornelius

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature: 

Date: October 5, 1998

Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance
cc: Cathi L. Cornelius

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modification to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA ✓

Cathi L. Cornelius

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: "VILLAGE PERSPECTIVES"- A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING THE PERSPECTIVES CONCERNING THE OKLAHOMA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS PLAN/STUDENT REASSIGNMENT PLAN

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Chicago, Illinois, On June 26, 1964, the daughter of Clarence and Phyllis Cornelius.

Education: Graduated from Booker T. Washington High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma in May 1982; received Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 1988, and a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May 1996. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Curriculum and Supervision at Oklahoma State University in May 1999.

Experience: Taught elementary school for eight consecutive years with Tulsa Public Schools, Holland Hall School, and Oklahoma City Public Schools from January 1989 - May 1996, respectively. Served as a Site Coordinator and Board Member for the Oklahoma City Public Schools Gifted and Talented Program from August 1993 - May 1996; employed as a Oklahoma City Public Schools Title I Parent-School-Community Coordinator from August 1996 - May 1998. Employed by Oklahoma State University, College of Education as a teacher assistant, research assistant, and student teacher supervisor 1996 to present.