

would spread quite broadly toward the more difficult areas, in which to the difference in race is added a heavy inheritance of difference in class status, but that here and there even in the more difficult areas integration would be achieved early, by law or agreement. And the whole process, from easy spots to the harder ones, ought not to take more than a few years.

It is not to be forgotten, and events will not let it be forgotten, that these movements spread of their own gathering momentum. A highly popular resolve to be equal and free cannot be put down. Never mind the examples; look around you at the world today, where colonial management has had to withdraw its hand from country after country.

HARRY BARD

A Baltimorean Reports on Desegregation

This article is a documented report on desegregation in the Baltimore City Public Schools. The account should give courage and assistance to school people and citizens in other communities as they work together to institute similar changes.

HOW MAY WE measure success in human relations? One way is through noting the absence of strife, tension and perhaps overt conflict. With this as a measure Baltimore's desegregation program, now one year old, has been highly successful; except for a brief incident, the period has been devoid of controversy. The presence of attitudes of acceptance, sharing, working together, however, is a more positive way of measuring progress. At the end of June 1955 about 2000 Negro youngsters were enrolled in 48 of the 109 schools formerly designated as white. In each of these biracial

school situations, classwork, assembly programs, club activities and PTA functions have gone on as before, except that teachers have used this extension of already heterogeneous groupings to support the view that *American strength comes through diversity*. These successes do not imply that all problems have been solved, or that *integration*, a much more complex process than *desegregation*, has been achieved. Yet the results of the first

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year are reasons enough for the quiet pride of accomplishment which Baltimore teachers possess.¹

Community in Transition

At first glance the apparent success of desegregation in the Baltimore City Public Schools seems to be the natural result of the fulfillment of an educational philosophy long held, viz., that *the school reflects society and the community*. There is little doubt that Baltimore, a city steeped in Southern traditions at the turn of the century, has recently eliminated, bit by bit, in evolutionary process one after another of its racial barriers. Whether due to progress in human relations, or to economic pressures of World War II, or to persistent aspirations of Negro groups, or to ingredients of all three, after 1940 a whole host of long-standing racial restrictions gradually began to disappear. Municipal services gave way first—the police department employed Negroes for the first time, later followed by the fire department. Utilities gave way next, with the transit companies hiring Negro motormen and bus drivers at the outbreak of the Korean conflict. More recently, Negro taxicab operators and colored municipal and state white-collar workers have joined the procession into new employment opportunities. The years following Pearl Harbor saw Baltimore accept, and at times even encourage, the movement of Negro labor from strictly unskilled jobs into semi-skilled

and, to a limited degree, skilled positions.

Moreover, change had come at the social and cultural levels in the 1940's and early '50's. Managers of leading hotels permitted racially mixed dinner meetings, though they still kept restrictions on overnight guests. Department stores abolished racial restrictions on trade, though many kept limitations on credit and exchange of purchases. The city's leading concert hall and its legitimate theater dropped the color line. Many civic, philanthropic and service agencies added Negro members to their boards. Municipal authorities appointed colored citizens to commissions dealing with health, recreation, education, and housing.

In 1954 for the first time in the history of Baltimore, two Negro representatives were elected to the State Legislature. It is little wonder, then, that the recent report issued by the Baltimore Community Self-Survey of Inter-Group Relations was titled, *An American City in Transition*.²

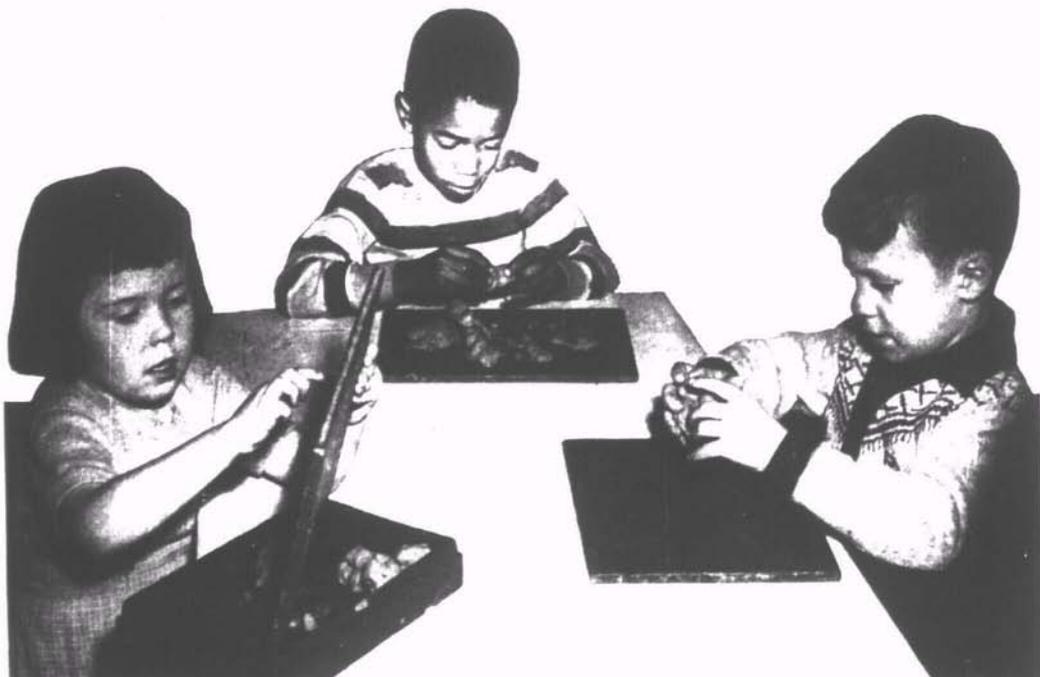
Factors Conditioning the Desegregation Program

It is clear that apart from the general influence of the community there were other circumstances affecting the progress of desegregation.

One can only conjecture at this stage—a year after Baltimore's decision to desegregate the schools—about the influences that led to apparent success. In retrospect these six factors seem to

²*An American City in Transition*, by the Baltimore Community Self-Survey of Intergroup Relations, 1955. Baltimore Commission on Human Relations, 719 St. Paul Street, Baltimore 2, Maryland.

¹Read especially "How Desegregation Has Worked," *Baltimore Sunday Sun*, June 26, 1955; also *Desegregation in the Baltimore City Schools*, Report of the Baltimore and Maryland Commissions on Interracial Problems, 719 St. Paul Street, Baltimore 2, Maryland, July 1955.



COURTESY, AFRO PHOTO, FRANK W. PHILLIPS

Second graders in Baltimore can overcome some serious hurdles when working together with clay, metal or cardboard.

be most evident:

1. Sincere, evolving and all-embracing belief within the educational staff that the resources of all should be harnessed toward progress.

2. Quiet, unpretentious and effective human relations activities, over a long number of years, involving pupils, parents, teachers and community leaders.

3. Strong, united and respected leadership by school authorities.

4. Clear, firm and unequivocal support by executive, legal, judicial and enforcement authorities.

5. Intelligent, forthright and widespread support by community leaders.

6. High morale and professional competence among the teaching staff.

Resources Of All Should Be Used

Just as Baltimore reflected an American community in transition, so the school system as a whole reflected a

growing belief in the recognition of the worth of all individuals. For example, in the early 1920's Baltimore eliminated teachers' salary differentials based on race. Meetings for administrators have been nonsegregated as long as present principals can recall.

When the professional in-service program was initiated in 1946, staff members from all segments of the system were sought as leaders and participants in diverse activities such as those dealing with child study, community study, driver education and art instruction. Administrators called together supervisors, principals and teachers from all schools to work cooperatively on numerous instructional programs. Increasingly, staff relationships were approached with a growing belief that educational problems would be solved

best by cutting across earlier established divisions, whether these be related to race, educational level or teaching experience. Moreover, community problems requiring joint teacher and parent efforts were approached within the same framework, for the Baltimore Coordinating Council of PTA's abandoned segregation patterns in 1947. Thus, a tradition of working together as an educational staff had already emerged before the desegregation policy was announced.

Human Relations Activities Bring New Understandings

Within this generally favorable climate have been projected a number of programs with human relations motifs. Since 1940 youngsters from Negro and white high schools have cooperated in Junior Town Meeting radio broadcasts dealing with health, delinquency, foreign affairs and a whole host of topics. For several years colored and white children from elementary and secondary schools, through biracial Junior Red Cross Councils, have carried out civic projects and worked side by side in summer workshops. Since 1946, the National Conference of Christians and Jews has brought together young people in the Baltimore area from Catholic, independent and public high schools (white and colored) for the purpose of conducting Brotherhood Week programs. For nine years now the United Nations Youth activities have emphasized intergroup relations at home as well as abroad, and have brought pupils from all schools together in city-wide projects.

In 1951, the school system itself had

secondary pupils from all schools collaborate in the writing of a book which was nationally recognized, *Baltimore: City of Promise*.³ In 1953 this project was followed up by a combined English-social studies activity, the Model Youth City Council. In this activity seniors in all schools investigated local problems and wrote bills aimed at improving Baltimore.

In recent years, human relations activities for teachers have fallen into two categories. In the early 1940's some of the professional activities were centered around programs formally labeled "human relations." For example, in 1946 a committee of Baltimore teachers from white and colored schools published the report, *Better Intercultural Relations*. This bulletin showed how classroom activities at all grade levels might give attention to intergroup understandings.

During the past eight years there has been a change in approach. More attention is now given to in-service activities that focus on broad problems related to the community and to children. For example, the Community Study Program,⁴ which has reached over 3000 teachers, has emphasized knowing the community, using its resources, and improving its environment. The "knowing" phase of the program has naturally included understanding the Negro population which embraces 28 per cent of the city's million people and about 40 per cent of the public school enrollment. But the

³ *Baltimore: City of Promise*. Written by Baltimore Senior High School Students, Curriculum Bureau, Baltimore City Public Schools, 1953.

⁴ Harry Bard, *Teachers and The Community*, National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1953. Gives a full account of the program.

program has also emphasized the importance of understanding religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups, as well as other factors that make the city tick. Moreover, the program has underscored the importance of having classroom and community work together to solve some of Baltimore's critical problems in housing, traffic, recreation and social welfare. The rich resources of hundreds of community leaders were marshaled in the conduct of these endeavors.

As teachers and pupils grew more accustomed to working together on common educational and civic problems, the earmarked "human relations programs" diminished in number, but the actual interracial contacts increased. When desegregation came, teachers and pupils did not need proof that people of good will can work together toward fulfillment of the American dream.

United Leadership Brings Respect

Within one week after the Supreme Court's desegregation decision, the School Board asked the City Solicitor to rule on the validity of the local law requiring separate schools. Following his ruling that this local law was now "unconstitutional and invalid," on June 3, 1954 the Board unanimously decided that "our system should be conformed to a nonsegregated basis . . . in September of this year . . . (and) we ask our staff to prepare material outlining the practical steps to be taken." In reply, on June 10 the Board of Superintendents submitted a program to implement the policy, and the School Board unanimously approved it a week later.

On June 14, 1954 Superintendent John H. Fischer brought all teachers together during the final week of the school year for the purpose of discussing the recent action of the School Board. In a stirring message he first made it clear that the Supreme Court decision was in the American tradition. He then recognized the emotional overtones and anxieties which might accompany the decision and forthrightly posed and answered these five questions⁵:

1. Will our school system be reorganized to integrate all schools?

"There will be no such reorganization . . . no child shall be denied entry to any school or class because of his race . . . But no effort will be made deliberately to transfer children of either race for the purpose of 'mixing' schools."

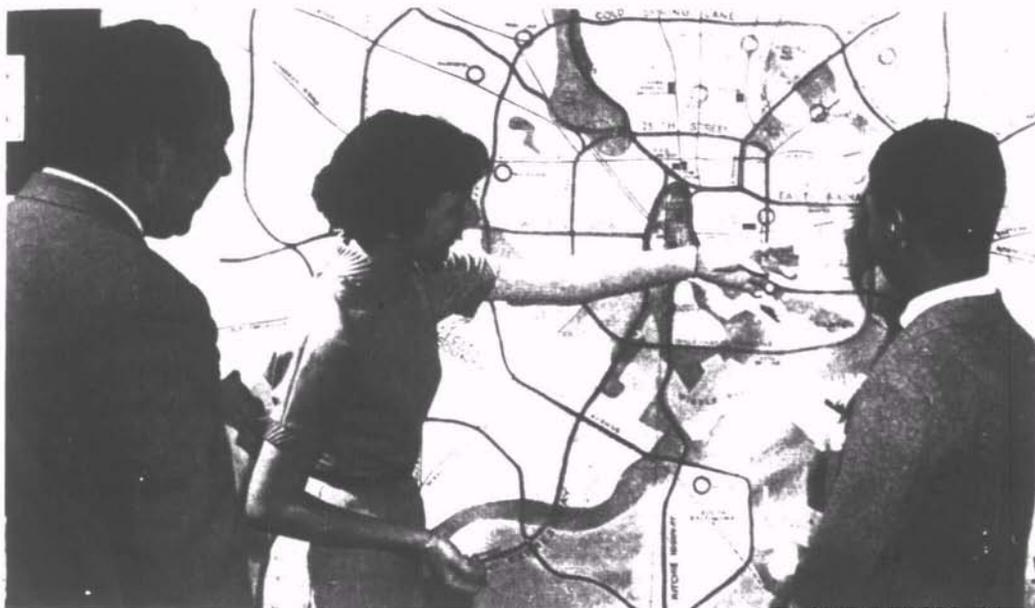
2. Will there be a large number of pupil transfers?

Here Dr. Fischer gave his beliefs that the long standing policy of operating Negro and white schools on equal standards would bring about little desire for transfers. That if requested, transfers would be honored as they fulfilled the customary requirements. (This statement, made to alleviate fears about mass changes, has since been borne out by the first year's practice.)

3. Will teachers or other staff members be discharged as a result of the new policy?

"No . . . no one will be discriminated against because of his race. Nor will his race entitle anyone to preferment over another who is better qualified." (This, too, has been borne out in the year of practice. The Division of Colored Schools ceased to exist, but no person suffered any loss of status as a result.)

⁵For a full account of Superintendent Fischer's address see *Eliminating Racial Segregation in the Baltimore City Public Schools*, page 7, Baltimore City Department of Education, 1955.



COURTESY, BALTIMORE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Baltimore high school youngsters can help solve many civic problems if they receive encouragement to do so.

4. Will children be required to attend particular schools?

Here the Superintendent called attention to the fact that Baltimore has never had a general policy of districting requirements for school enrollment. (Many Baltimoreans believe that the absence of districting has been a very important factor in the success of the desegregation program. It has helped further the policy that "No child will be deliberately assigned to any school because of his race.")

5. Will it work?

Dr. Fischer here recounted the numerous occasions when Baltimore Negro and white children, teachers and parents had worked together on educational activities. He cited especially how well desegregation had been working in the one former all-white school where Negro students had been enrolled in one curriculum since 1952. He concluded by noting that ". . . without exception, every one (activity) has suc-

ceeded . . . There is abundant evidence that good will and good sense are widely distributed among our people and that those qualities are characteristic of both our races."

The tone set by the School Board and Board of Superintendents was characteristic of the way principals, supervisors, teachers and other staff members received the decision. There were some honest reservations, understandable doubts and even a few fears about next steps. But the forthright, intelligent, unwavering stand of the leaders did much to bolster those teachers who conscientiously wanted to obey the law and to transform the new policy into educational practice. There was no "crusade," but united action by the leaders left a very small group of dissenters without ties.

Legal Support Aids Enforcement

Baltimore's desegregation policy gave every outward appearance of working smoothly from September 7, 1954 when schools opened on a desegregated basis, through September 29 when a school strike broke. In retrospect the troubles themselves were but a minor part of Baltimore's first year of nonsegregated schooling. How much of the difficulty spilled over from the Milford, Delaware, incident and how much was indigénous is equally difficult to assay.

On September 30 picketing broke out in one of the elementary schools and within two days spread to about six other elementary schools and four high schools. A few hundred high school youngsters were the most vociferous; a group of them marched through the city and tried to induce

other white secondary pupils to join them. For many of them it was a holiday and an opportunity to let off adolescent steam.

All told, less than a dozen of the 48 schools that had mixed enrollments were affected by picketing and by the school strikes which continued for three days. City-wide attendance was down but three per cent during that period, though in a few of the schools from one-third to one-half of the pupils stayed away. It is important, however, to note that many parents did not send their children because of intimidation, rather than because they were in support of the strike.

Without minimizing the three-day strike, the plus factors need to be noted. Student councils from some of the high schools openly condemned the strike. At Southern High School,

Learning number concepts together in Baltimore schools can be challenging to first graders.



where the strike was centered, faculty members risked their own safety to protect colored pupils, and the football team stood by its one Negro teammate and refused to play without him. Principals, pupils, teachers, parents and others rose to the occasion, quieting fears, standing by the schools and calmly going through the daily routine. Fortunately, the school authorities made their position clear that all schools would remain open and that all school children would be safeguarded.

The enforcement officers played an important role in settling the strike; and their actions, coupled with those of the educators, turned the tide against the strikers. The police force spent the first two days keeping order and preventing violence during picketing. On the third day, the Police Commissioner, after consultation with civic and legal leaders, stated that "henceforth there would be strict enforcement of two Maryland laws, one against disturbing any public school session, and the other against inducing children to absent themselves unlawfully from school." By radio and television, the Commissioner personally warned picketers that they would face arrest. This stern law enforcement support, coming at a time when the strike was losing strength, caused it to die in its tracks.

Community Support Reinforces the Decision

The support of the schools by the populace in general at the time of the strike was the finest tribute that could be paid to the current level of school-community relations. In dealing with school problems related to building

programs, personnel, curriculum and instruction, finance and other educational concerns, Baltimore educators have operated on the basis that the public must not only be informed but that it should share in making decisions. Moreover, teachers have followed the credo that though it is not the school's task to remake society, it does have, nevertheless, a role in helping to solve community concerns such as those related to traffic, housing, city planning, recreation and other civic demands.

At the first enunciation of the desegregation policy, a whole host of civic agencies representing religious, patriotic, fraternal and service groups applauded the decision. The Negro community and press were models of disciplined emotions, not doing anything that would further fan excitement. The interesting aspect of this community support is that it represented all shades of opinion, from groups often labeled conservative to those sometimes called starry-eyed.

The press, radio and television were especially forceful in their support, not only during the school strike, but at all times. Foremost was the coverage of the *Baltimore Sunpapers* which supported the Board's decision by editorial policies, followed by news reports which were very effective in alleviating ungrounded fears about problems of health, social relations and scholarship.

Staff Morale and Competence Give Meaning to Pronouncements

Most of Baltimore's teachers are native Marylanders, themselves reared in the traditions of segregated schools.

There would be of necessity some internal conflicts which would need to be resolved. As a matter of fact, but a few months before the Supreme Court decision, a sampling of white teachers by the Commission on Human Relations indicated that the majority felt skeptical toward desegregation in the immediate future. (This is an endorsement of the belief that teachers sometimes underestimate readiness for change.)

That so many teachers had so much faith in the right thing to do was the greatest tribute to the high morale of the staff and to teacher-administration relations. During strife and calm, the staff remained practically one hundred per cent behind the new policy and was unswerving in its support.

Desegregation was not to bring many new classroom problems, but it was to place added strains on old ones. For example, the long spread of reading and mathematical abilities in any class might be extended even further for teachers whose classes would now have some Negro youngsters with very limited cultural background. (A similar situation was true for some years in a few Baltimore schools, which, for the first time, received white students from underdeveloped areas in the hill regions of the Southeast.) For that matter, desegregation might cause the spread to be extended the other way in cases where new pupils would come from the homes of Negro professional workers. Concepts of grouping, teaching for individual differences, use of varied materials, teacher-pupil planning, and a whole host of instructional practices would need to be sharpened and applied more adroitly than

ever. Good teachers would know this, and wise administrators and supervisors would apply patience and aid toward solutions.

The First Year

It is too early yet to measure how effectively teachers in Baltimore are dealing with these problems of instruction and pupil growth. However, it is clear from talking to any teacher that there is a strong professional pride in accomplishment.⁶

It is further evident that desegregation is not synonymous with integration. The former is a status established by law; the latter is a condition created by mutual understanding, trust, interests, and experiences. Integration is a long-drawn and complex process. It involves social changes related to housing and recreation, and economic changes related to occupational choices, as well as changes in educational processes.

Each community is unique, and the nature and pace of change must of necessity be affected by this truism. Thus, the steps taken in Baltimore might apply only there.

For Baltimore, the first year has been one of grace. In general, teachers and citizens alike are glad that the step has been made. They take silent pride in developments. They are somewhat fearful of living up to all the publicity the "Baltimore Plan" has received, and hopeful that during the second year they may work more quietly on some of the yet unsolved problems.

⁶ Read "School Desegregation: A Case Study," by Gertrude Samuels, *New York Times Magazine*, May 8, 1955, for an interesting account of what Baltimore teachers are doing.

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