

August 2012

From No Choice to Forced Choice to School Choice: A History of Educational Options in Milwaukee Public Schools

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FROM NO CHOICE TO FORCED CHOICE TO SCHOOL CHOICE:
A HISTORY OF EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS IN MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

James K. Nelsen

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in History

at

The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

December 2012

ABSTRACT

FROM NO CHOICE TO FORCED CHOICE TO SCHOOL CHOICE:
A HISTORY OF EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS IN MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

James K. Nelsen

The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2012

Under the Supervision of Dr. Amanda I. Seligman

Americans cherish freedom and value local control of education. The issue of “school choice,” a movement that supports publicly funded tuition vouchers for students who attend private schools, appeared on the public agenda in the 1980s and has remained a controversial topic into the twenty-first century. Milwaukee had one of the first and most expansive school choice programs in the United States. If one is to understand school choice, one must understand its origin in Milwaukee. Milwaukee moved through three eras of choice—the eras of “no choice,” “forced choice,” and “school choice.” The Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) followed a “comprehensive” model and a traditional neighborhood assignment pattern in the first era. Schools were racially segregated in that era. Lloyd Barbee led the protest movement and legal challenge to end segregation in the 1960s and 1970s, and Superintendent Lee McMurrin and the school board responded by creating a magnet school program that offered students more choices than any other district in the United States. Magnet schools were supposed to racially integrate students

and provide them with a variety of quality educational options. But the program was difficult to implement and not well received by many parents, either African American or white. Many families wanted to keep their children in neighborhood schools, but if not enough students volunteered to attend an integrated school, then some had to be “forced” to choose one in the second era of school choice. And while many of the magnet schools were excellent, they did not improve education in Milwaukee as a whole. Civic and community leaders tried to remedy low academic achievement in the 1990s by introducing more forms of choice, including charter schools, vouchers to private schools, open enrollment in suburban districts, and neighborhood schools and small schools within MPS. Despite all these choices, education has not improved in Milwaukee. Nonetheless, Milwaukee parents and students have a level of choice, for good or for bad, that is not available in any other school district in the United States. These choices would not be possible if it were not for Milwaukee’s unique urban history.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AED—Academy for Educational Development

AP—Advanced Placement

BUILD—Build Unity, Integrity, Leadership, and Dignity

C/100—Committee of 100

CORE—Congress of Racial Equality

FHA—Federal Housing Administration

ICS—Independent Community Schools

K–8—a school that enrolls students in grades kindergarten through grade 8

LEAPS—Law, Education, and Public Service (a school inside Washington High School)

MATC—Milwaukee Area Technical College

MIRC—Milwaukee Integration Research Center

MPS—Milwaukee Public Schools

MTEA—Milwaukee Teachers Education Association

MUSIC—Milwaukee United School Integration Committee

NAACP—National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons

NAEP—National Assessment of Educational Progress

NALC—Negro American Labor Council

NEA—National Education Association

NNNPC—Near Northside Non-Partisan Conference

NSI—Neighborhood Schools Initiative

PTA—Parent Teacher Association, sometimes PTSA (includes students)

SPCA—Sherman Park Community Association

Triple O—Organization of Organizations

UCAG—United Community Action Group

UWM—the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

VA—Veteran’s Administration

GLOSSARY OF USEFUL TERMS

- Advanced Placement (AP)—a program in the United States sponsored by the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) that offers standardized courses to high school students that are generally recognized to be equivalent to undergraduate courses in college; participating colleges grant credit to students who obtained high enough scores on the exams to qualify
- alternative school—a school that uses nontraditional teaching methods to provide educational services to “at-risk” students; often characterized by small size and close relationships between students and teachers
- at-risk students—students who are “at risk” of failing academically for one or more reasons, such as behavior problems, truancy, poverty, or family problems
- compensatory education—supplementary programs or services designed to help children who are cognitively or economically impaired reach their full potential; oftentimes associated with corrective measures following a lawsuit
- distributive education—education that includes both classroom education and on-the-job training
- feeder school—a school that provides a significant number of graduates to a specific school
- fundamental education—education that emphasizes a “back-to-basics” approach; stresses reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies; popular in the 1970s and 1980s
- gifted and talented—elementary school program for students with high intelligence, academic ability, achievement, and creativity; it is usually a flexible program that meets a wide variety of needs
- junior high school—usually, a school that contains grades seven to nine that organizes teachers into academic departments, unlike in a middle school
- intact busing—the process by which students who were assigned to an overcrowded elementary school boarded a bus at their school with their teacher and were bused “intact” to a different school
- International Baccalaureate (IB)—a program based in Geneva, Switzerland, that allows high school students to complete a series of rigorous courses and exams and earn college credits while in high school
- magnet school—a public elementary and secondary public school of choice that offers

- specialized curricula designed to attract students from all parts of a school district
- middle school—a school that usually contains grades six to eight that organizes teachers by grade level, with one teacher per subject; students move from teacher to teacher as a “family” or “unit,” unlike in a junior high school
- Montessori method—an approach to educating children based on the research and experiences of Italian physician and educator Maria Montessori (1870–1952); rooted in the theories of Thomas Dewey and allows children to self-direct their learning
- multiplex—a building that used to house a comprehensive high school but is reconfigured to accommodate three to six small high schools
- multi-unit individually guided education (IGE)—students are organized into large units of 75–100 students; a lead teacher, two associate teachers, and one or more aides are assigned to each unit; adults make group decisions about school rules and instructional objectives for each student; adults act as guides as each student pursues his or her own learning; popular in Wisconsin in the 1970s
- normal school—a school that trained high school graduates to be teachers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- open education—an informal system of education marked by decentralized learning areas, freedom of movement from area to area and even from room to room, group and individual student activities, and unstructured periods of study; formalized roles of student and teacher are erased; instruction itself is rarely given to more than two or three pupils at a time and the same material is hardly ever presented to the class as a whole; rooted in the ideas of John Dewey and other “progressive” educators
- open enrollment—a law in the state of Wisconsin that allows students to attend any public school in the state if the school or district is willing to enroll the students and if the students’ parents are willing to provide their own transportation
- progressive education—a pedagogical movement that began in the late nineteenth century and still exists in various forms in the twenty-first century; contrasted with traditional curriculum, which was rooted in classical preparation for the university; characterized by hands-on projects, self-directed learning, and group work instead of traditional teacher-directed learning and textbooks; also emphasizes community involvement, good citizenship, and the psychological well-being of the student
- school choice—a program in the state of Wisconsin that allows low-income students in the city of Milwaukee to attend private schools on tuition vouchers

senior high school—a high school that contains grades ten to twelve; often paired with a junior high school that contains grades seven through nine

Superior Ability Program—the program for gifted and talented students in some middle schools and high schools in Milwaukee; succeeded by the Program for the Academically Talented (PAT) in the 1980s and honors classes at the high school level in the 1990s

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It takes a lot of people to write a dissertation. Although the writing itself must be by one person, the author, the larger process is a team effort. I spent twelve years in graduate school, and my list of supporters grows with each passing year. Their contributions to my work varied, but all are important to me and deserve my thanks.

I must first thank the staff of Hamilton High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My first experience at Hamilton was in 1989 when I enrolled there as a thirteen-year-old freshman. I did not know it at the time, but Hamilton and Washington High School were the first two high schools to be integrated in 1976 through Milwaukee's magnet school program. I lived in the Hamilton neighborhood so I was not required to enroll in the school's word processing and marketing specialty. But many of my friends took those classes. Coincidentally, my best friend at the time, Tony, lived in the Pulaski High School neighborhood but attended Washington, where he was enrolled in the computer specialty program. Neither of us thought much about race at the time—we just wanted good educations. I think I got that, and I thank my teachers for it. I graduated from Hamilton in 1993 and attended Marquette University for a year and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) for four. I was fortunate enough to be placed at Hamilton for my student-teaching and was hired there at the end of the year when one of my former teachers took a promotion at the district office. I have made many friends in my fourteen years at Hamilton, and I thank them for all the encouragement they have given me in teaching and in completing this project. Several Hamilton staff members volunteered to give interviews for this dissertation, and I am grateful for their participation.

There are several UWM faculty to whom I owe my thanks. Michael Gordon read

a twenty-four-page version of this dissertation when I was an undergraduate in his senior seminar. He later encouraged me to apply for the history department's doctoral program. My dissertation committee has been invaluable. Glen Jeansonne was my master's adviser and was kind enough to take a position on my dissertation committee. Glen encourages students to write papers that are interesting and informative and will be read by others, rather than something that will only sit on a library shelf. Joe Austin, Rob Smith, and Raji Swaminathan also contributed thoughtful comments.

Most importantly, I thank Amanda Seligman, who has been my doctoral adviser since almost the day I began the program. I consider myself very, very lucky. Amanda is a person of many talents—scholar, teacher, mentor. She expects the best out of her students and always encourages them to set high goals. More broadly, Amanda demonstrates deep concern about the entire student and his or her total experience in graduate school. She sets time aside in each of her courses to address methodology and professional development, and she advocates for her students behind the scenes. As a part-time student, I relied on Amanda to be my eyes and ears. Amanda always kept me abreast of books to read, conferences at which to present, university and department events to attend, and changes in the graduate program. She also read this dissertation several times across many years and provided me with useful feedback that was crucial in making this dissertation work. Amanda did all that despite having two young children, publication deadlines, and an extremely full schedule of committee work and other university activities. Amanda also listens very deliberately to student concerns, demonstrates concern about my personal life, and has memorized a startling quantity of arcane facts about me. Academia would be a better place if more students had advisers

like Amanda.

Several people guided me to source material. The archives staff at the UWM's Golda Meir library were constantly retrieving boxes for me. They can find whatever a researcher needs and always do so in a pleasant manner. The staff of the Humanities room in the Milwaukee Public Library also did an amazing job and found materials for me that I did not know existed. Gene Jones and his staff in the Milwaukee Public School's Office of Board Governance do a wonderful job of keeping district records organized. I must also thank the staff of the Google News Archive for digitizing almost every issue of the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Milwaukee Sentinel*. Although the archives division closed after I finished my research, the work they were able to complete will be a powerful tool for people who research local history.

Three former school board members, three former superintendents, three former members of the Committee of 100, and several past and current Milwaukee Public Schools staff members granted me interviews. They welcomed me into their homes and lent a firsthand perspective not revealed in primary sources. Former superintendent Dr. Lee McMurrin and current Milwaukee Teacher Education Association president Robert Peterson shared their private papers with me and suggested other sources. Sally Weems offered her perspective on North Division High School and tutored me in French so I could meet the History Department's foreign language requirement. I am especially indebted to Dr. Lynn Krebs, formerly of the Milwaukee Public Schools, who introduced me to former school board president Doris Stacy and former human relations specialist Dr. Steven Baruch. Dr. Baruch finished *The Milwaukee Public Schools: A Chronological History, 1836–1986* for Rolland Callaway. Their work is an essential source for

researching school board policy.

Finally, I give my thanks to my friends and family who encouraged me to fulfill my dreams. Ken, Missy, Meghin, and Darline are the best friends for whom I could ever ask, and Leah not only put up with my long hours, but she actually claims my teaching and research are two of the reasons she loves me. I thank my mom for instilling a work ethic and love of learning in me, and I thank my dad for teaching me to be independent. Finally, my brother, Dave, is not only a great guy and terrific brother, he is also my proofreader. Having a professional copy editor in the family is a nice asset for anyone who does any kind of writing. Dave has read almost everything I have written in graduate school, and I would never have reached this plateau without him. Thanks, man.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Freedom of choice is a basic concept in America. In order to contribute fully and freely to our society, a citizen must be able to choose, from a wide range of occupational options, the career best suited to his or her needs. Education is an essential prerequisite in this process of choice. Children, as well as adults, have a variety of talents and needs. No single educational program can meet the needs of all students. Thus, freedom of choice as adults largely depends on the opportunity to choose educational settings best suited to development of the unique potentials of each child.¹

Americans cherish freedom of choice, as the quote above indicates. Yet many Americans take freedom of choice for granted. “Freedom” and “choice” are related but are not the same. Freedom is a concept, a goal. It is something that is achieved and has various degrees, which have been debated throughout time. Choice is the act of using freedom. Most people think choice makes people happy, and the more options, the better, or so they think.

If freedom is a good thing and more freedom is a better thing, then one might wonder why Americans had to fight for it and why they still fight over it. As renowned historian Eric Foner states:

The Declaration of Independence lists liberty among mankind’s inalienable rights; the Constitution announces as its purpose to secure liberty’s blessings. The United States fought the Civil War to defend the Free World. Americans’ love of liberty has been represented by poles, caps, and statues, and acted out by burning stamps and draft cards, running away from slavery, and demonstrating for the right to vote. If asked to explain or justify their actions, public or private, Americans are likely to respond, “It’s a free country.”²

¹ “Alternative Education in Wisconsin,” n.d. (but sometime after 1967 and probably around 1971) in Kathleen Mary Hart, Milwaukee Public Schools Desegregation Collection, 1975–1987, UWM Manuscript Collection 90, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 1, folder 5.

² Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1998), xiii.

Foner points out in *The Story of American Freedom* that the United States is known as “the land of the free” and “the cradle of liberty.” He says that most Western countries place prominent value on civil and economic equality, but that, if given a choice, most Americans would choose liberty over equality.³ Foner examines the history of freedom by using three interrelated themes: “the meanings of freedom; the social conditions that make freedom possible; and the boundaries of freedom—the definition, that is, of who is entitled to enjoy it.”⁴ He then traces the history of freedom through various eras of United States history: the original thirteen colonies, the American Revolution, western expansion, the Civil War, the rise of organized labor, the Progressive Era, the New Deal, the civil rights movement and related movements of the 1960s, and “conservative freedom” as represented by the presidency of Ronald Reagan.⁵

Other historians also have written on the history of freedom. Political historian Michael Kammen, for example, writes that freedom can best be understood in a particular historical period when it is contrasted with some other quality. For example, freedom can be cast against authority in the eighteenth century, property in the first half of the nineteenth century, order in the second half of the nineteenth century, and justice in the

³ Foner, xiii–xiv.

⁴ Foner, xvi.

⁵ See Alpheus Thomas Mason and Richard H. Leach, *In Quest of Freedom: American Political Thought and Practice* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959 and 1972) and Leon Whipple, *The Story of Civil Liberty in the United States* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927; reprint, New York, Da Capo Press, 1970) for classic works written under similar themes. See Lee Quinby, *Freedom, Foucault, and the Subject of America* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991) and Richard Stivers, *The Illusion of Freedom and Equality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008) for intellectual histories of freedom in the United States. See John W. Danford, *Roots of Freedom: A Primer on Modern Liberty* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2000) and R.W. Davis, ed., *The Origins of Modern Freedom in the West* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995) if interested in comparing American intellectual history to the history of freedom in a European context.

twentieth century.⁶ Richard King follows up by demonstrating how the civil rights movement refocused and revitalized the definitions of freedom and citizenship. He draws upon the writing and speeches of Martin Luther King, Ella Baker, Stokely Carmichael, James Forman, and political thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Frantz Fanon.⁷ More recently, David Hackett Fischer has written a history that examines the multiple means of freedom and the struggle to define it throughout history. He argues that this struggle is what is most important in United States history: “What made America free, and keeps it growing more so, was not any single vision of liberty and freedom but the interplay of many visions. Together, these ideas made America more free than any one American ever was, or wished to be.”⁸

While freedom is ubiquitous in United States history, the history of choice—the act of using freedom—is less studied and is usually the purview of social scientists. Political scientists, for example, may quote the writings of John Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Condorcet, Adam Smith, and other “enlightened” philosophers, who believed that human beings were rational and capable of making their own decisions without government interference.⁹ According to many social scientists, the Founding Fathers of

⁶ Michael Kammen, *Spheres of Liberty: Changing Perceptions of Liberty in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 5.

⁷ Richard H. King, *Civil Rights and the Idea of Freedom* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

⁸ David Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 15.

⁹ See Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011) for an accessible account of the link between the Enlightenment and early United States government. Other works include Jerome Huyler, *Locke in America: The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Frank Shuffelton, ed., *The American Enlightenment* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1993); and Paul Merrill Spurlin,

the United States believed that free choice was good for both individuals and society. In theory, if each individual acts on his or her own, he or she will prosper, and if all individuals have this free choice, then society will prosper. Kenneth Arrow was one of the first social scientists to postulate this theory and is considered the founder of the resultant philosophy of “social choice theory.”¹⁰ Social choice theory is related to “public choice theory,” which applies economic principles to choice in voting and governmental decision making.¹¹ However, social choice theory is broader than public choice theory in that it encompasses a broader range of choice, not just voting. Few historians have chosen to embrace social choice as an analytical lens through which to view history. Norman Schofield, who has attempted to explain United States history through the framework of social choice, is a notable exception,¹² as is D. L. d’Avray, who has applied

“Montesquieu in America, 1760–1801” (master’s thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1940; New York: Octagon Books, 1969).

¹⁰ Kenneth Joseph Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley, 1963). See John Bonner, *Introduction to the Theory of Social Choice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) and Jon Elster, ed., *Rational Choice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) for two basic textbooks on social choice theory.

¹¹ Classic works on public choice theory include Duncan Black, *Theory of Committees and Elections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent, Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1962); Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957); and Mancur Olson Jr., *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1965). See James M. Buchanan, *Choice, Contract, and Constitutions* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), and Jac C. Heckelman et al., eds., *Public Choice Interpretations of American Economic History* (Kluwer Academic, 2000) for more recent collections of essays on nine historical events. See Iain McLean and Arnold B. Urken, eds., *Classics of Social Choice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995) for a collection of primary sources dating from A.D. 105 through 1884 that could be used to form a theoretical historical basis for social choice.

¹² Norman Schofield, *Architects of Political Change: Constitutional Quandaries and Social Choice Theory* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

social choice theory to the comparative history of religion and the philosophy of law.¹³

Social choice, public choice, and other choice theories can connect to education. Specifically, when one combines “freedom” and “choice” into “freedom of choice” and then applies freedom of choice to education, one may think of the “school choice” movement, which supports publicly funded tuition vouchers for students who want to attend private schools. Voucher proponents argue that providing students with choices outside the public school system spurs competition, which improves the quality of schools. They point to the competitiveness of the business world as proof that competition breeds success. Milwaukee has the oldest voucher system in the United States and has been a model for other school districts and other states.¹⁴

Many scholars have examined school choice, and many have traced the origins to Milwaukee, but none have studied the deeper history of choice within Milwaukee. Milwaukee’s choice movement is rooted in Milwaukee’s African American civil rights movement of the 1960s and its magnet school movement of the 1970s and 1980s. The magnet school movement was a response to the civil rights movement and an attempt to give Milwaukee students quality educational opportunities in racially integrated schools. Unlike the magnet school movements in other cities, where only a few magnet schools were established, all Milwaukee high schools and many of the elementary schools and

¹³ D. L. d’Avray, *Rationalities in History: A Weberian Essay in Comparison* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and D.L. d’Avray, *Medieval Religious Rationalities: A Weberian Analysis* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁴ “Publically Funded School Voucher Programs,” *National Conference of State Legislators*, <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/educ/school-choice-vouchers.aspx> (accessed May 26, 2012), and “School Vouchers: Issues and Arguments,” *School Choices*, 1998, <http://www.schoolchoices.org/root/vouchers.htm> (accessed May 26, 2012).

middle schools were given magnet statuses. The magnet program did not succeed in racially integrating schools and was only marginally successful at improving academic achievement. As the quality of Milwaukee schools declined in the 1980s and 1990s, the movement to provide other choices outside of the magnet schools accelerated under the leadership of Howard Fuller, who supported black community control of schools in black neighborhoods. Other choices also emerged, including charter schools, open enrollment in suburban districts, neighborhood schools, and small high schools, which gave Milwaukee students more choices in school selection than any other city in the United States. As with the earlier magnet program, expanding choice was supposed to spur competition and improve quality of education, but academic achievement has still not made the long-hoped-for gains. So perhaps choice is not actually as good as some people believe.

This dissertation is about choice in Milwaukee in all its forms. It goes back to the beginning of public education and breaks the history of educational options into three periods—"no choice" (prior to 1976), "forced choice" (1976–1995), and "school choice" (after 1987), which overlaps with the forced choice era. It unites two distinct areas of scholarship by bridging historical writing on education and the civil rights movement with the work done by social scientists and education scholars on busing, magnet schools, and the school choice movement. Milwaukee is used as the case study because Milwaukee has more varieties of educational choice than any other city in the United States. Milwaukee students attended neighborhood schools within a racially segregated school system in the era of no choice. Schools had theoretically identical programs in this era. Milwaukee's African American children were expected to choose to attend white

schools and racially integrate them, whether they wanted to or not, in the forced choice era. Choice in this context centered around magnet schools. And finally, in the third phase, Milwaukee students were offered a wide variety of choices in the forms of charter schools, school choice, open enrollment, neighborhood schools, and small schools.

Milwaukee, like other cities, based school assignment on neighborhood boundaries during the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century. Cities were “walking cities,” so anything else would have been impractical. Nineteenth-century students rarely attended school past age fourteen, and when they did, they probably attended a high school offering a “classic” college preparatory curriculum. By World War II, children were more likely to have attended a “progressive” school or a “comprehensive” school. This is the era of “no choice,” which lasted until 1976 in Milwaukee. Students had no choice in schools and little choice in curriculum, with one exception—some students were allowed to attend vocational schools outside their neighborhoods in some cities. The no choice era began to wane after 1960 as scholars and educational theorists began to question the hidden purposes of education when social history became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁵ This is the subject of chapter 2.

Civil rights advocates also challenged the system of no choice. Many other historians have written about the struggles of African American students to attend racially

¹⁵ Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962). See V. T. Thayer, *Formative Ideas in American Education: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York and Toronto: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1965) for an intellectual history that also touches on the social history that was popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Rena L. Vassar, *Social History of American Education* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965) provides valuable primary sources that support both Welter and Thayer. Many other histories of this period have been written and will be referenced later in the dissertation.

integrated schools in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁶ The legal importance of *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and *Swann v. the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* are well documented. Richard Kluger's book *Simple Justice: The History of Brown vs. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*, for example, was one of the first and is still one of the best books written on the legal history of racial integration, covering everything from *Plessy v. Ferguson* to *Brown*. Kluger argued school segregation was only one aspect of the racial caste system held in place by statutory regulations and judicial decisions. He also broke down the overthrow of segregation into two confluences—one coming from community organizers and another from African American jurists. James T. Patterson's *Brown vs. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* is a similar legal history, but Patterson goes further than Kluger by examining the legal history that followed *Brown*. He argues that the Supreme Court began to scale back court-ordered busing plans as conservative justices were appointed in the 1970s and 1980s, while right-wing policymakers claimed that the failure of African American students to achieve was the result of the failure of African American families rather than segregated schools. Meanwhile, according to Patterson, whites fled to the suburbs, which resegregated the

¹⁶ There is a difference between desegregation and integration. Desegregation is the process of ending the separation of two groups. Integration involves desegregation but also includes goals such as eliminating barriers to association, creating equal opportunity programs regardless of race, and promoting cultural diversity, rather than merely bringing a racial minority into the majority culture. Integration represents a change in attitudes and associations that fosters acceptance across racial lines. Desegregation is largely a legal matter, integration largely a social one. Integration is voluntary, while desegregation may or may not be. See Murry Friedman, "School Integration Today: The Case for New Definitions," in *New Perspectives on School Integration*, ed. Murray Friedman, Roger Meltzer, and Charles Miller (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 1.

schools. Thus, Patterson casts doubt on the courts' ability to force social change.¹⁷

Several histories have been written about organizing integration movements. Steven J. L. Taylor did a comparative study of Buffalo and Boston that argued that the keys to achieving peaceful integration, as in Buffalo, and avoiding violence of the type experienced in Boston, were to involve local leaders, both black and white, and to make integration voluntary whenever possible.¹⁸ Similarly, Clarence Taylor researched black organizing strategies in New York and found two distinct camps—one that wanted racial integration and another that fought for community control of black schools¹⁹—just as there were two distinct groups of African Americans in Milwaukee.²⁰ Finally, Dionne Danna has researched African American boycotts of public schools in Chicago during the civil rights movement as a means to desegregate schools, relieve overcrowding, and gain access to equitable resources. As in New York and Milwaukee, what began as a

¹⁷ Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown vs. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 1976, 1975), and James T. Patterson, *Brown vs. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also George R. Metcalf, *From Little Rock to Boston: The History of School Desegregation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983). As Patterson did, Metcalf writes a political history that shows how key individuals and institutions—particularly Richard Nixon and the Republican party—enabled local actors to resist or undercut federal enforcement of integration. Coming from the opposite end of the political spectrum is Diane Ravitch, who, until recently, found any government initiatives in education to be ineffective. See Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945–1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). Chapters 4–7 deal with civil rights and contain a few references to magnet schools. Ravitch recanted some of her views in *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

¹⁸ Steven J. L. Taylor, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo: The Influence of Local Leaders* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

¹⁹ Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

²⁰ Jack Dougherty, *More than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

movement for integration ended as advocacy for community control of schools.²¹

Milwaukee was both similar and different when compared to those cities. Milwaukee's neighborhoods were racially segregated, as were most other northern cities, due to segregative zoning laws, restrictive covenants, and discriminatory mortgage-lending practices. Ostensibly, students attended segregated schools because school assignments were based on geography.²² But a number of things set Milwaukee apart from other cities. For one, Milwaukee was one of the most segregated cities in the United States in the 1960s,²³ and Milwaukee would rely much more on magnet schools than other city in the United States. The history of racial segregation in Milwaukee and efforts to eliminate it are the subject of chapter 3.

Jack Dougherty and Bill Dahlk are two historians who have written about integration in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). Dougherty examines three overlapping and competing strands of the school reform movement in his book *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee*. The movement began

²¹ Dionne Danna, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963–71* (New York: Routledge, 2003). See also Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1971).

²² See John A. Powell, "Living and Learning: Linking Housing and Education" in *In Pursuit of a Dream Deferred: Linking Housing & Education Policy*, ed. J. A. Powell, G. Kearney; V. Kay (New York: Peter Lang, 2001) and the special section of the *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 2 (March 2012) for the relationship between segregated housing and schools; and Harvard Sitkoff, "Segregation, Desegregation, Resegregation: African American Education: A Guide to the Literature," *Magazine of History* 15, no. 20 (Winter 2001): 6–13 for an overview of legal history.

²³ See Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) for the best study of segregation in Milwaukee in the 1960s. See John L. Rury, "The Changing Social Context of Urban Education: A National Perspective," in *Seeds of Crisis*, ed. John L. Rury and Frank A. Cassell (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 15–16, 19, for an explanation of how Milwaukee fits into the national context. See Dougherty and Joe William Trotter Jr., *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–45*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985 and 2007).

with an older black elite that advocated the hiring of African American teachers, a young movement that wanted to integrate schools, and a third movement that advocated community control of schools. According to Dougherty, “activists from various generations interpreted [the *Brown* decision] in different ways as they encountered changing forms of racism over time.”²⁴ Dougherty’s work is biographical, telling the story of reform through the lives of William Kelly of the Milwaukee Urban League; attorney Lloyd Barbee, who led the legal challenge to the segregated school system; and activists Marian McEvilly and Howard Fuller.

Bill Dahlk followed up on Dougherty’s work in *Against the Wind* by examining what Dahlk calls “educational proprietorship.”²⁵ Whereas Dougherty examined three distinct streams of black advocacy and attributes the differences among those three streams to generational divides, Dahlk sees deindustrialization as key to understanding the shifting priorities of Milwaukee’s black community. He also uses a biographical approach but examines other black reform movements, such as curriculum reform, superintendent Howard Fuller’s administration, and vouchers, in greater detail than Dougherty.²⁶ Both books are very important works in the history of education, but, like other historical scholarship, their sections on magnet schools could use elaboration.

Chapter 4 is about the planning of Milwaukee’s magnet plan. Magnet schools are

²⁴ Dougherty, 5.

²⁵ Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans and the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963–2002* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), xxi–xxii, xxxii.

²⁶ Dahlk, xxxv.

“public elementary and secondary public schools of choice”²⁷ that offer a specialized curriculum designed to attract students from all parts of a school district.²⁸ They were supposed to integrate school districts by attracting white students to inner-city schools. Magnet schools come in many varieties. Most magnet schools specialize in particular areas, such as math and science, computers, trade and technology, or fine arts. Also, some magnet schools use nontraditional teaching approaches, such as open classrooms, individualized instruction, or the Montessori method. Magnet schools were the hope of black and white Americans for voluntary integration and are the main form of educational choice in this dissertation. This dissertation is unlike other scholarly works, in that most other studies of magnet schools have been written by social scientists, many of whom lack historical training.

The Milwaukee case was distinct because the trial *Amos v. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee* lasted thirteen years, much longer than trials in other districts. People speculated that federal judge John Reynolds took so long because he wanted time for people to prepare for integration and avoid the violence that had plagued Boston’s integration.²⁹ The Milwaukee school board had a difficult task when Judge Reynolds ruled against it in 1976. The board and school administration had formerly been concerned with curriculum matters and school construction. They were now asked

²⁷ “Fact Sheet,” Magnet Schools of America, http://www.magnet.edu/modules/info/who_we_are.html (accessed August 5, 2010).

²⁸ Grace Chen, “What is a Magnet School?,” *Public School Review* (last modified December 4, 2007), <http://publicschoolreview.com/articles/2> (accessed August 5, 2010).

²⁹ Ronald Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, NC, and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) and J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

to venture into an area with which they were not familiar. The conservative majority of the board asked new Superintendent Lee McMurrin to prepare a voluntary integration plan after obtaining community input. The final plan relied mostly on magnet schools, which were part of a national trend in school integration and were something with which McMurrin had a lot of experience. But the board never completely embraced the plan and implemented it only reluctantly. The fractured school board also filed an appeal.

Several major studies have been written on implementing integration. Most of these studies focused on busing and were written in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Gary Orfield, the director of UCLA's Civil Rights Project (at Harvard University until 2007) for the past couple decades, is one of the leading scholarly proponents of busing. He writes about the legal basis for busing, public attitudes toward it, the economics of busing, and the alleged conflict between racial integration and bilingual instruction for Latinos, among other subjects. He also pays significant attention to the role the federal government played in hampering busing, but in doing so, he ignores resistance movements by local citizens and offers only a pro-busing perspective. Furthermore, Orfield does not study magnet schools, which are key to understanding busing in Milwaukee and other cities.³⁰

Coming from a different perspective, one finds Christine Rossell, a political scientist at Boston University who is an expert on educational policy. Her most important book is *The Carrot or the Stick for School Desegregation Policy: Magnet Schools or Forced Busing* (1990), which involved research into racial integration and "white flight"

³⁰ Gary Orfield, *Must We Bus? Segregated Schools and National Policy* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1978) and "Public Opinion and School Desegregation," *Teachers College Record* 96 (1995): 654–669.

in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Los Angeles; and Boston.³¹ Rossell's argument that white parents are willing to send their children to schools in African American neighborhoods only under certain conditions is provocative and shows multiple dimensions to the causes of white migration. In Los Angeles, for example, distance was almost as important as racial composition of a school when parents decided whether to keep their children in particular schools. Racial composition was the third most important criterion in Baton Rouge, right behind reading test scores. Level of income (social class) was also an important factor in all three districts. In other words, when desegregation is carefully planned, white migration is not the result.³² This dissertation supports Rossell's point but

³¹ The term "white flight" is troublesome. While it is a convenient term, it is not always accurate. As Amanda Seligman explains in her book on three neighborhoods on the west side of Chicago, "to summarize the behavior of white West Siders as 'white flight' is to narrow the breadth of their struggles to preserve their neighborhoods." See Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 4. When reading newspaper articles and conducting interviews, it also appeared to me that white parents were willing to compromise on integration but were frustrated by what they saw as a lack of concern for their children. Rather than cast them as racists, which the term "white flight" implies, I use the term "white migration" when referring to a gradual migration to the suburbs and "white flight" to describe a sudden exodus.

³² Other important works by Rossell on this topic include "Controlled-Choice Desegregation Plans: Not Enough Choice, Too Much Control?," *Urban Affairs Review* 31, no. 1 (1995): 43–76; "The Desegregation Efficiency of Magnet Schools," *Urban Affairs Review* 38, no. 5, (May 2003): 697–725; (with David J. Armor) "The Effectiveness of School Desegregation Plans, 1968–1991," *American Politics Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1996): 267–302; "Is It the Busing or the Blacks?," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1988): 139–145; "Legal Aspects of Magnet Schools," in *Handbook of Research on School Choice*, ed. Mark Berends et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 379–392; and "Magnet Schools as a Desegregation Tool: The Importance of Contextual Factors in Explaining Their Success," *Urban Education* 14, no. 3, (October 1979): 303–320. Other scholarship that fits with Rossell's work includes Davison M. Douglas, *School Busing: Constitutional and Political Developments*, vol. 2, *The Public Debate over Busing and Attempts to Restrict Its Use* (New York: Garland, 1994); Mary F. Ehrlander, *Equal Educational Opportunity: Brown's Elusive Mandate* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2002); Ronald Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Edward J. Hayes, *Busing and Desegregation: The Real Truth* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1981); Gregory S. Jacobs, *Getting Around Brown* (Columbus: University of Ohio Press, 1998); Richard A. Pride and J. David Woodard, *The Burden of Busing: The Politics of Desegregation in Nashville, Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985); and Claire Smrekar, "The Social Context of Magnet Schools" in *Handbook of Research on School Choice*, ed. Mark Berends et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 393–407. Finally, see Gary Orfield, Susan E. Eaton, and the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, eds., *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown vs. the Board of Education* (New York: The New Press, 1996) for criticism of the critics of busing.

will do so with a historical perspective, instead of the view of a quantitative social scientist.

Chapter 5 examines unique challenges to implementing Milwaukee's magnet plan. The magnet school plan was supposed to give students a wide variety of choices in where they would attend school, but students did not volunteer in the expected numbers. Thus, integration did not happen at the expected rate. Many students—both black and white—wanted to stay in their neighborhood schools. Therefore, school administrators forced African Americans to choose southside schools. Hence, the period from 1976–1987 may be thought of as the era of “forced choice.” During this time, MPS relied on a complicated, inefficient, and expensive busing plan. Curricula proved difficult to implement in some schools, and there was much dissatisfaction with the plan in both the black and white communities.

Chapter 6 is about the reaction to the magnet plan, which was not well received by many students or parent and community groups. African American students who volunteered or were forced to attend southside schools were sometimes met with hostility. African American community groups, under the leadership of Howard Fuller, attempted to end busing and take control of their neighborhood schools. Fuller echoed the community control movement of the 1970s and believed that forcing African Americans students to choose southside schools made it appear that African American could not get a good education unless it was in a white school. Fuller believed the opposite was true—African Americans could educate their children more effectively than the existing school system if they were allowed to do so in their own neighborhoods. Meanwhile, white parents feared that the quality of their children's education would

suffer if their children were to attend school with people of low financial worth. Many white families left Milwaukee for more affluent suburban districts.

But magnet schools did not effectively improve educational opportunities for urban students. Chapter 7 is about the failure of the magnet plan to live up to integration or academic expectations. Milwaukee's demographics changed in the 1970s and 1980s, as the white birthrate declined and white families left the city for the suburbs. Milwaukee's economy also sharply declined in that period. Milwaukee was no longer the manufacturing city it had once been. In fact, it lost more jobs than almost any other city in the United States, and many of its residents were left in poverty. African American students were among the city's poorest inhabitants and failed to make significant academic improvement. Parents, community groups, and business interests responded by advocating for more choices. Parents and community groups again said they could improve education if busing was discontinued and students were kept close to home. Business interests supported market-driven reforms—the idea that choice in school would spur competition and improve education while lowering costs. Howard Fuller emerged as the leading advocate for the end of busing and the increase in choice. He eventually became MPS superintendent.

The choice movement continued after Fuller left office in 1995. Hence, the period from 1987–present is the era of “school choice” and is the subject of chapter 8. As in the case of magnet schools, few of the school choice studies have been written by historians. School choice, being a contemporary issue, is the subject of social scientists or political commentary. At best, these studies lack historical perspective; at worst, they seek to promote a political agenda. One of the objective ones, for example, is Gayle Schmitz-

Zien's dissertation in urban education, "The Genesis of and Motivations for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, 1985–1995." She interviewed sixteen participants in the school choice movement, ascertained their motivations, and then grouped those motivations under one of three themes—racial equality, economics or market theory, and religious school survival—and then discussed the universal theme of social justice. But while some historical references are made, the framework is fundamentally one of social science.³³

Milwaukee is unique in that it offers a wider variety of choice than any other city in the United States. Some of these choices—charter schools, a "school choice" voucher system, and open enrollment—are external choices. In other words, they give students options outside of MPS. Other choices—neighborhood schools, small schools, and a smaller number of magnet schools—represent choices available within MPS. These choices were supposed to improve the quality of education for Milwaukee students, but recent studies show that education has not improved at all. Students in MPS perform at about the same level as non-MPS students, if one adjusts for poverty, which leaves one to wonder whether the expansion of choice was really worth the investments of time and money that were devoted to it.

³³ Gayle Schmitz-Zien, "The Genesis of and Motivations for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, 1985–1995" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2003).

CHAPTER TWO
THE ERA OF NO CHOICE:
EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS PRIOR TO THE 1970S

Schools exist to educate students. But while virtually everyone agrees that students deserve the best possible education, teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, politicians, and theorists cannot agree on much else. They constantly debate subject matter, teaching methods, scheduling patterns, and types of schools children should attend. For example, schools all over the United States eliminated art, music, physical education, and other specialty classes in the early twenty-first century in favor of English, mathematics, science, and social studies, because decision makers, facing tight budgetary restraints, believed their money should be devoted to learning “the basics.” But other schools refused to eliminate electives on the grounds that nonacademic classes help develop well-rounded children and engage some students in ways the four core academic areas do not, thus motivating students to attend school and be successful in all subjects. Even when there is consensus about course offerings, there is much debate about what should be taught within individual courses. For example, a United States history class might emphasize patriotism, academic knowledge, or life skills such as map reading, civil rights, and the American economy. Furthermore, one teacher may teach through lecture and discussion, while another prefers cooperative learning, and a third uses an inquiry approach. Some teachers require a lot of reading and writing, while others believe in visual learning and expression. The debate over phonics versus whole-

language education in elementary school may rage into the twenty-second century.¹

The fact that these issues are so vigorously debated is a testament to the now commonly accepted notion that all children should attend school. Indeed, only 2.7 percent of all American children were educated at home (“homeschooled”) in 2007.² Almost all other children attend school, either public or private.³ But near-universal enrollment in school was not achieved until the mid-twentieth century. Most children did not attend school throughout most of United States history, and when they did attend school, their options for the kinds of schools they could attend either were limited or did not exist. Hence, the period prior to the 1970s may be thought of as the era of “no choice.”

The Jamestown colony was established in 1607, the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1620, and Boston was founded in 1630, but the American colonies did not get their

¹ See Robert J. Franciosi, *The Rise and Fall of American Public Schools: The Political Economy of Public Education in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004); William Hayes, *The Progressive Education Movement: Is it Still a Factor in Today's Schools?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006); Sarah Mondale and Sarah B. Patton, eds. *School: The Story of American Public Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Joel H. Spring, *The American School, 1642–1996*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997); Steven E. Tozer, Paul C. Violas, and Guy Sense, *School and Society: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009); David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); and Decker F. Walker and Jonas F. Soltis, *Curriculum and Aims* (New York: Teachers' College Press and Columbia University, 2004) for concise histories of American schooling. For a longer book, see Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools*, rev. ed. (1974; repr., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). Ravitch is a well-known conservative historian of education and is critical of government involvement in education. This is her seminal book.

² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics: Institute of Education Sciences, *1.5 Million Homeschooled Students in the United States in 2007*, NCES 2009–030, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009, 2, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009030.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2012).

³ U.S. Department of Commerce: Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *School Enrollment in the United States—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students*, by Amie Jamieson, Andrea Curry, and Gladys Martinez, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/p20-533.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2012).

first school until 1635, when Boston Latin opened.⁴ Students who attended Boston Latin were expected to matriculate to Harvard University, which was established one year after Boston Latin, when John Harvard donated money and books to the people of Massachusetts.⁵ The curriculum at Boston Latin was, not surprisingly, Latin—and to a lesser extent Greek—and was probably patterned after Harvard’s entrance requirements, which were to demonstrate proficiency in both classical languages.⁶ The curriculum was organized around a seven-year program that consisted of at least twenty-seven subjects, most of which involved Latin or Greek. Grammar was very important, but theology was also required, as were small amounts of history and science. Nearly all subjects were based on the study of ancient writers.⁷ Though the curriculum was originally intended to last seven years, some students completed it in less time and were admitted to Harvard as early as age fourteen. The day lasted from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. in summer and 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. in winter, with a two-hour lunch break provided no matter the season.

⁴ Emit Duncan Grizzell, *Origin and Development of the High School in New England Before 1865* (New York: MacMillan, 1923), 2–3; Philip Marson, *Breeder of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1963), 16–17; and Spring, 6–8. This may or may not be true, as the Virginia Company decreed that a school be located at Charles City on the James River in 1621. The call for a schoolmaster went out immediately, but the beginning of the school was interrupted in 1622 by an “Indian massacre” in which at least four colonists were killed. The Virginia Company collapsed in 1624, and no one knows whether the school ever held classes. See Elmer Ellsworth Brown, *The Making of Our Middle Schools: An Account of the Development of Secondary Education in the United States* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), 32–34.

⁵ Spring, 13.

⁶ Grizzell, 14; Pauline Holmes, *A Tercentenary History of the Boston Public Latin School, 1635–1935*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935; repr., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970), 255; and Marson, 12.

⁷ See Marson, 12, for a detailed list. See also Grizzell, 12–13, and Spring, 12–13, for additional background information.

This schedule was followed from 1635 until sometime into the mid-nineteenth century.⁸ Schoolmasters placed high priority on memorization and recitation,⁹ and corporal punishment was used to enforce discipline.¹⁰ Exams were given on Fridays, Saturdays were for writing, and Sundays were devoted to religious exercises.¹¹

Most children were excluded from Boston Latin. Admission to the school required students be able to read and write, skills that were usually acquired from literate parents or private tutors, two things rarely found among poor families. Middle-class children, on the other hand, were usually literate but would have received no benefit from attending Boston Latin—the curriculum was designed to prepare students for Harvard, not farmwork, skilled trades, or shop keeping. Furthermore, the school’s lengthy schedule precluded poor and middle-class students from attending school, as their labor was needed at home. Girls were completely excluded until 1789.¹² The school was publically supported but only for Boston residents. Students from the surrounding area were expected to pay tuition.¹³

Curriculum changes came slowly. Harvard changed its admissions standards in 1803 so that mathematics and geography were required, but even then, students took less

⁸ Marson, 12–13.

⁹ See chapter 10 of Holmes.

¹⁰ See chapter 4 of Holmes.

¹¹ Spring, 12–13.

¹² William J. Reese, *The Origins of the American High School* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 3–4, 10.

¹³ Holmes, 27–30. See pp. 30–53 for a detailed list of taxes, fines, and rents used to fund the school.

than one year of each subject at Boston Latin until about 1823, when ancient history, English history, geography, arithmetic, geometry, and algebra were listed in the course catalog as separate subjects. Even then, the geometry text was by Euclid. English classes appeared for the first time in the 1826 catalog. The entrance age was set at nine at that time for the then-five-year curriculum, thus continuing the possibility of entering Harvard at age fourteen. French was introduced in 1852, and American transcendentalist writers, astronomy, chemistry, physics, one German book, gymnastics, drawing, and an optional music class came into being by 1870. The admissions age increased to twelve by then, and a six-year course of study meant graduation at age eighteen. Finally, in 1876, a modern curriculum was introduced that resembled what students take in high school in the twenty-first century. Students studied between nine and eleven subjects per year. Latin, English, history, mathematics, and gymnastics and military drill were required every year; science and geography were required for the first six years; French was required in years three to eight; Greek in six to eight; and German in seven and eight. In other words, five languages, including English, were required in the senior year of high school. Fine arts classes were required in the lower grades.¹⁴

Boston Latin is still one of the best schools in the United States. Even in the twenty-first century, it still requires four years each of English, Latin, a modern foreign language, and mathematics, plus three years of history and two years of science to graduate. It boasts twenty Advanced Placement classes,¹⁵ and all students are expected to

¹⁴ Holmes, 258–302.

¹⁵ “Boston Latin School, 2009–10 Profile,” Boston Latin School, <https://www.bls.org/ftpimages/314/download/Profile001.pdf> (accessed August 7, 2010).

attend college after graduation, be it Harvard or some other prestigious university.¹⁶ To graduate from Boston Latin is to join an elite group that includes Samuel Adams, Henry Ward Beecher, Leonard Bernstein, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Hancock, Joseph Kennedy, Henry Knox, Cotton Mather, Edward Charles Pickering, George Santayana, and Charles Sumner. Five signers of the Declaration of Independence, including Benjamin Franklin (who attended but did not graduate), went to school there.¹⁷

Boston Latin became the model for colonial schooling and a “classical” education. Massachusetts had twenty-three schools by 1689,¹⁸ and New England as a whole had thirty-nine by 1700.¹⁹ There also were some schools following the Boston model as far south as Virginia.²⁰

Private academies were the only other option available to the male children of the wealthy. Benjamin Franklin proposed the creation of private academies in 1743 to teach practical subjects such as penmanship, drawing, arithmetic (including accounting, geometry, and astronomy), and English language (including grammar, oral reading, and composition), natural science, history, geography, civil government, logic, morality, and religion. Franklin, who attended Boston Latin for only one year, became a sharp critic of

¹⁶ Robert Wernick, “At Boston Latin, Time Out for a 350th Birthday,” *Smithsonian* 16, no. 1 (1985): 122–135.

¹⁷ “History (375 Year): Celebrating a Public Treasure – 1635 to 2010,” Boston Latin School, <http://www.bls.org/podium/default.aspx?t=113646> (accessed August 7, 2010) and Marson 15. Chapter 6 of Holmes contains brief biographies of 115 pupils.

¹⁸ Spring, 14.

¹⁹ Grizzell, 7–8.

²⁰ Spring, 14–17. See Brown, 37–57, for brief sketches of the schools in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia and 130–136 for a summary of curriculum and rules of conduct. All were based on the Boston model.

the traditional or “classic” curriculum, as it is also called. Franklin had read the works of long-forgotten English radicals John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, and Algernon Sidney, and possibly Robert Molesworth and Joseph Priestly. These men all believed the traditional curriculum, with its emphasis on obedience to the schoolmaster and adherence to the classics, created citizens who were submissive to the state. Franklin believed an educated citizenry was key to living in a republic and that such an education should be utilitarian, along the lines of Jean Jacques Rousseau’s vision for education.²¹

Franklin’s ideas caught on and spread rapidly. Commerce grew after American independence, and the new American elite wanted its children to learn things that would be useful in making money. Private academies fit that need, and they had most of the new republic’s students by 1800, though they did not have anything close to a majority of American children due to their tuition requirements.²² Most children were excluded from school because they were of modest means.

Access to schools improved slightly during the nineteenth century. Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and other reformers of the early nineteenth century were the chief engineers of the “common school” movement,²³ which began in Boston in 1821, when it

²¹ “Ben Franklin: A Timeline, 1657–1719,” The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, http://www.benfranklin300.com/etc_timeline.htm (accessed August 7, 2010); Brown, 179–182; and Spring, 18–24. Franklin was describing something that became known as “progressive” education in the late nineteenth century. See chapters 1–4 of Hayes for more on Plato, Rousseau, John Dewey, and other progressive educators. See also Brown, 229; Spring, 211–212; Tozer, Violas, and Sense, 106–108; and Walker and Soltis, 15–17. Alexander Dallas Bache, a great grandson of Franklin, is considered by some to be the father of antebellum science education. See Hugh R. Slotten, “Science, Education, and Antebellum Reform: The Case of Alexander Dallas Bache,” *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 323–342.

²² Reese, 23–28. See Brown, 190–202, and Grizzell, 27–34, for highlights of various academies in New England.

²³ Reese, 43; Spring, 96–103, 106; and Tozer, Violas, and Sense, 53–71.

established an English-only school that was supposed to provide a comprehensive education, similar to what was found in the private academies, to all children.²⁴ Once again, however, most children had no time or need to attend school. Only sixty-five children attended the English school 1822.²⁵ The city, however, opened a school for girls in 1826 to train them to be teachers.²⁶

Common schools were mostly an urban phenomenon. Again, rural children had no need to attend school. Rural communities also lacked a sufficient concentration of children and an adequate tax base to support schools. Urban children typically attended elementary school from about six to about age fourteen, roughly grades one to eight, though grade levels rarely were used until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Students, mostly male, who wanted to attend college matriculated to high school. The high school could have been in a distinct building in the city or it might have been on the upper (“high”) floor of the elementary school. Networks of elementary schools were established to feed students into the high schools, when high schools moved into their own buildings,²⁷ and from these networks came the first school districts. Twenty-six towns in Massachusetts, two in Maine, and one in New Hampshire had English-language high schools by 1839.²⁸ The number of private academies decreased, as parents chose free public schools over “pay schools” (as private schools were often called) for financial

²⁴ Brown, 300–302. See chapter 13 of Grizzell for a detailed list of course offerings in several of the English schools.

²⁵ Grizzell, 43.

²⁶ Grizzell, 45.

²⁷ Brown, 294–296.

²⁸ Grizzell, 48–86, 94, 126.

reasons as well as the geographical factor—few people wanted to send their children away to school when there was a perfectly good school in their town.²⁹ One-hundred nine towns had opened public high schools by 1865 in Massachusetts,³⁰ and the other New England states had opened seventy-one.³¹ This framework spread to the rest of the country, and elementary schools and high schools were established in all cities from the 1830s to the 1870s.

These high schools were referred to as “comprehensive” schools in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries because they offered a variety of courses that could prepare students for a variety of careers or post-secondary education. Comprehensive schools were tied to neighborhood boundaries. In theory, if all schools were comprehensive, then all students would have the same educational opportunities regardless of where they lived. Meanwhile, other schools, such as Boston Latin, that offered specialized curricula persisted and drew students from all parts of a city or school district.³² Such schools were rare, however, in the age of a walking city.

On a related note, the term “neighborhood” was defined by United States Supreme Court in 1826 as a “susceptible variation of the word ‘locality.’ Both terms are elastic and, dependent upon circumstances, may be equally satisfied by areas measured by rods

²⁹ Grizzell, 42, 137.

³⁰ Grizzell, 132, 146–149

³¹ Grizzell, 181, 194, 226, 250, 270. See also Brown, 311–314.

³² The term “magnet school” was not coined until the 1960s, but Boston Latin and other schools like it certainly met the definition of magnet schools long before the term was in use. Boston Latin is a member of the Magnet School Association as of this writing.

or miles.”³³ The town of Stowe, Massachusetts, was probably the first in the United States to divide its political jurisdiction into separate school districts, which were based on neighborhoods, in 1805. Students were required to attend their neighborhood school, except for certain notable families, which were allowed to send their children to any school within the town boundaries. Dover, Massachusetts, set up an identical system in 1807. Courts overturned both school assignment systems in 1828 and 1831, respectively, on the grounds that all students and families had to be treated equally—if some students had to attend neighborhood schools, then all students had to attend schools in their neighborhoods.³⁴

But that ruling did not apply to African American students. In October 1787, fourteen free African Americans, some of whom had fought in the American Revolution, submitted a petition to the Massachusetts legislature protesting their children’s exclusion from the Boston public schools. Deliberately echoing the protests of the Sons of Liberty, they complained to the legislature of taxation without *education*. Nonetheless, the legislature turned them down, so they set up their own private school. Tuition was twelve and a half cents per week, and the school “year” lasted only three and a half months.³⁵

The Boston School Committee eventually capitulated and admitted the students to

³³ Quoted in Meyer Weinberg, *Race and Place: A Legal History of the Neighborhood School* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 7.

³⁴ Weinberg, 2.

³⁵ Tony Hill, “Where Do We Go from Here?: The Politics of Black Education, 1780–1980,” *The Boston Review* (October 1981). See also Hilary J. Moss, *Schooling Citizens: The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 135–137. Moss argues throughout her book that white opposition to African American education expanded as public education did. She cites scholarship on debates on early nineteenth citizenship that involved issues of race, class, and education. Education was a key aspect of citizenship, so denying an education to someone who was African American or poor relegated him or her to an inferior position in the social and legal hierarchy.

the public schools. But African Americans still faced discrimination and harassment, so the Boston School Committee gave them their own school in 1806 after receiving petitions from African Americans in 1798 and 1800. Facilities were, not surprisingly, inferior to white schools.³⁶ Boston's African Americans began to protest these conditions in the 1820s, but their pleas for better schools fell on deaf ears. Finally, in 1849, a black printer named Benjamin Roberts sued on behalf of his five-year-old daughter, Sarah (referred to as Susan in some sources), who had to walk past five white elementary schools on the way to the African American school. The case made it all the way to the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, writing for the majority of the court in 1850, stated that the equal protection clause of the Massachusetts Constitution did not mean schools had to be integrated. They could be separate as long as they were equal. The United States Supreme Court used this decision as a precedent in *Plessey vs. Ferguson* in 1896, which made "separate but equal" the law of the land.³⁷ Nonetheless, abolitionists lobbied hard, elected candidates to office, and passed legislation in Massachusetts in 1855 that outlawed school segregation on the basis of "race, color, or religion." The 326 African American students who had been enrolled at Boston's three black schools were reassigned to formerly all-white public schools appropriate to their grades and residences.³⁸

³⁶ Moss, 137–139, and Spring, 87–88.

³⁷ Douglas J. Ficker, "From Roberts to Plessey: Educational Segregation and the 'Separate but Equal' Doctrine," *Journal of Negro History* 84, no. 4 (Autumn 1999): 301–314; Hill; and "Education: Sarah Roberts vs. Boston," The Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/longroad/02education/roberts.htm> (accessed December 27, 2010). See also Moss, chapters 5 and 6, especially 152, 165, 181–182.

³⁸ Spring, 88–89.

Massachusetts, however, was the exception, for segregation laws were enacted in New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Connecticut, Maryland, and most other parts of the United States throughout the nineteenth century, and the courts upheld them all.³⁹

Segregation was also bolstered by the Naturalization Act of 1790, in which Congress declared that Native Americans and immigrants from Africa or Asia could not become U.S. citizens.⁴⁰

Schools continued to expand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Civil War, which ended in 1865, confirmed the United States would have an industrial economy. Americans moved to the cities, which enabled more children to attend school due to the great concentration of school-age children and the decreased need for agricultural labor. There were only two cities with five hundred thousand residents in 1870 but twelve such cities in 1920, and the percentage of Americans living in them increased from 26 to 51 in that same time span. The cities teemed with European immigrants on the East Coast and Asians on the West. More than four hundred thousand immigrants came from Europe, and more than thirteen thousand came from Asia in an average year between 1866 and 1920. Most immigrants took factory jobs. Some historians estimate that as much as 60 percent of the industrial labor force was foreign born on the eve of World War I.⁴¹

³⁹ Weinberg, 3–5. See chapters 1–2 of Moss for detailed information on New Haven, Connecticut, and chapters 3–4 for Baltimore, Maryland. See Howell S. Baum, *Brown in Baltimore: School Desegregation and the Limits of Liberalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010) for the difficulty of implementing *Brown* in Baltimore.

⁴⁰ Spring, 176.

⁴¹ Tozer, *Violas*, and *Sense*, 82–87.

As the population increased, so did the demand for schools, and children also stayed in school longer because child labor laws made it harder for them to work in factories. There was also a growing sense that cities were breeding grounds for juvenile delinquency. It was hoped that schools could change that by instilling character into children and assimilating ethnic groups. The number of students in high school increased from 358,000 in the 1889–90 school year to 7.1 million in 1939–40, and the percentage of the school-age population enrolled in school increased from 57 to 93.⁴²

In this age of mass production, it made sense to some people to standardize curricula. There was, however, disagreement over what students should be taught. In 1892, the National Education Association (the NEA, when it was strictly a professional organization and not a labor union) appointed a Committee of Secondary School Studies, more commonly known as the “Committee of Ten” because it had ten members. Charles Elliot was its most eminent authority. Born into a wealthy family in Boston in 1834, Elliot attended the Boston Latin School and graduated from Harvard at age nineteen with a degree in chemistry. He became a professor there and accepted the position of president of the university at age thirty-five. Elliot believed there should be four aims to education—social stability, employment skills, equal opportunity regardless of class, and meritocracy—and that education should be the key to success in political and economic life.⁴³

Charles Elliot’s experiences at Boston Latin and Harvard shaped the direction of

⁴² Tozer, Violas, and Sense, 82.

⁴³ Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School, 1880–1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1969) and Tozer, Violas, and Sense, 108–114. Of all the sources used in this dissertation, the best biography of Elliot is chapter 7 of Marson.

the Committee of Ten. The committee issued a landmark report the following year that recommended four kinds of high schools, depending on a student's interest. All students would take mathematics and physical, natural, and social sciences. The schools would diverge from there based on language. The four schools would be classical (two years of Latin and two years of Greek), Latin-scientific (four years of Latin plus extra science courses), modern languages (four years of French and German), and English (mostly classical literature). The first two types of schools were considered college-preparatory, while the other two were not. No place was left for art, music, physical education, or vocational education. The Carnegie unit, originally 120 hours of class time, was invented to evaluate high school transcripts for admission to college.⁴⁴

The committee recommended a six-year course of study, but most high schools lacked the space needed to add grades seven and eight. The most common solution to this problem was to establish junior high schools for grades seven to nine. These schools functioned in the same way as senior high schools (grades ten to twelve) but with simpler subject matter.⁴⁵ In 1910, Berkeley, California, became the first city in the United States

⁴⁴ David L. Angus and Jeffrey E. Mirel, *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890–1995* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1999), 8–10; Brown, 381–384; Krug, 59–65; Spring, 223–224; and Walker and Soltis, 28.

⁴⁵ See footnote 1 for sources. Junior high schools were just what their name implies—they were structured as high schools for younger students, grades seven through nine. Teachers were organized by academic departments, and students traveled all over a building to get to classes. The same students were not necessarily in the same classes. Middle schools, on the other hand, are typically composed of grades six through eight (though sometimes younger students are involved) and organize teachers by grade level. There are typically four teachers (English, mathematics, science, and social studies), and students move from teacher to teacher as a class. This keeps students together as a “family” or “unit” for most of the day, with students splitting up only for electives. Most theorists believe middle schools are more developmentally appropriate than junior high schools because middle schools increase teacher collaboration in lesson planning and the monitoring of student progress. They also facilitate a transition between one teacher and no movement in elementary school to seven teachers or more and a lot of movement in a high school. See William M. Alexander and Paul S. George, *The Exemplary Middle School* (New York: CBS College Publishing, 1981) and chapter 11 of Hayes for more information.

to try the new model of education. Students could choose from three courses of study: general, commercial, or elementary industrial. Students were still assigned to neighborhood elementary schools but were able to choose their high schools.⁴⁶ Those options were available only in cities that had access to transportation by way of streetcar and had large enough numbers of students to make multiple high schools possible.

The committee was criticized for being unrealistic. Only one committee member was from a public high school. The other nine were college professors, college presidents, or headmasters of private academies. None of them were women, so it cannot be said that the committee represented the teaching corps.⁴⁷ Public school superintendents and teachers were angered and insulted by the committee's recommendations, because it looked like they were being told that they did not know how to run schools effectively.⁴⁸ The inclusion of so much foreign language for both college-bound and non-college-bound students and the rejection of vocational education conflicted with public and industrial demands.⁴⁹ Professors at Columbia University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of Chicago, the University of Minnesota, and other universities urged school districts to make vocational education an option.⁵⁰

Several school districts responded to the criticism. The Cleveland Public Schools,

⁴⁶ Krug, 239–240, 327–335.

⁴⁷ Angus, 8, and Krug, 39.

⁴⁸ Krug, 66–67.

⁴⁹ Brown, 337–338; Krug, 14–17; and Spring, 220.

⁵⁰ Krug, 223–224, and 238–239.

for example, began a two-track curriculum in its elementary schools in 1910, one track to prepare students for vocational schools and one track to prepare them for classical college-preparatory schools.⁵¹ In 1920, Grand Rapids, Michigan, became one of the first mid-sized districts in the country to open a vocational high school. It also put trade programs in two of its other high schools.⁵²

Milwaukee also had its share of vocational education. The independent public Milwaukee School of Trades opened in January 1906. It became part of the Milwaukee Public Schools in 1907,⁵³ and it was allowed to enroll students from all parts of the city beginning in 1941, making it Milwaukee's first magnet high school.⁵⁴ A Girls' Trade School, which offered courses in cooking, sewing, and household management,⁵⁵ opened during the 1917–18 school year.⁵⁶ All other high school students took a four-year curriculum consisting of composition, rhetoric, literature, history, algebra, geometry, and physics. Milwaukee students also took either four years of Latin or one year of Latin followed by three years of Greek or German, according to a curriculum guide from 1899.⁵⁷ A network of four “pre-vocational” junior high schools—two for boys and two

⁵¹ Krug, 238.

⁵² Angus, 29–31.

⁵³ William M. Lamers, *Our Roots Grow Deep*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Board of School Directors, 1974), 13, 41, 164.

⁵⁴ Milwaukee Board of School Directors, *Proceedings of the Board of School Directors* (Milwaukee: The Board of School Directors), May 6, 1941 (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*).

⁵⁵ *Proceedings*, January 7, 1919.

⁵⁶ *Proceedings*, August 7, 1917, and January 2, 1918.

⁵⁷ Lamers, 28–29.

for girls—was also established in the 1920s.⁵⁸ There were 4,691 students in the vocational junior and senior high schools by the end of 1928, which was more than 24 percent of the junior-senior high school population.⁵⁹ An Agricultural School was established in 1919 in cooperation with the Milwaukee County College of Agriculture for boys who lived on farms and could not attend regular high school.⁶⁰ Thus, a few choices emerged midway through the era of no choice. But these schools were still inaccessible for students who did not have transportation.

The most famous example of a vocational school, however, has to be Stuyvesant High School in New York City. Stuyvesant High School opened in 1904 to teach “manual training for boys,” and Dr. Ernest R. von Nardoff became principal in 1908. Von Nardoff had a degree in mining engineering, not education, from Columbia University and had been a physics instructor at Barnard College and head of the science department at Erasmus Hall High School for eleven years before taking his position at Stuyvesant. He recruited a top-notch faculty that had strong backgrounds in skilled trades and/or science. He also maintained a fully equipped shop adjacent to his office, so he could continue to be an active scientist. Extracurricular activities included French, Latin, debate, philatelic (stamp collecting), short stories, swim, golf, fencing, chess, and drum corps. Admissions requirements, including a test, were introduced in 1920, and enrollment increased quickly. Students were attracted to the practical manual training

⁵⁸ References to the prevocational schools are made throughout the school board proceedings, but the most details can be found in *Proceedings*, February 7 and March 7, 1922; June 3, 1924; May 7 and October, 1928; January 3, 1929; and June 30, 1931.

⁵⁹ *Proceedings*, January 3, 1929.

⁶⁰ *Proceedings*, May 6, 1919.

and extracurricular activities at first, but many of them also found they enjoyed the sciences. Staggered scheduling was introduced in 1920 to accommodate the number of students who wanted to attend Stuyvesant, and a third shift was added in 1923. Enrollment reached 5,000 in 1928, the same year new advanced science courses were introduced. Between thirty and forty sections of physics were taught daily by 1934, the year of von Nardoff's retirement.⁶¹

The NEA recognized the criticisms that vocational educators had of the Committee of Ten, so it organized the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in 1913 to reconsider Committee's work. It was made of six education professors, three representatives of normal schools, three people from the U.S. Bureau of Education, three local school administrators, two public high school teachers, two state high school supervisors, and one college president who had been a professor of education. There were no representatives from academic disciplines.⁶²

The Commission issued its final report, the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, in 1918, which was much more progressive than the Committee of Ten's plan. The report was heavily influenced by the work of "progressive" education theorist John Dewey, who believed education should be student centered and should prepare students for useful things in life. He followed the same logic as Rousseau and Franklin.⁶³ The

⁶¹ Walter Hellman, "Early NYC High School Physics and Development of the Science Magnet School," *The Physics Teacher* 43 (2005): 598–601.

⁶² Angus, 15.

⁶³ See chapters 1–4 of Hayes for more on Plato, Rousseau, John Dewey, and other progressive educators. See also Brown, 229; Spring, 211–212; Tozer, Violas, and Sense, 106–108; and Walker and Soltis, 15–17.

Commission did not issue a list of recommended subjects; instead it called for comprehensive high schools in which students could take whatever they wanted⁶⁴ as long as the overall high school experience met the following objectives: 1) health, 2) command of fundamental processes (e.g., reading, writing, arithmetic, and expression), 3) worthy home membership, 4) vocation, 5) citizenship, 6) worthy use of leisure, and 7) ethical character.⁶⁵

The commission made a hard push for vocational education. In its view, students should be allowed to train in agricultural, business, clerical, industrial, fine arts, or home economics—whatever their desires were.⁶⁶ Vocational guidance counseling was key. In as much as traditional school counselors helped students choose colleges, vocational counselors helped non-college-bound students choose careers. Counselors would administer various aptitude tests in the first year of junior high school to see what students' talents were. Also, each student would be assigned a home room teacher who would guide the student's socialization by steering him or her into clubs that related to the student's performance on the tests. The New York junior high schools, for example, had 387 clubs and sixty-eight other after-school activities in 1922. Eighty-three clubs centered on physical training, thirty-one were devoted to history projects, and most of the rest were on career exploration. At the end of the first year of school, the vocational counselor would use the test data, grades in vocational classes, and the clubs the student joined to help him or her make the right career choice. Eighth and ninth grade electives

⁶⁴ Spring, 228.

⁶⁵ Angus, 15, and Walker and Soltis, 28–29.

⁶⁶ Spring, 228.

were devoted to this one area. Students could then matriculate to a comprehensive senior high school or could go directly into the workforce.⁶⁷

Most school districts followed the recommendations of the Commission and established comprehensive high schools, which could prepare students for either employment or college. Comprehensive schools offer all the basic academic classes plus electives in various vocations. Students may choose to take classes in several areas or may specialize in just one, depending on school policies. Comprehensive schools were hailed as a “prototype of democracy” in the mid-twentieth century because they were supposed to represent a cross section of the United States. They were supposed to teach the value of good citizenship through student involvement in sports and clubs, and they emphasized school unity through colors, mascots, pep rallies, and assemblies.⁶⁸

Comprehensive schools also were seen as a good way to assimilate immigrant groups through courses on English language and United States history and patriotic clubs, such as Junior Red Cross and victory garden clubs.⁶⁹

Comprehensive schools continued to be the standard American high schools after World War II and into the twenty-first century. With the rise of juvenile delinquency in the 1950s and 1960s, comprehensive schools were seen as a way to reach troubled youth through “life skills” classes, such as cooking, interior design, art in the home, health, and everyday math. There were also “relevant” classes such as African American history,

⁶⁷ Harvey Kantor, “Choosing a Vocation: The Origins and Transformation of Vocational Guidance in California, 1910–1930,” *History of Education Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 351–365; Krug, 241–243; and Spring, 233–240.

⁶⁸ Angus, 59–68, and Krug, 391–392, 396–397.

⁶⁹ Krug, 407–411, 417.

problems in democracy, and modern literature.⁷⁰ Many students who were viewed by their guidance counselors and teachers as having low levels of intelligence or achievement were steered into the “life skills” and “relevant” classes. They were the students who would not have enrolled in high school in the nineteenth century but were now required to by law, and they needed classes to take.⁷¹

This last bit of information raises interesting questions about who takes what kinds of classes in comprehensive schools. In 1910, when most high schools still had the “classical” curriculum, girls accounted for slightly more than half of all students enrolled. That means a sizeable portion of the female population was taking classes that would prepare them for college—even if they did not go to college, they were still trained for it.⁷² But as the number of vocational and life skills classes increased and vocational guidance became mainstream, girls were channeled into “feminine courses.” For example, a study of high school enrollments in nineteen states during the 1924–25 school year revealed that girls were enrolled in 53 percent of all high school courses but only 49 percent were taking mathematics classes, compared to 63 percent of all boys. Likewise, 38 percent of girls were enrolled in science classes and less than 1 percent were in industrial arts, while 50 percent of all boys took science and 29 percent took industrial arts. Sixty percent of all girls were enrolled in “commercial” classes, compared to 30 percent of boys, and 28 percent of all girls took “household arts” classes, compared to a

⁷⁰ Angus, 69–84.

⁷¹ Sol Cohen, “The Industrial Education Movement,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1968): 95–110.

⁷² Angus, 39–40, 45–46.

tenth of a percent of all boys.⁷³ This tracking of students by gender effectively undermined the opportunity for most girls to continue on to college.

Racial and economic tracking were evident too. For example, in Detroit, only 19 percent of all African American students were enrolled in the college-preparatory track in 1924–25, while 44 percent were in the “general” track. The enrollment for nonblack students was almost equal in these categories—28 percent to 27 percent. Only 9 percent of African American students were in the vocational track, compared to 15 percent of nonblack students.⁷⁴ In terms of class, a 1949 study of a “typical midwestern community” by A. B. Hollingshead found that two-thirds of upper-class students were in the college-preparatory track, while a majority of the lower-class students were in the “general” track. Furthermore, a 1944 study by W. Lloyd Warner, Robert Havighurst, and Martin Loeb of a “Yankee City” found all of the upper-class students were in the college-preparatory track, as were 83 percent of the upper-middle-class students. But only 45 percent of the lower-middle-class students, 28 percent of the upper-lower-class students, and 26 percent of the lower-lower-class students were in these classes. Both these studies reflected national trends in class-based differentiation of education.⁷⁵

Thus, comprehensive schools, while greatly expanding access to school still did not offer students much in terms of choice—students were tracked into particular courses based on gender or class. Comprehensive schools also did nothing to address racial

⁷³ Angus, 49.

⁷⁴ Angus, 91. See Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of An Urban School System: Detroit, 1907–81* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993) for a good case study.

⁷⁵ Angus, 97. See also W. Lloyd Warner, Robert Havighurst, and Martin Loeb, *Who Shall Be Educated?* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944).

segregation. Elementary and secondary school enrollment was still based primarily on neighborhood attendance patterns, which means northern cities with segregated neighborhoods also had segregated schools. African American schools, comprehensive or not, were frequently cited as being of low quality. Some African Americans and liberal whites felt that racial integration would improve the education of the children of both races. These people turned to protests and lawsuits in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s to force school districts to integrate students. Milwaukee is a good example of how both protests and legal challenges were used to induce change and crack the framework of no choice.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ERA OF NO CHOICE:

CHALLENGING SEGREGATION IN MILWAUKEE, 1963–1967

The city of Milwaukee was sharply divided by race in the 1960s. The Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) assigned students to schools closest to their homes, which seems ostensibly fair, but Milwaukee’s neighborhoods were racially segregated, which meant the schools were segregated. While James Groppi was the primary organizer behind the movement to enact fair housing laws, by 1963, Lloyd Barbee emerged as the leader of the movement to racially integrate the schools. Barbee took a two-pronged approach—he sued the school district, and he also led a grassroots protest movement. He tried to prove that the schools were segregated not just by residence pattern but through administrative practices. But reform was difficult. Superintendent Harold Vincent and a majority of the school board did not want to change, and Milwaukee’s African American leadership could not agree on what goals they should pursue. Choice was one of the issues that divided African Americans—they had to decide whether integration was their best option or they would be better off taking direct control of their children’s schools.

Segregation was based on the neighborhood school system, which dated back to the founding of the city. The original Town of Milwaukee, sometimes referred to as “Juneautown,” after its founder, Solomon Juneau, a French furrier, was established as a trading fort on the east bank of the Milwaukee River in 1818.¹ Colonel George H.

¹ John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee*, 3rd ed. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 2008), 26–32; Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee: The History of a City* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society, 1940), 5; and Robert W. Wells, *This Is Milwaukee* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 10, 15–16. These are the three best sources of Milwaukee history. See chapter 1 of Greg J. Carman, “Wall of Exclusion: The Persistence of Residential Racial Segregation in Metropolitan Milwaukee” (PhD diss.,

Walker, a transplanted Yankee, founded Walker's Point south of the Menominee River in 1833, and Byron Kilbourn, a government surveyor, came to the area in 1834 and picked out a choice piece of land on the west bank of the Milwaukee River, which he aptly named "Town of Milwaukee on the West Side of the River." This village, having a very unwieldy name, was commonly referred to as "Kilbourntown."² These three communities eventually became the east, south, and west sides of Milwaukee.

The residents of the three towns never really got along with one another. Each felt the others were competitors. Juneau and Kilbourn competed fiercely for land sales. Whenever either man made an offer to sell land to a particular individual, the other often followed suit with a more attractive offer.³ But the cost of maintaining separate city governments was prohibitive, so Juneautown and Kilbourntown merged into the Town of Milwaukee in 1839, and Walker's Point was annexed in 1845. Each of the old villages became a ward in the new town, but the union of the villages did not put an end to their rivalries. A kind of autonomy still existed. Each ward still competed for settlers, and they were still physically separated by the rivers. Town ordinances varied from ward to ward, and each ward was allowed to raise its own tax money and spend it on itself.

University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2010) for a brief account. Other older histories include William George Bruce, ed., *History of Milwaukee, City and County* (Chicago and Milwaukee: S.J. Clarke Publishing, 1922); Howard Louis Conrad, ed., *History of Milwaukee County from Its First Settlers to the Year 1895* (Chicago and New York: American Biographical Publishing, 1895); John G. Gregory, *History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin* (Chicago and Milwaukee: S.J. Clarke Publishing, 1931); and *History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from Pre-Historic Times to the Present Date, Embracing a Summary Sketch of the Native Tribes, and an Exhaustive Record of Men and Events for the Past Century; Describing the City, Its Commercial, Religious, Educational and Benevolent Institutions, Its Government, Courts, Press, and Public Affairs; and Including Nearly Four Thousand Biographical Sketches of Pioneers and Citizens* (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1881).

² Gurda, 32–38; Still, 12–13; and Wells, 21–23.

³ Still, 19–23, 30–32.

Voting for delegates to the territorial legislature was split across ward lines. Roads were laid so that when they reached a river they did not line up with the road on the other bank in the rival ward, which made bridge construction difficult.⁴

When the city of Milwaukee was formally incorporated in 1846, it was divided into five wards—one in Juneautown, two in Kilbourntown, and two in Walker’s Point. Each ward was given its own elementary school, and the city’s Common Council appointed the school board with equal representation from each ward. This was the birth of MPS and the neighborhood school concept.⁵ Children walked to the school closest to their homes, as they did in other nineteenth-century cities.⁶

After a few experiments in the 1850s and early 1860s,⁷ the first permanent high school opened in 1867, when the state legislature authorized creation of the “Milwaukee

⁴ Gurda, 43–57, and Still, 35–38.

⁵ Rolland L. Callaway with Steven Baruch, *Formative Years, 1836–1915*, vol. 1 of *The Milwaukee Public Schools: A Chronological History, 1836–1986* (Thiensville, WI: Caritas Communications, 2008), CD-ROM, 34–37, and William M. Lamers, *Our Roots Grow Deep*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Board of School Directors, 1974), 4–5. Lamers wrote the most comprehensive history of MPS from 1836 to 1967. Though he lacks scholarly citations, Lamers had access to key personnel and primary sources necessary for writing the book. Lamers became an assistant superintendent in 1941 and worked with administrators whose tenure stretched back to before World War I, so he learned a lot of history from personal conversations. He also had access to their personal files, which unfortunately, have been lost by MPS. Lamers also used the published *Proceedings of the Board* and articles from the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, both of which are also used in this dissertation, and other published reports from the school board and the superintendent. See Lamers, 171–173, for his list of sources. Other sources of early MPS history include the sources cited in footnote 1 and Patrick Donnelly, *History of Milwaukee Public Schools* (Milwaukee: Evening Wisconsin Company, 1892); Jas. M. Pereles, *Historical Sketch—The Milwaukee School Board, 1845–1895* (Milwaukee, 1895); and D. H. Schueler, *Milwaukee Public Schools, Historical Sketch* (Milwaukee, 1904).

⁶ See chapter 3 of Howard P. Chudacoff and Judith E. Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000) for more on the concept of “walking cities.”

⁷ Callaway, 45.

High School” in Juneautown.⁸ The three-year high school was comprehensive in nature, as befit the time period (see chapter 2). Students were divided into two tracks: general and classical. The general curriculum included two years of mathematics; five trimesters of various sciences; four trimesters of history; three trimesters of philosophy; courses in bookkeeping, the U.S. Constitution, economics, rhetoric, grammar, and English literature; a year of German, and two additional years of German, French, or Latin. The classical curriculum included the same mathematics courses as the general curriculum, but the only other courses offered were Greek, Latin, and German. There was no attention to history, philosophy, or the natural and social sciences.⁹

Milwaukee High School became East Side High School after Kilbourntown and Walker’s Point were given their own high schools—South Side High School in 1893 and West Side High School in 1894, respectively (renamed East Division, South Division, and West Division after 1899). As the city’s population grew and more students stayed in school, it became necessary to build more high schools. North Division opened in 1907; Milwaukee School of Trades (later, Milwaukee Trade and Technical High School and now the Lynde and Harry Bradley Technology and Trade School), which had been an independent school, became part of MPS that same year; Washington High School began operation in 1912; Riverside, or the new East Division, was built in 1913 (with the old East Division becoming the now-defunct Lincoln High School); and Bay View High School opened in 1914. Several new junior high schools and elementary schools were

⁸ Milwaukee Board of School Directors, *Proceedings of the Board of School Directors* (Milwaukee: The Board of School Directors), August 23, 1867 (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*), and Lamers, 4–5.

⁹ *Proceedings*, November 1867.

built during this time as well.¹⁰

This school construction was necessitated by large numbers of immigrants and by compulsory school laws.¹¹ German immigrants had been flowing into Milwaukee's ports since 1848, and their children made up almost half the school-age population by 1851. Being poor, most settled in the less affluent Kilbourntown. The Irish were the second largest immigrant group and settled in the Third Ward, immediately south of the Menominee River.¹² They vacated the area in 1892 and moved north of downtown after a fire swept through their neighborhood. Italians, being the poorest of Milwaukee's European immigrants, moved into the Third Ward neighborhood next,¹³ and Poles immigrated to the south side in large numbers following the turn of the century.¹⁴ Czechs, Slovaks, Russians, Hungarians, and Jews also had their own enclaves.¹⁵

Milwaukee's small African American population lived in the area of the north side of the city bounded by Third Street, Sixth Street, Wisconsin Avenue (then called Grand Avenue), and Kilbourn Street (then called Cedar Street). This nine-square-block neighborhood in downtown Milwaukee on the west side of the river had been German

¹⁰ *Proceedings*, August 1, 1893; May 1, 1894; September 4, 1894; March 5 and July 8, 1907; August 28, 1911; May 17, 1912; and June 1914 and *Lamers*, 10–13, 41, 153–159, 164–165.

¹¹ James G. Cibulka and Frederick I. Olson, "The Organization and Politics of the Milwaukee Public School System, 1920–1986" in *Seeds of Crisis*, ed, John L. Rury and Frank A. Cassell, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 15–16, 19, 78.

¹² Still, 80–81, and Wells, 82, 143. See parts of Gurda, chapters 3–6, for more on immigration and settlement patterns.

¹³ Judith A. Simonsen, "The Third Ward: Symbol of Ethnic Identity," *Milwaukee History* 10, no. 2 (1987): 61–62; Still, 268; and Wells, 152.

¹⁴ Still, 267–270, and Wells, 151–152.

¹⁵ Still, 275–278, and Wells, 152–153.

until about 1900, when the Germans started moving north in search of better neighborhoods. Russian Jews and Greeks, being newer immigrant groups, then occupied the area until shortly before World War I, when they too began to move north. As relative newcomers to Milwaukee, African Americans logically moved into the neighborhood because it had low-cost housing. African Americans faced employment discrimination and were relegated to low-paying service sector jobs, which forced them to rent, rather than buy, their homes.¹⁶ The neighborhood would become the hub of the city's African American community, which spread out from there over the course of the twentieth century as more migrants settled in Milwaukee.

African Americans faced discrimination in places of public accommodation, such as theaters, hotels, and restaurants.¹⁷ As in other northern cities, Milwaukee's African Americans turned inward, in the tradition of Booker T. Washington, and developed their own black institutions, including churches, stores, and social clubs. But Milwaukee was different from other cities. As African Americans left the South in search of jobs at the beginning of the twentieth century, many of them settled in Chicago if they were skilled or semi-skilled laborers. African Americans without those skills sometimes continued on to Milwaukee.¹⁸ This settlement pattern meant that Milwaukee's African American population was very small until well after World War II. In fact, among the twenty-five

¹⁶ Joe William Trotter Jr., *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–45*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 24–25. See also Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans and the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963–2002* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), 12–14, and Phyllis M. Santacroce, “Rediscovering the Role of the State: Housing Policy and Practice in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1900–1970” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2009), 51–55.

¹⁷ Trotter, 25.

¹⁸ Trotter, 28–31. See p. 28 for comparisons to Chicago.

largest cities in the United States, Milwaukee had the third lowest percentage of African Americans as late as 1960.¹⁹ This settlement pattern also meant that Milwaukee's black middle class grew very slowly. It also relied on close association with the white business community for economic support, as the black community did not have the financial resources to sustain black-owned businesses. As the number of new migrants increased on the eve of World War I, some of Milwaukee's small black middle class looked unfavorably toward the migrants because the newcomers were of a lower economic class and could potentially lower the social status of the black middle class in the eyes of whites, upon whom the black middle class depended.²⁰

As the city began to fill, Progressive leaders, such as Socialist mayor Daniel Hoan, whose administration lasted from 1916 until 1930, and philanthropist Charles Whitnall, became concerned about what they called "congestion" in the city.²¹ Basically, they wanted residents to spread out, so they began a campaign to annex land and plan new communities with public parks and other services.²² The city grew from 25 square miles to 44 square miles from 1919 to 1932. It laid 296 miles of water lines at a cost of \$13 million and laid 393 miles of sewer lines at a cost of \$14 million.²³ Talk of metropolitan consolidation surfaced in the 1930s, when local governments looked to lower costs during the Great Depression. This could have meant one countywide school district,

¹⁹ John M. McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier: Planning and the Politics of Growth, 1910–1960* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 195.

²⁰ Trotter, 32–33.

²¹ McCarthy, ix, 4.

²² McCarthy, 45–55.

²³ McCarthy, 66.

which is common in southern states, but referenda were turned down in almost every municipality, which historian John McCarthy attributes to a growing sense of consciousness that the suburbs should be different and separate from Milwaukee.²⁴ Also, suburbs were able to provide school, water, and sewage services for themselves by the 1930s and were less likely to need the city.²⁵

The suburbs and newly annexed parts of Milwaukee were almost entirely white. Poverty continued to be a major impediment to African Americans' finding better housing, as Milwaukee's African Americans continued to struggle to find good-paying jobs in the 1920s and 1930s. And even if they could earn enough money to buy a home, Milwaukee real estate agents abided by a "gentleman's agreement" to refuse to sell property outside the central city to African Americans.²⁶ According to an article in the *Milwaukee Journal* in 1924, "Milwaukee will have a 'black belt' if the Real Estate Board can find ways and means to make it practicable."²⁷ Banks also promoted segregation by engaging in a practice called "redlining"—encircling poor/black neighborhoods in the color red and denying the residents within the red area mortgage loans. The federal level cooperated with the banks through the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, which did not guarantee mortgage loans to people who were in those redlined areas.²⁸ Restrictive

²⁴ McCarthy, 106–112.

²⁵ McCarthy, 68–71, 75–77.

²⁶ Santacrose, 138, and Trotter, 71.

²⁷ Quoted in Trotter, 71. See also McCarthy, 194–195.

²⁸ David L. Kirp, et al., *Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 7, 26–27, and Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 51–52. See also Carman, 119–122; Arnold R. Hirsch, *The Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in*

covenants, which were agreements that prevented land from ever being sold to African Americans, were also used to keep African Americans out of the suburbs.²⁹ One study by an African American attorney in the 1940s found that 90 percent of the plats filed with the county register of deeds after 1910 prohibited the sale of land to African Americans. Additionally, an ordinance was enacted in 1920 that zoned the entire southern half of Milwaukee's black district for commercial and light manufacturing, effectively blocking African American migration until World War II.³⁰

The war drew more African Americans north in search of jobs.³¹ African American migration continued after the war, and Milwaukee had the highest rate of African American population growth in any Midwestern city in the period 1950–1960,³² increasing 186.9 percent, compared to a 16.3 percent population increase overall.³³ The city also renewed annexation during that period under the leadership of Frank Zeidler, a Socialist and mayor from 1948 until 1960. Zeidler added the Town of Lake to

Chicago, 1940–1960, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; repr., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), especially chapters 11; and Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) for what are considered the three classic texts on the federal government's role in promoting segregation.

²⁹ Santacroce, 22, 231.

³⁰ McCarthy, 194, and Trotter, 71.

³¹ McCarthy, 195.

³² "Negro Population Shifts in Growth," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 13, 1965, 1:7. See also Carman, 68–69 and Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 53.

³³ Frances Beverstock and Robert P. Stuckert, eds., *Metropolitan Milwaukee Fact Book: 1970* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Urban Observatory, 1972), 46.

Milwaukee in 1953³⁴ and the Town of Granville in 1956.³⁵ He also annexed individual neighborhoods and houses in the Town of Greenfield until the rest of Greenfield incorporated as a city in 1957.³⁶ Zeidler, like Hoan before him, thought Milwaukeeans should spread out and believed that every man should be able to buy his own home. He thought those who could not afford homes should be able to live in one provided through a public housing program, including housing at the edge of the city.³⁷ But he could not win enough support of the common council or the state to construct public housing beyond the inner city, and he faced bitter opposition from suburbanites who feared African Americans might settle near their borders. Lack of good-paying and affordable housing were two impediments to black home ownership in the newly annexed parts of the city.³⁸ In fact, more than 98 percent of African Americans lived in the inner core in 1953.³⁹

Further expansion of the city was blocked by suburbanites who resented the encroachment of the city and the urban problems they feared the city could bring. They successfully lobbied the state of Wisconsin to change annexation laws to prevent Milwaukee's expansion in 1955.⁴⁰ They also passed zoning laws that required lots that

³⁴ McCarthy, 186–187.

³⁵ McCarthy, 191. The annexation was tied up in litigation until 1962.

³⁶ Gurda, 342.

³⁷ McCarthy, 129–131.

³⁸ McCarthy, 198–200. See also Carman 69–74, 162, and chapters 3 and 4 of Santacroce.

³⁹ McCarthy, 198.

⁴⁰ McCarthy, 197. The legislation is commonly referred to as the “Oak Creek law” after a semi-rural area that was incorporated as a city in 1955.

were so large that African Americans were priced out of the suburban housing market.⁴¹

As in the 1930s, the federal government continued to support racially biased lending policies in the 1950s and 1960s. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veteran's Administration (VA) granted almost all loans to people who wanted to build new single-family homes, instead of granting loans to multi-family units or to remodeled older homes. With most empty lots in the suburbs, the FHA and VA gave white middle-class people an incentive to leave the cities. The FHA tracked racial information and used it to redline African American neighborhoods, making it difficult for African Americans to get out of the inner city.⁴² In fact, according to the FHA's own records, there were only sixty-six African American families in the twenty-five suburban communities surrounding Milwaukee in 1967, and eight suburbs had no African American residents at all.⁴³ As former Milwaukee mayor John Norquist commented "[for] the FHA, creditworthiness was synonymous with whiteness."⁴⁴

James Groppi, a white Catholic priest, led Milwaukee's campaign to end housing discrimination. Groppi had traveled to Selma, Alabama, in 1965 to participate in the civil rights marches there. Groppi, who was Italian American, felt that his fellow Italians had

⁴¹ Carman, 167–169, 177–203, and McCarthy, 207–212. See also "Negro Population Shifts in Growth," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 13, 1965, 1:7; Rury, 11–14; and Trotter, 24–25.

⁴² Massey and Denton, 52–54. See also Carman, 161–165, 170–171; Harold M. Rose, "The Development of an Urban Subsystem: The Case of the Negro Ghetto," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 60.1 (1970): 1–4; and Trotter, 258–263. See Gurda, 358–365, for a broad perspective on Milwaukee and chapter 2 of Santacroce for the development of postwar public housing in Milwaukee. See chapter 1 of Dahlk, *Against the Wind* for a short synopsis of organizing efforts against segregated housing in Milwaukee.

⁴³ Frank A. Aukofer, *City with a Chance* (Milwaukee, Bruce Pub., 1968), 57.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Carman, 171.

received unequal treatment from Irish church authorities in the Milwaukee Archdiocese. He therefore identified with the mistreatment of African Americans and took up their cause when he returned to Milwaukee.⁴⁵ Groppi is most famously known for leading African American and liberal whites in protest marches across the Sixteenth Street Viaduct in 1967 as a means of demonstrating the need for an open housing ordinance in Milwaukee. Although the marchers remained peaceful, they were greeted by a crowd of five thousand angry whites when they reached Kosciuszko Park, some of whom held signs that said, “Polish Power” and “A Good Groppi is a Dead Groppi.” Others yelled, “Niggers go home!” “Go back to Africa,” and “Sieg Heil,” and some threw stones, bottles, garbage, and chunks of wood.⁴⁶ Obviously, a sizeable portion of white Milwaukee was not ready to integrate.

The segregated residence pattern led to a segregated school system, because students were assigned to schools closest to their homes. The school board and superintendent took no steps to intervene and relieve segregation. The state legislature revoked the Milwaukee Common Council’s power to appoint the school board in 1907 and made the board an elected body. Its fifteen members served six-year terms, with one-

⁴⁵ See chapter 4 of Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). See also Register of the James Groppi Papers, 1964–1978, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection EX and Milwaukee Tape 5, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee for biographical information on Groppi and his involvement in the NACCP Youth Council. See also Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 106–125; Gurda, 365–376; and Santacrose, especially 261–272, 302. See Frank A. Aukofer Papers, 1957–2000, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 16. Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, boxes 7–8, 16, for a collection of news articles written by Frank Aukofer, who covered Groppi for the *Milwaukee Journal*. The articles form the basis of Frank A. Aukofer, *City with a Chance* (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub., 1968). See chapter 3 of *Selma of the North* for information on school desegregation.

⁴⁶ Jones, 169–170.

third elected every two years on an at-large basis. The intent of the “reform” was to make the school board directly responsible to the people and take it out of ward politics, but African Americans could not muster enough votes to elect any more than one African American to the board.⁴⁷

When debating racial issues, the school board was split between eight conservatives and seven liberals throughout the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁸ These factions were not immutable. The factions varied or could be nonexistent depending on the issue. The school board dealt with frequently dealt with curriculum, appointment of administrators, the budget, school construction/repair, and legal matters. In some years, race is barely mentioned in the school board proceedings. Also, the terms “liberal” and “conservative” are used here in the traditional sense of the words, not the connotation prevalent in the early twenty-first century—liberals wanted change, while conservatives resisted change. Some of the liberals and conservatives could be considered moderates and occasionally voted with the other faction, and some switched sides as the context of the race and integration debate changed.

The school board was led by conservative president Lorraine Radtke from 1963 until 1965.⁴⁹ She prided herself on being “pure German [of] Prussian extraction” and said that all ethnic groups struggled when they first came to Milwaukee but were always able to overcome poverty. She claimed to see “paradoxes in the Negro thinking,” which

⁴⁷ Cibulka and Olson, 75–77.

⁴⁸ See appendix A, table 1.

⁴⁹ Lamers, 87. Radtke evidently had broad support, as she was elected president on the first ballot. See *Proceedings*, July 2, 1963.

she expressed by stating, “He says he hates the white man yet he wants to integrate with him. He wants to copy the white people, he wants the same standard of living, yet he says white people are all wrong.” She also demonstrated a paternalistic racism by saying African Americans should develop their own course in life:

I would like to see him excel in areas which have not been thoroughly developed by white people. I think that the Negro has a great deal to offer our culture in the fields of the arts—music, drama, painting, and sports. He should develop his skills to the utmost. He should be original in his approach to living. He should realize that he need not imitate the white man to fulfill his culture.⁵⁰

Steven Baruch worked in the MPS human relations office in the 1970s and described Radtke as “a conservative in the good sense of the word,” that she resisted change and wanted to give programs a chance to work. Radtke and the other conservatives believed the school board should not alter the neighborhood school system or do anything else that would change the status quo in Milwaukee.⁵¹ The seven liberal board members disagreed and said racial integration was a key to quality education. If school board meeting agendas are any indication, then the liberals were largely ignored.⁵² The board dealt mostly with school construction, budgetary matters, and approval of curriculum between 1963 and 1975. It also increased the amount of time it spent on student discipline by the 1970s, as fights and other disruptive behaviors increased and the

⁵⁰ Quoted in “Miss Radtke Assails Churches on Rights,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 1, 1964, 1:1,3. Couching race in terms of ethnicity was common among whites in the 1960s. See Stephen M. Leahy, “Polish American Reaction to Civil Rights in Milwaukee, 1963 to 1965,” *Polish American Studies* 63, no. 1 (2006): 35–56, and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) for a complete account of the psychological transition from ethnicity to “whiteness” among whites.

⁵¹ Steven Baruch, interview with author, Glendale, WI, July 9, 2010.

⁵² Doris Stacy, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 30, 2010, and Leon Todd, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 28, 2010.

teachers union gained strength and demanded action.⁵³

Radtke's most vocal opponent was attorney Lloyd Barbee. A native of Memphis, Tennessee, and graduate of the University of Wisconsin Law school, Barbee joined the NAACP at age twelve and remained active in it his entire life. He moved to Milwaukee in September 1962 and opened his own law firm, Barbee and Jacobson (known as Barbee and Goldberg after 1976), and quickly became involved in the school desegregation issue, partly because he experienced discrimination while in law school.⁵⁴ He began researching the extent of racial segregation in MPS upon his arrival to Milwaukee.⁵⁵

Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954) overturned *de jure* segregation—that is, segregation by law—in public schools, but *Brown* was silent on segregation based on residential pattern.⁵⁶ Barbee believed that the Milwaukee school

⁵³ Rolland L. Callaway with Steven Baruch, *Building Boom and the Winds of Change, 1946–1975*, vol. 3 of *The Milwaukee Public Schools: A Chronological History, 1836–1986* (Thiensville, WI: Caritas Communications, 2008), CD-ROM.

⁵⁴ Register of Lloyd A. Barbee Papers, 1933–1982, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 16 and Milwaukee Micro Collection 42, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as Barbee Papers). See also “At the Heart of Barbee’s Many Causes Was Education,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 1, 2004.

⁵⁵ See miscellaneous notes and documents in Barbee Papers, box 14, folder 12. Some notes and documents are dated as early as 1963.

⁵⁶ The best legal histories of school desegregation are Charles Elliot Crockett, “The Legal and Historical Development of American Magnet Schools and Student Admission Rights to Them” (PhD diss., Auburn University, 1994); William M. Gordon, “The Implementation of Desegregation Plans Since *Brown*,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 63, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 310–322; Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of *Brown vs. Board of Education* and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 1976, 1975); James T. Patterson, *Brown vs. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); “U.S. Constitution: Fourteenth Amendment,” in Find Law for Legal Professionals, <http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/constitution/amendment14/25.html> (accessed August 8, 2010); and J. Harvie Wilkinson III, *From *Brown* to *Bakke*: The Supreme Court and School Integration: 1954–1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). See also Lino A. Garcia, “From Prohibiting Segregation to Requiring Integration” in *School Desegregation: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Walter G. Stephan and Joe R. Feagin (New York: Plenum Press, 1980, 76–79); George R. Metcalf, *From Little Rock to Boston: The History of School Desegregation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); and Weinberg, 15–18.

board had violated *Brown* by deliberately promoting segregation. The board disagreed. It established a “freedom of choice plan” in 1964, which was also in use in several school districts throughout the United States. In theory, students were allowed to choose any school in the school district and were allowed to attend if space was available and the parents could take responsibility for transportation, which met the criteria for integration set in *Brown*. In practice, often times, only a few token African American students were admitted to a school.⁵⁷ Barbee appealed to the state superintendent of public instruction, who rejected his arguments.⁵⁸

Barbee and the NAACP tried to work with the school board to integrate the schools. The board responded by creating a seven-member Committee on Equality and Educational Opportunity in 1963 to study racial problems in MPS. Radtke appointed attorney Harold Story, another conservative, as chairman. Story had strong ties to the business community and had been vice president and general counsel to the Allis-Chalmers corporation when the United Auto Workers, its chief employee union, sued the company as part of a bitter labor dispute in which the union was accused of having ties to the Communist party.⁵⁹ Story said the school board should take a “color-blind” approach

⁵⁷ Crockett, 40–44; Joe R. Feagin, “School Desegregation: A Political-Economic Perspective” in Stephan and Feagin, 30–31; and Christine H. Rossell, *The Carrot or the Stick for School Desegregation Policy: Magnet Schools or Forced Busing* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 3–6.

⁵⁸ “Rothwell Answers NAACP,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 6, 1963, and Theodore V. Montgomery Jr., “A Case Study of Political, Social, and Economic Forces Which Affected the Planning of School Desegregation Milwaukee 1976 ” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1984), 138–141.

⁵⁹ See Stephen Meyer, “*Stalin over Wisconsin*”: *The Making and Unmaking of Militant Unionism, 1900–1950* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992). See Cibulka and Olson, 90–91, and Dougherty, 64–70, for the NAACP’s 1957 request to integrate MPS.

and that any kind of integration plan would be “in complete violation of the law.”⁶⁰

Radtke appointed three other conservatives to the committee—John Foley, Margaret Dinges, and Ed Krause—and three liberals—Cornelius Golightly (the only African American on the school board), Elisabeth Holmes, and John Pederson.⁶¹

Golightly, a professor of philosophy at UWM, presented evidence of the harmful effects of *de facto* segregation. He pointed to a 1961–62 study of the school system by the state department of public instruction that, among other things, compared Fulton Junior High and North Division Senior High (both of which were more than 90 percent black) to Audubon Junior High and Pulaski Senior High (both of which were more than 90 percent white) and found that the white schools had a wider array of courses and better programs for adult education. Golightly and other liberals believed this inequality was one of the prime causes of African American students’ failure to achieve. The conservative majority, however, disregarded most of what Golightly had to say and said improvements had been made to black schools since the state report had been published, but interestingly, they did not point out any specific examples of what those improvements were.⁶²

Most members of the school board did not get involved in the day-to-day operations of the schools, deferring to the superintendent instead. The “School Board

⁶⁰ Cibulka and Olson, 92; William John Dahlk, “The Black Educational Reform Movement in Milwaukee, 1963–1975” (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1990), 40; and “11 Demonstrators Seized for Blocking School Buses,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 24, 1965, 1:1,4.

⁶¹ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 63, and “School Board Study Won’t Halt NAACP,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 7, 1963, 2:1,12.

⁶² “School Group Named on ‘Equity’,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 7, 1963, 1:1,5.

Member's Creed" taken by board members in 1957 is indicative of this difference:

In working with the Superintendent of Schools and his Staff –

I will hold the Superintendent of Schools responsible for the administration of the schools.

I will give the Superintendent of Schools authority commensurate with his responsibility.

I will expect the schools to be administered by the best training technical and professional people it is possible to procure.

I will elect employees only on the recommendation of the Superintendent.

I will participate in Board legislation only after considering the recommendation of the Superintendent and only after he has furnished complete information supporting his recommendation.

I will expect the Superintendent of Schools to keep the Board of Education adequately informed at all times through both oral and written reports.

I will expect to spend more time in Board meetings on educational programs and procedures than on business detail.

I will give the Superintendent of Schools friendly counsel and advice.

I will refer all complaints to the proper administrative officer or insist that they be presented in writing to the Board as a whole.

I will present any personal criticisms of employees to the Superintendent.

I will provide adequate safeguards around the Superintendent and other personnel as they may perform their proper functions on a professional basis.⁶³

Superintendent Harold Vincent had not been hired to deal with racial issues or integration. Vincent has been described as a “brick and mortar superintendent”—he constructed schools to accommodate the city’s rapidly growing school-age population,⁶⁴ which had increased 50 percent between 1950 and 1960.⁶⁵ Vincent ignored racial issues, and concentrated on what might be deemed more traditional school-related issues in his

⁶³ *Proceedings*, March 4, 1957.

⁶⁴ Callaway, 64.

⁶⁵ Percentages derived from Beverstock and Stuckert, 50.

seventeen years in office. Teachers were fairly well paid, and Vincent and the school board kept taxes low. He introduced new curricula, and superintendents in other cities considered him one of the most successful. School board members, fellow administrators, and the *Milwaukee Journal* praised him for his professional and personal conservatism. He did not drink alcohol or smoke tobacco and refrained from using profanity.⁶⁶

Milwaukee media lauded Vincent for his achievements;⁶⁷ African Americans did not. For example, when Vincent was given the Home and Family award from the all-white Eagles Club in 1966,⁶⁸ the Milwaukee Urban League⁶⁹ and the *Milwaukee Star*, an African American newspaper, demanded that he not accept the award.⁷⁰ Lloyd Barbee and Fr. Groppi led approximately sixty-five people, half of whom were white, in a protest outside the Eagle's Club the night of presentation for about two hours.⁷¹ Anticipating trouble, Groppi formed the NACCP Commandos, a type of unarmed police force, to

⁶⁶ "Supt. Vincent Plans to Retire at End of Next School Year," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 3, 1966, 1:1,4. Indeed, Vincent appears to have been a conservative in the traditional sense of the word—he was someone who did not like change.

⁶⁷ Roger W. LeGrand, WITI-TV, July 29, 1969, and Carl Zimmerman, WITI-TV, September 15, 1966. Both television editorials found in Barbee Papers, box 75, folder 3.

⁶⁸ "Eagles Club Will Honor Supt. Vincent," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 25, 1966, 2:4.

⁶⁹ "Vincent's Award Called 'Slap in the Face' of Negroes," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 26, 1966: 1:16.

⁷⁰ "MUSIC, Youth Council Protest Vincent Award at Eagles," *Milwaukee Star*, October 22, 1966, 6.

⁷¹ "2 Rights Groups, 4 Klansmen March as Eagles Fete Vincent," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 14, 1966, 2:10, and "Rights Groups Join Protest at Eagles Club," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 14, 1966, 1:5.

protect the other demonstrators.⁷² Four members of the Ku Klux Klan, three in white cloaks and robes, showed up to distribute white supremacist literature and stage a counter protest.⁷³

Vincent and the school board's conservative majority denied that there was deliberate segregation in MPS. Barbee disagreed and filed suit against the school district on June 17, 1965, on behalf of the parents of thirty-two black students and nine white students in *Amos et al. vs. the Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee*.⁷⁴ The United States Supreme Court ruled three years later in *Green vs. County School Board of New Kent County* (1968) that school districts had to take steps to eliminate segregation when it was present,⁷⁵ which Barbee argued the board had failed to do. But Barbee went beyond *Green* and also argued that MPS deliberately promoted segregation in five ways: (1) the school board established school boundary lines that produced segregation; (2) it approved construction of predominantly black schools; (3) it allowed white students to transfer but restricted black pupils to segregated schools; (4) instead of taking a "color-blind" approach to staff assignment, it preferred black teachers and other black staff work

⁷² "Ceci Asks Foe to Halt Commandos," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 5, 1966, 3:15. See also chapter 5 of Jones.

⁷³ "2 Rights Groups, 4 Klansmen March as Eagles Fete Vincent," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 14, 1966, 2:10, and "Rights Groups Join Protest at Eagles Club," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 14, 1966, 1:5. The uninformed man had been accused of bombing the Milwaukee NAACP headquarters.

⁷⁴ Barbee Papers, register, ix, and Michael Stolee, "The Milwaukee Desegregation Case" in *Seeds of Crisis*, ed. John L. Rury and Frank A. Cassell (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 245. See Santocroce, 249–259, and the register of the Barbee Papers for information on Barbee's career in the state legislature prior to the *Amos* lawsuit. The case was *Armstrong vs. O'Connell* from 1976 until 1979.

⁷⁵ Crockett, 40–44; Joe R. Feagin, "School Desegregation: A Political-Economic Perspective" in Stephan and Feagin, 30–31; and Christine H. Rossell, *The Carrot or the Stick for School Desegregation Policy: Magnet Schools or Forced Busing* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 3–6.

in black schools and allowed white staff to transfer out of such schools; and (5) it failed to integrate students who were bused “intact” with white students at receiving schools.⁷⁶

As explained earlier in this chapter, MPS divided the city into several elementary school districts based on neighborhood needs.⁷⁷ Those schools fed into specific junior high schools, which in turn fed into specific senior high schools.⁷⁸ These boundaries were adjusted if a new school was built or an existing school became overcrowded, which was common in the 1950s and 1960s because of the tremendous growth in the central city population.⁷⁹ Arthur Kastner, head of the MPS Department of School Housing Research, claimed in a newspaper interview that race was never a factor in determining which boundaries would be moved or where facilities would be expanded. He said he did not care if the students were “colored, white, Mexican, or polkadot” but called integration “impossible.”⁸⁰ Barbee argued that if Kastner could use maps, surveys, census data, and a group of demographers to adjust boundaries and feeder patterns to minimize

⁷⁶ *Amos et al. vs. The Board of School Directors of Milwaukee et al.*, Civs. A. No. 65–C–173 (United States District Court, E.D. 1976), 780; Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 33–41; “Sherman School Site on Picket Line Again,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 6, 1964, 2:1; “Suit Here Charges School Segregation,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 18, 1965, 2:1; “Three Say Bias Study is Going to Slowly,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 1, 1964, 1:9; “Vincent Maps Plan for Equal Schooling” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 6, 1964, 1:1, 4; and “Vincent to Place Teachers by Needs—Not By Race,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 17, 1963, 1:2. Caroline Goddard, “Lloyd A. Barbee and the Fight for Desegregation in the Milwaukee Public School System” (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1985) is the best legal history of the case.

⁷⁷ Office of the Superintendent, “Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee 1943–1953–1963” (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, January 1964), 2 in Barbee Papers, box 114, folder 9.

⁷⁸ “An Analysis of the Impact of School District Boundary Changes on the Pattern of Racial Imbalance in Central Area Schools,” October 4, 1966, 18–20 in Barbee Papers, box 114, folder 10. The report does not list an author but appears to be written by Barbee or a member of his staff.

⁷⁹ Goddard, 54 and Office of the Superintendent, “Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee: 1943–1953–1963,” 2–5 in Barbee Papers, box 114, folder 9.

⁸⁰ “Integrate Schools? He’d Give Up,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 8, 1967, 1:8.

overcrowding for more than twenty years, then he could use the same tools to desegregate schools.⁸¹

Although Kastner publicly stated he did not take race into account, Barbee argued that memos from the Department of School Housing Research clearly show Kastner did. Kastner knew African American families had higher birth rates than white families, and he used that knowledge to predict where population growth would occur. One of his general rules was that once a school district was 30 percent black it was within the “tipping point” and was destined for a rapid growth in African American population and white out-migration. Kastner’s office made recommendations to the school board to adjust the district boundaries to reduce overcrowding or potential overcrowding in schools located in these high growth areas,⁸² which Barbee argued was a “policy of containment” that strived to keep African American students in the central city area when they easily could have been bused to less crowded white schools.⁸³

Although there were hundreds of boundary changes over the years, two examples illustrate Kastner’s office’s commitment to segregation. In the late 1950s the school board observed the percentage of black pupils in the Center Street School district had grown dramatically and was predicted to continue to grow. Its district contained twenty-

⁸¹ See “An Analysis of the Impact of School District Boundary Changes on the Pattern of Racial Imbalance in Central Area Schools,” October 4, 1966, 18–20 in Barbee Papers, box 114, folder 10, Barbee’s notes in folder 11, and “support evidence” in folder 12. See also Milwaukee Board of School Directors, *Proceedings of the Board of School Directors* (Milwaukee: The Board of School Directors), June 1 and 30, 1950, September 6, 1955, and January 10 and June 5, 1956 (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*).

⁸² “Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee, 1943–1953–1963,” January, 1964, in Barbee Papers, box 114, 9, and Goddard, 72.

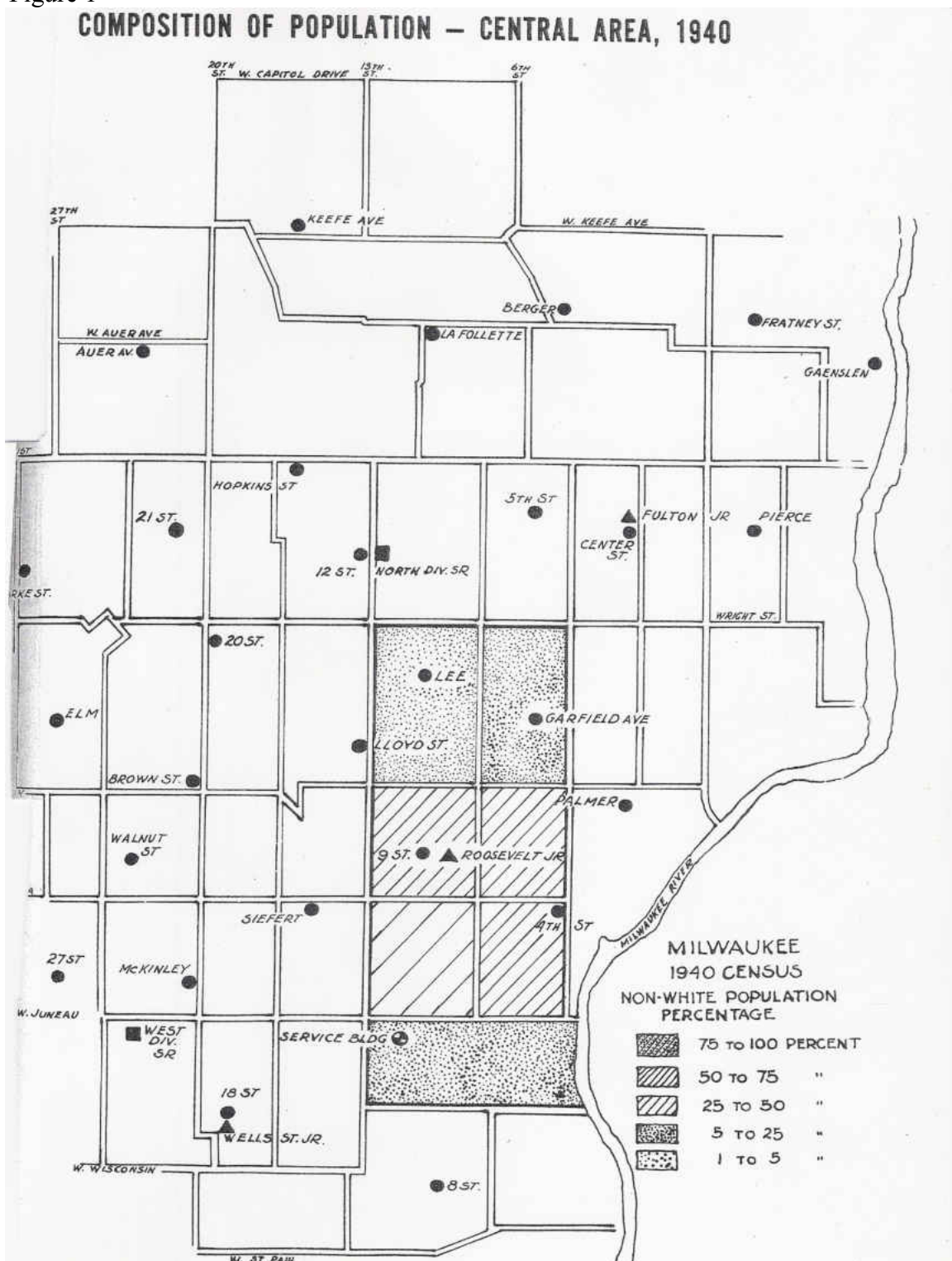
⁸³ “An Analysis of the Impact of School District Boundary Changes on the Pattern of Racial Imbalance in Central Area Schools,” 9.

seven city blocks, so the board detached the twelve eastern-most blocks, which had mostly white students, and added them to the neighboring Pierce district, which also was mostly white. Thus, the Center Street School district went from being racially balanced to being primarily black, while the Pierce district remained primarily white. By 1964, Center was only 5 percent white, while Pierce was still 87 percent white. The same thing happened to the LaFollette district when five of its thirty-five blocks were detached and given to the Keefe Avenue School district. However, the boundaries of the Fratney School district, a predominantly white district adjacent to the central city, were never changed to make room for African American students.⁸⁴

The second example centered on an explosive controversy surrounding Washington and Marshall High Schools in 1970. The root of the problem lay in overcrowding at Custer and Madison High Schools and at Peckham Junior High. The school board proposed Peckham's ninth grade be assigned to Washington Senior High, making it a four-year high school instead of a three-year school. This action would overcrowd Washington, so some of its students would have to be assigned to Marshall Junior-Senior High (grades seven to twelve), which also would pick up students from Custer and Madison. But this would overcrowd Marshall. Therefore, Marshall's seventh and eighth grades would have to be assigned to nearby junior highs, making Marshall a four-year senior high. Several elementary schools also would have to have their feeder

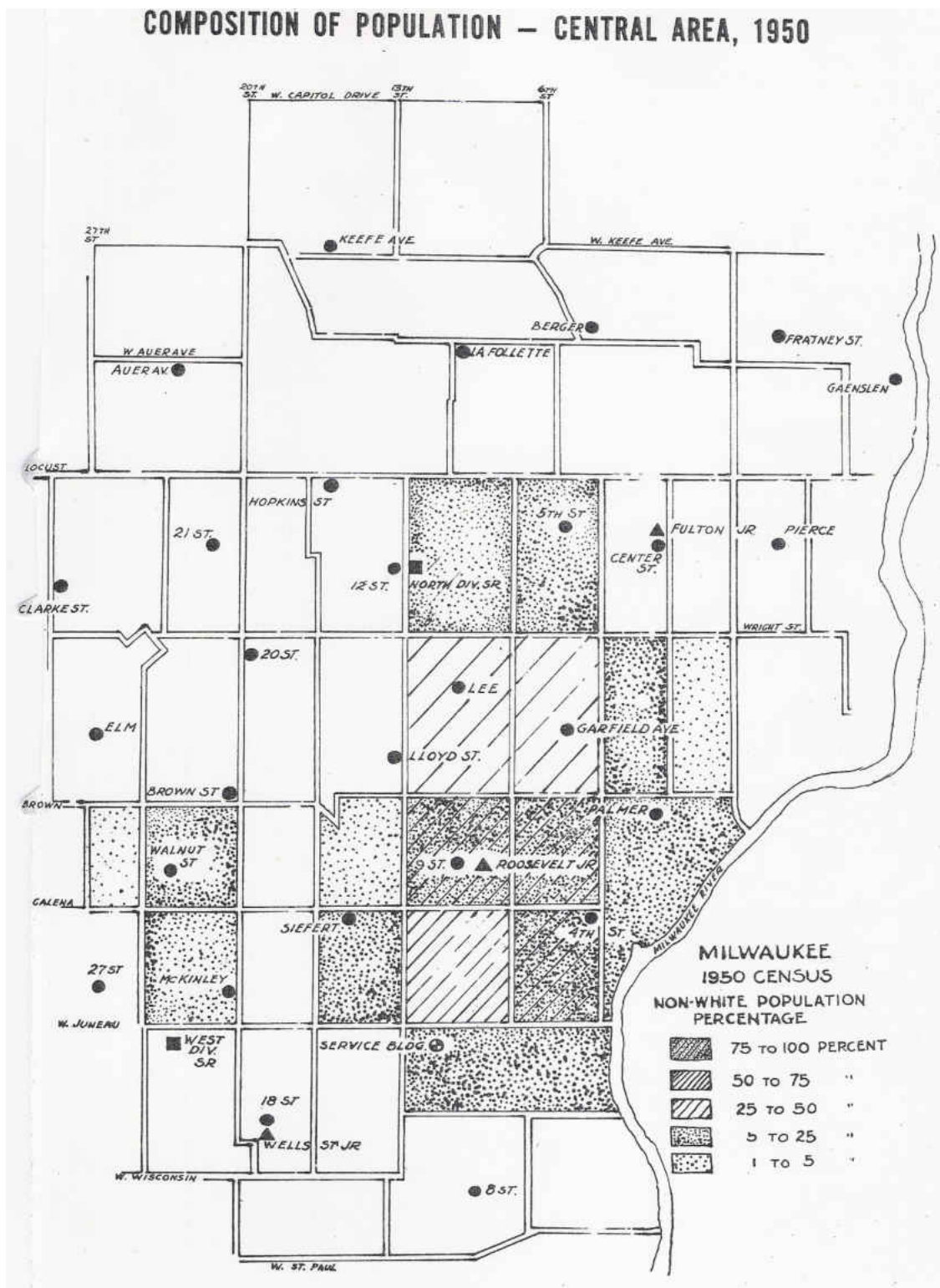
⁸⁴ "An Analysis of the Impact of School District Boundary Changes on the Pattern of Racial Imbalance in Central Area Schools," 11; Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee: 1943–1953–1963," 2–5; and Office of the Superintendent "Report on Visual Count of Pupils by Schools" in *Background Papers on Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, 1964), Barbee papers, box 158, folders 8 and 9. See figures 1–3 for a maps with the racial breakdown of Milwaukee's central city in 1940, 1950, and 1960. See figure 4–6 for maps of elementary school boundary changes affecting the central city, 1943–1963.

Figure 1



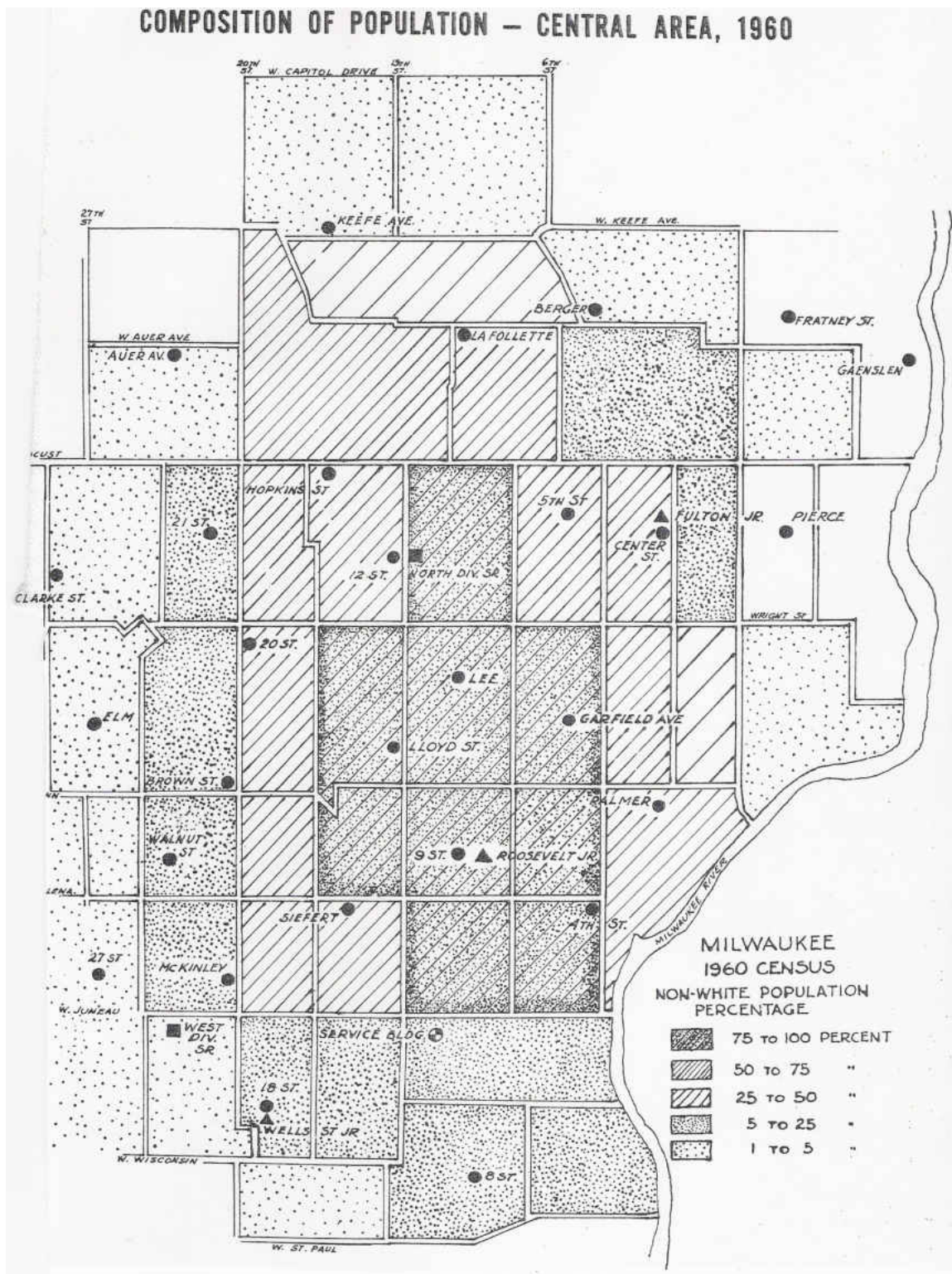
Source: Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee 1943-1953-1963" (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, January 1964).

Figure 2.



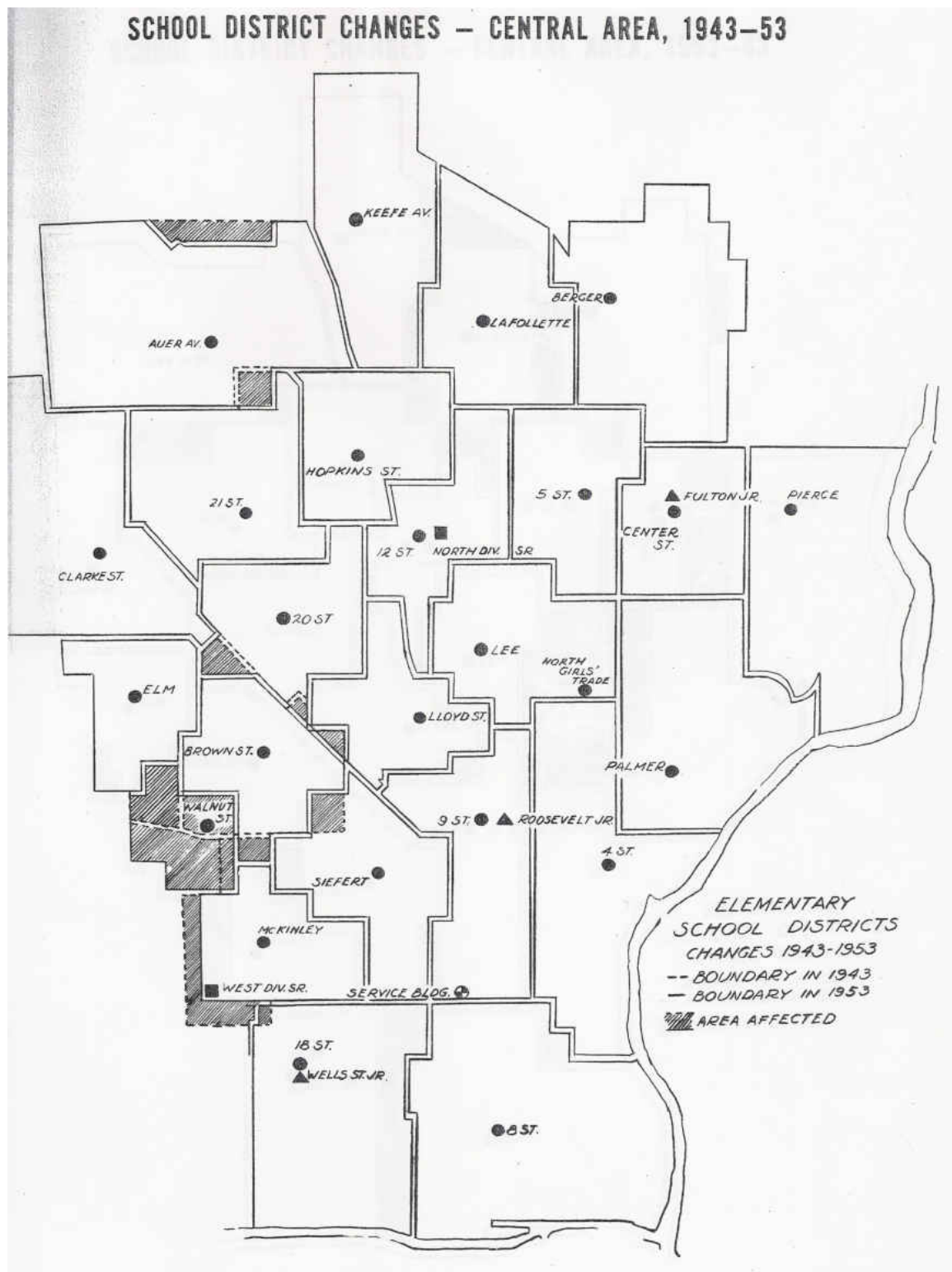
Source: Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee 1943-1953-1963" (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, January 1964).

Figure 3.



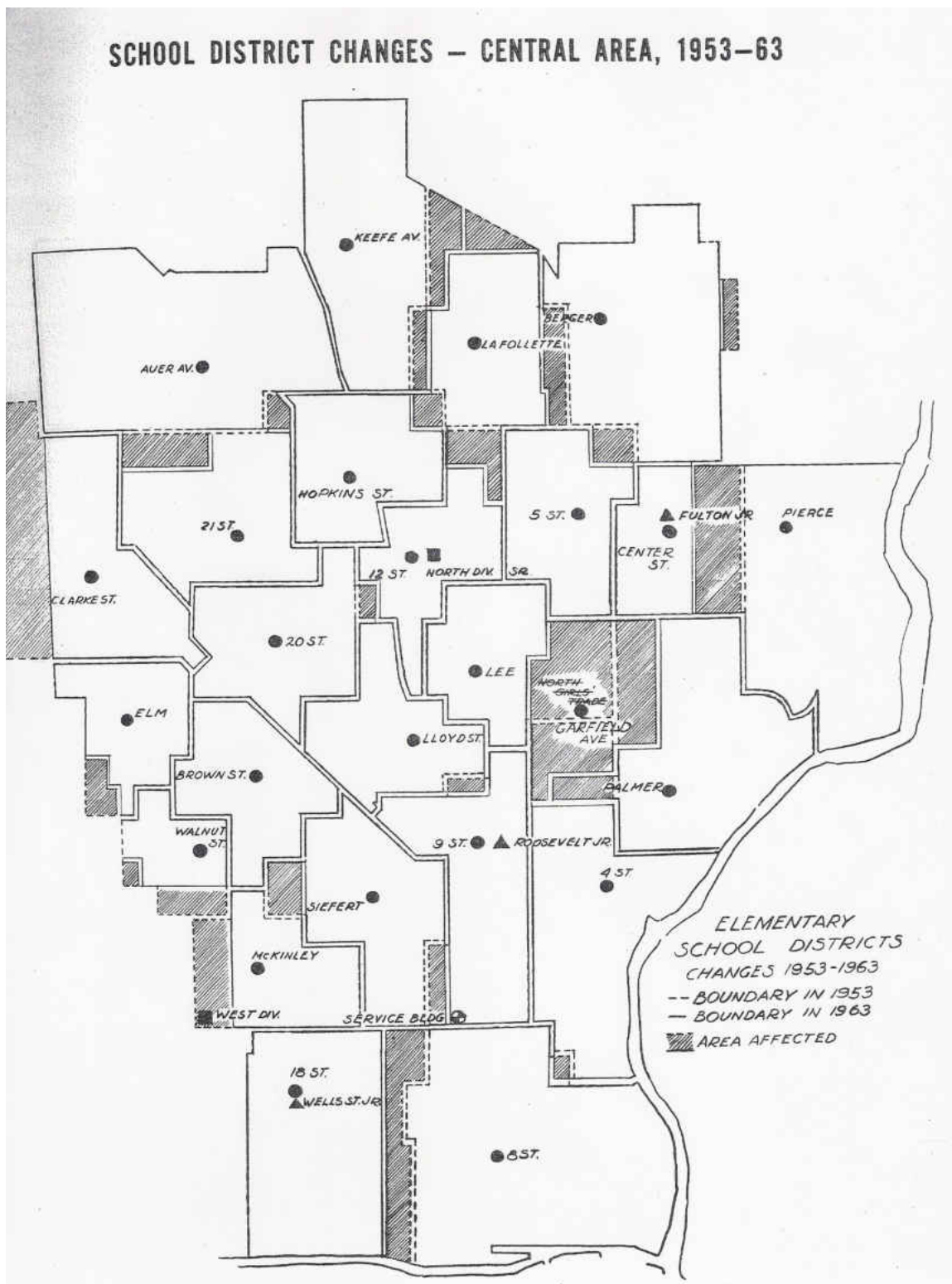
Source: Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee 1943-1953-1963" (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, January 1964).

Figure 4.



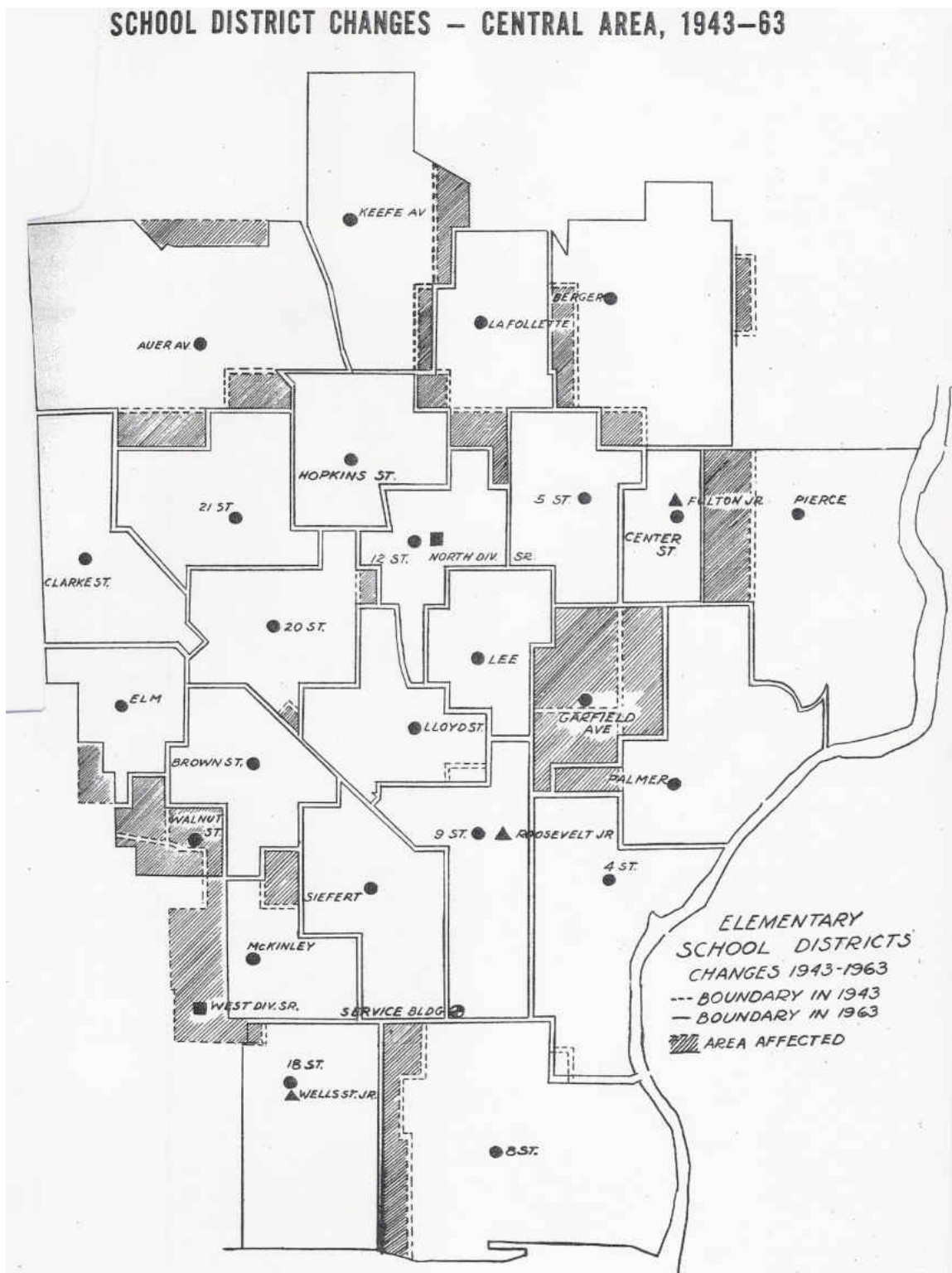
Source: Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee 1943–1953–1963" (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, January 1964).

Figure 5.



Source: Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee 1943-1953-1963" (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, January 1964).

Figure 6.



Source: Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee 1943-1953-1963" (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, January 1964).

plans changed to accommodate this, and in total, the boundaries of 40 school districts out of 156 would change.⁸⁵ The plan would create a racial imbalance. Washington was about 10 percent African American. Many white parents considered that ratio to be an ideal racial balance, but by moving Peckham's ninth grade to Washington and transferring a portion of Washington's school district (a section that was mostly white) to Marshall, the percentage of African American students at Washington would increase significantly and would probably inspire white flight, in the view of those parents. However, the school board claimed this plan was a sound education strategy because it maintained neighborhood schools and because many school systems across the country were switching from junior and senior high schools to middle schools and four-year high schools.⁸⁶

But simply adjusting these boundaries was not enough to meet the growing population of the city of Milwaukee. The school board predicted in 1947 that more schools would be needed in order to meet the needs of the baby boom. Its solution was to build new schools in newly populated areas of the city, which were populated by white families, many of which were headed by World War II veterans.⁸⁷ There were also a few

⁸⁵ David I. Bednarek, "Boundary Shift at Washington Termed Extension of Ghetto," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 14, 1970, 2:1,3 and David I. Bednarek, "Boundary Right: School Board Can't Win," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 28, 1970, 1:1,14. See Dougherty, 131–133 for more on the changing demographics of Washington High School. See figure 7 for a map of central city schools.

⁸⁶ David I. Bednarek, "Boundary Shift at Washington Termed Extension of Ghetto," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 14, 1970, 2:1,3 and David I. Bednarek, "Boundary Right: School Board Can't Win," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 28, 1970, 1:1,14. See William M. Alexander and Paul S. George, *The Exemplary Middle School* (New York: CBS College Publishing, 1981), 11–12, and chapter 12 of William Hayes, *The Progressive Education Movement: Is it Still a Factor in Today's Schools?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006) for more on the history of middle schools. MPS would convert completely to middle schools in 1978; see *Proceedings*, February 24, 1977.

⁸⁷ *Proceedings*, August 6, 1947; June 5, 1951; January 13, and September 1, 1953; and April 4, 1956.

“new” Garfield Avenue Elementary School.⁸⁸ Substandard classrooms (former storerooms or gymnasiums) were put into use in several other schools.⁸⁹ The selective building of schools was the subject of the second part of Barbee’s case.

Parkman Junior High School, Holmes Elementary, and MacDowell Elementary were three new schools that opened in the central city and were actually newly built, but in the case of MacDowell, there were problems with how the school was constructed.⁹⁰ It was three stories high and had fortress-like towers with a dark-colored exterior. Kindergarten classes were held in the basement on the opposite side of the building from the nurse’s office, which upset some parents who wanted the youngest children to have access to natural light and a nurse. Barbee compared McDowell to the new Louisa May Alcott school, which was on the south side and was just one story surrounded by a large lawn. The exterior was made of a soft red brick, and kindergarten classes were held in a separate wing that adjoined a grassy play area and was near the school nurse. In simple terms, the black students received the “bad” school, while the white students received the “good” school.⁹¹ Furthermore, as each one of these schools opened, the boundaries of adjacent districts in the central city shrank to make room for the new school, which further isolated African American students from the rest of the city. Barbee said the school board should send African American students to the southside schools on buses

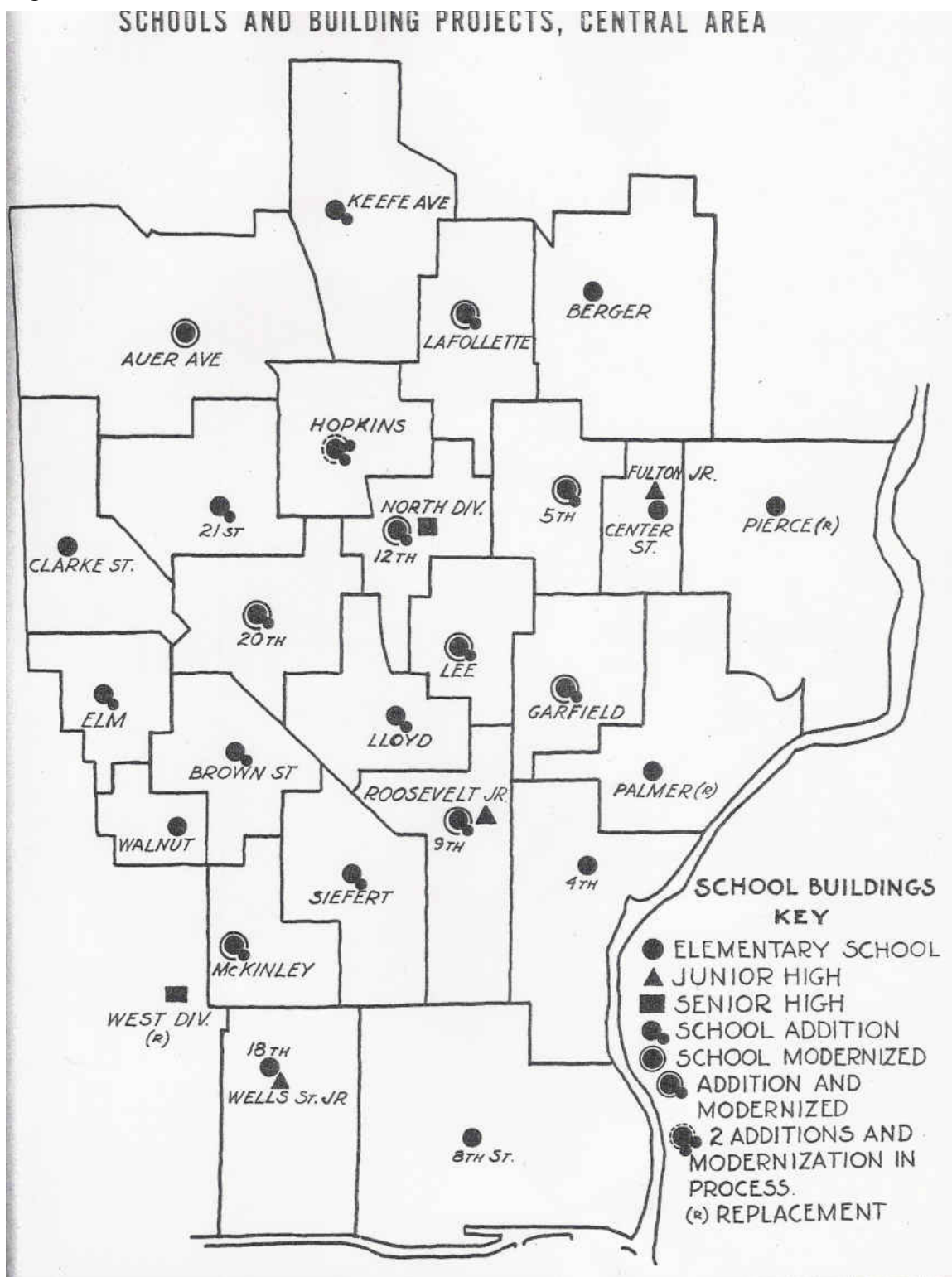
⁸⁸ “An Analysis of the Impact of School District Boundary Changes on the Pattern of Racial Imbalance in Central Area Schools” and “Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee: 1943–1953–1963,” 2–5. See figure 8 for a map.

⁸⁹ Goddard, 87.

⁹⁰ “New Black Jr. High Approved,” *Milwaukee Courier*, September 7, 1968, 1:2.

⁹¹ “Separate is Not Equal,” *Milwaukee Courier*, June 22, 1968, 1:1.

Figure 8



Source: Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee 1943-1953-1963" (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, January 1964).

instead of building more schools in black neighborhoods. Barbee did not suggest that the school board find volunteers for the buses, nor did he say that students should be bused involuntarily.⁹²

The board's third method of enforcing segregation was to selectively deny pupil transfers. The school board adopted a "free transfer" or "open transfer" policy in 1964 to try to avoid litigation from the NAACP and other civil rights groups.⁹³ The policy allowed students to transfer for any reason, provided parents paid the cost of transportation. This policy was supposed to provide families with a degree of choice, but Barbee presented evidence that it was not consistently enforced—African American students had to go out of their way to transfer out of a black school, while all white students had to do to get out of a black school was cite "fear" or "harassment" from African American students.⁹⁴ Also, because parents had to provide transportation, getting to a southside school would have been difficult for poor African American children.

The school board also discriminated in teacher assignment. The school board had resisted hiring African American teachers—it took until 1930 for it to get its first two,⁹⁵ and by the 1950–51 school year, the first year in which MPS kept data on the racial breakdown of its faculty, nine out of 1,749 MPS teachers were African American. Eight

⁹² Barbee Papers, box 114, folder 10, and Office of the Superintendent, "Report of School District Changes in Central Area of Milwaukee: 1943–1953–1963," 2–5.

⁹³ Goddard, 83–84.

⁹⁴ See transfer requests in Barbee Papers, box 109, folders 15–18, 22; box 110, folders 1–6; and box 155, folders 7–13.

⁹⁵ William J. Kritek and Delbert K. Clear, "Teachers and Principals in the Milwaukee Public Schools" in *Seeds of Crisis*, ed. John L. Rury and Frank A. Cassell, 148. See chapter 1 of Dougherty for detailed information on the struggle to force MPS to hire African American teachers. These were important middle-class job opportunities for African Americans.

of those nine were assigned to Fourth Street and Ninth Street Schools, which were black elementary schools. The remaining teacher taught at the only junior high school in Milwaukee where African American students were a majority. The number of African American teachers increased to 193 in the 1960–61 school year, but 64 percent of them were assigned to schools with at least 90 percent black enrollment. Another 19 percent were assigned to other black-majority schools, and the remaining 17 percent were in white or mixed schools. School officials readily admitted this was intended and desirable in their view for both teachers and students.⁹⁶

Teacher transfers were related to assignment. Teachers, like students, could request a change in schools for any reason.⁹⁷ “Environmental” reasons became an increasingly popular excuse among white teachers for getting out of black schools.⁹⁸ Others came right out and cited an inability to teach African American students.⁹⁹ Discipline problems and hostility from students were the most common reasons cited for transferring out of inner-city schools. Many teachers said they were physically and mentally exhausted and no longer saw themselves as teachers. Some teachers even reported being physically assaulted or having personal property damaged, including automobiles.¹⁰⁰ Most of the transfers went to white teachers, as most of them had more

⁹⁶ See assignment documentation in Barbee Papers, box 98, folders 1–3, and box 101, folder 8; “Nonwhite Pupils in More Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 3, 1965, 2:1,12; and Stolee, 237–238.

⁹⁷ Goddard, 84–85.

⁹⁸ See transfer requests in Barbee Papers, box 111, folder 26, box 112, folders 15–16, 18, and box 157, folders 1–13.

⁹⁹ See transfer requests in Barbee Papers, box 111, folder 2, box 112, folders 9–12, box 132, folder 25, and box 157, folders 1–13.

¹⁰⁰ See transfer requests in Barbee Papers, box 111, folder 26.

seniority than African American teachers.¹⁰¹ Thus teachers could not actually change schools at will.

Finally, “intact busing” was, in Barbee’s view, the most blatant tool used to maintain segregation. Intact busing was the process by which a class of African American students who were assigned to an overcrowded elementary school boarded a bus at their school with their teacher and were bused “intact” to a different school. Students were not allowed to integrate at the receiving school and were bused back to their neighborhood school at the end of the day and often times for lunch. The first instance of intact busing was in 1959.¹⁰² Because the most overcrowded schools were almost always in black neighborhoods and the receiving schools were usually in white neighborhoods, this practice preserved racial segregation. Superintendent Howard Vincent claimed it would not be fair to integrate students at the receiving school because intact busing was only temporary until space was available at the sending school, and it would be wrong to break up friendships when space became available again at the sending school. He also said the policy against integration made administration of the program easier because it could be done any time during the semester without disrupting the daily routine at the receiving school, as the students from the sending school still had their own teachers and were under the jurisdiction of their original principal. He said it was as if the bused students had never left their original school¹⁰³ and that it was a notable improvement over programs that reduced overcrowding in other districts, which relied on

¹⁰¹ Goddard, 84–85.

¹⁰² *Proceedings*, December 2, 1959.

¹⁰³ Stolee, 251.

part-time or staggered scheduling and disrupted normal school operations.¹⁰⁴

Barbee said Vincent was not telling the truth. He argued that students had been bused and integrated at the receiving school until 1957 because both the students and the receiving schools were white. Intact busing did not resume until the following school year, when there was a surge in the city's African American population.¹⁰⁵ From the 1958–59 school year through the 1973–74 school year, there were 509 classes of intact busing for all or part of a semester (counting semesters separately). Of these 509 cases, 214 (42 percent) involved movements between schools of about the same racial compositions; the remaining majority of 289 cases (57 percent) involved movement between schools whose racial compositions were substantially different. Most intact busing was done from black schools to white schools or from white schools to white schools. White students were rarely, if ever, bused to black schools. Additionally, the number of African American students who were bused intact was larger than the number of white students who were bused intact.¹⁰⁶

Vincent denied racial discrimination. According to him, African American students attended schools that were old and in the greatest need of modernization and so they were bused intact, while the white students who had been bused intact had no

¹⁰⁴ Office of the Superintendent, "Policies and Procedures Relating to Pupil Transportation," (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, 194), 1 in Barbee papers, box 122, folder 1. See Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 125–127, for double shifting in Chicago.

¹⁰⁵ "Vincent Denies Segregation," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 20, 1967, 1:1,5.

¹⁰⁶ See untitled charts, graphs, and tables in Barbee Papers, box 73, folders 43–44, and Goddard, 90.

schools in their areas.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the white students could never go to neighborhood schools, and hence, had to be integrated into the schools they were attending,¹⁰⁸ though evidence submitted at trial showed this was not always true.¹⁰⁹

Barbee surveyed teachers who participated in intact busing to see how it affected equality of educational opportunity, and he introduced the results as evidence at the trial. Teachers who had white classes reported either positive or mixed experiences with intact busing. In some schools, the bused students were allowed to mix with the other students and had full use of the facilities, including the cafeteria, playground, audio/visual equipment, reading center, and library. They also got to participate in school activities, and their parents were included in the receiving school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Teachers who had classes from black schools almost always reported negative results. Many teachers reported their students felt isolated and not fully accepted, even when they were allowed to participate in school activities. They also said students needed a stable environment if they were to learn and that intact busing created instability in their lives. Teachers of both races said students missed valuable class time because the bus ride took too long and reported their students did not feel as if they were a part of either their sending or receiving school. A few complained also their students were bused for more than the one semester recommended in the intact busing plan.¹¹⁰

Based on this evidence, Barbee argued that intact busing was psychologically

¹⁰⁷ "Vincent Denies Segregation," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 20, 1967, 1:1,5.

¹⁰⁸ Goddard, 89.

¹⁰⁹ "Vincent Denies Segregation," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 20, 1967, 1:1,5.

¹¹⁰ See interviews in Barbee Papers, box 117, folder 8.

damaging. It branded African American students as inferior, as they were physically separated from white students. Barbee also said intact busing was not temporary, as Vincent claimed. For example, two classes at Seifert school were bused intact while the building underwent expansion, but the African American population continued increasing so fast that when the project was completed, six classes still had to be bused. Barbee predicted this pattern would continue at Seifert and other schools for several more years. This practice was in violation of the school board policy that said if a group of students were to be bused for more than one year it was not temporary and that they should be permanently assigned to the white school.¹¹¹

Despite this evidence of segregation, there was not much of an organized resistance movement to oppose school segregation until Barbee arrived in Milwaukee. Unlike in other northern cities, Milwaukee's African Americans were relatively satisfied with their status, perhaps because they had only recently moved to Milwaukee. The Bisbing Business Research group conducted a poll for the *Milwaukee Journal* in October 1965. The results of the survey were published in a series of articles in February 1966 entitled "As Milwaukee Negroes See It." Four hundred African Americans and one hundred whites were polled. More than 80 percent of the African Americans said they liked living in Milwaukee, and two-thirds said they liked MPS.¹¹² When asked to name the most serious problems facing African Americans in Milwaukee, education ranked

¹¹¹ Goddard, 89, and "Mrs. Dinges Likely to Head School Board," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 26, 1967, 1:1,9.

¹¹² Charles E. Friederich, "Negroes Like It Here, but Seek Improvement," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 6, 1966, 1:1,24, and Charles E. Friederich, "Most Negroes Call Education Good Here," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 7, 1966, 1:1,13.

third (28.5 percent), behind jobs (42 percent) and housing (34 percent). A poll conducted by UWM in 1960 showed similar results—education was again ranked third (9 percent), with housing and jobs listed as the two biggest problems.¹¹³ This was followed five years later by another UWM study that found two-thirds of Milwaukee’s African American parents said the teachers of their children were as good as those elsewhere, 71.9 percent judged their inner-city school buildings to be well maintained, and 70.0 percent said schools were better now than when they were children.¹¹⁴

Thus, there was not widespread support for a legal challenge to segregation in the mid-1960s. This ambivalence was partially caused by divisions within Milwaukee’s African American leadership. There were actually three distinct groups of civil rights advocates in Milwaukee in the 1960s: a middle-aged, middle-class African American elite; a young group of integration activists; and an emerging group of Afro-centric activists. The middle-class elite had been around the longest and had lobbied MPS to hire African American teachers beginning in the 1930s. Primarily interested in financial success, the elite was conservative, had a fair number of entrepreneurs, sometimes lived in white neighborhoods, and did not want to harm their relations with the white businesses. The integrationists, led by Barbee and Groppi, wanted swift change. Finally, the Afro-centrists advocated for changes in curriculum and school governance, which in

¹¹³ Charles T. O’Reilly, et al., *The People of the Inner Core—North* (New York: LePlay Research, 1974), 150.

¹¹⁴ *Milwaukee Journal*, September 18, 1965.

some circles involved state-supported vouchers to attend private schools.¹¹⁵

Understanding the distinctions among these groups is one of the keys to understanding the reaction to Milwaukee's magnet plan, which will be analyzed in chapter 6. All three groups wanted African Americans to have quality educational opportunities, but they disagreed on how that could best be done.

Alderwoman Vel Phillips and future alderwoman and state representative Annette "Polly" Williams followed the older viewpoint. Like most other prominent African Americans, they sent their own children to private or parochial schools for some or all of their education.¹¹⁶ A UWM study showed that 53 percent of this black elite lived in middle-class neighborhoods, so even those who sent their children to public schools were sending them to white ones.¹¹⁷ Local notables such as Theodore Coggs, Grant Gordon, Clarence Parrish, Hercules Porter, and Ken Coulter fit this description.¹¹⁸ Also, some officials in the Milwaukee branch of the NAACP and some of Milwaukee's black church leaders were hesitant to challenge white leaders, who controlled business interests.¹¹⁹

But a younger group of African Americans who advocated integration instead of cooperation had begun to emerge in the early 1960s. These African Americans sought to

¹¹⁵ Jack Dougherty provides the best analysis of these three groups, organizing his book around the idea that there was "more than one struggle." Bill Dahlk acknowledged and used Dougherty's framework. See *Against the Wind*, 17–26, for an analysis of the black middle class, 26–28 for an analysis of low-income African Americans, and 28–30 for relations between the two groups. See also interviews in Gayle Schmitz-Zien, "The Genesis of and Motivations for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, 1985–1995" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2003).

¹¹⁶ Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 16, 85, 90.

¹¹⁷ Study Shows Negroes Want to Leave 'Core,'" *Milwaukee Journal*, April 24, 1963, 2:1.

¹¹⁸ Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 85.

¹¹⁹ Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 11, 91–92.

give children additional options of where to attend school. Calvin Sherard formed a local chapter of the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) in 1961. Within a year, NALC claimed to have one hundred members and began picketing Milwaukee businesses that were lax in hiring black clerks.¹²⁰ Ken Coulter, publisher of the *Milwaukee Star*, and Walter Jones, general manager of the *Star* and later editor of the *Milwaukee Courier*, also an African American newspaper, lent support by giving considerable coverage to school segregation and other civil rights issues.¹²¹

Under pressure from these and other community groups, Harold Story was forced to open hearings on segregation in the fall of 1963. Representatives of the NAACP, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Near Northside Non-Partisan Conference (NNNPC), requested at least fifteen minutes at a school board meeting to present a CORE report on problems with segregated education in Milwaukee.¹²² CORE's presentation was especially critical of intact busing and showed that it went on too long to be considered a temporary measure.¹²³ CORE also criticized the school board's failure to assign African American teachers to white schools, the assignment of inexperienced teachers to black schools, and discrimination in student transfers.¹²⁴ Finally, representatives from the

¹²⁰ "Negroes Picketing Deplored by Union," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 16, 1962, 2:1,10.

¹²¹ Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 16.

¹²² Richard McLeod to Harold Story, October 4 and 24, 1963, Congress of Racial Equality, Milwaukee Chapter, records, 1963–1964, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 27, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 1, folder 1.

¹²³ Richard McLeod, "Segregation in Milwaukee Public Schools" (Milwaukee Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, December 10, 1963), 3–5 in CORE records, box 1, folder 2.

¹²⁴ McLeod, "Segregation in Milwaukee Public Schools," 2–3.

NAACP, under the leadership of Barbee, also spoke at the meeting and threatened a school boycott unless plans were put in place by January 30, 1964, to integrate the schools.¹²⁵

That meeting was the beginning of the movement that swayed Milwaukee's African American community away from the older elite and toward the younger integrationists. It was followed by a meeting on January 21, which broke down quickly when Story refused to allow representatives from CORE and NNNPC to sit with Barbee. Barbee stormed out of the meeting with about twenty-five other people and sang "We Shall Overcome" in the lobby. He left the building after a few minutes of singing, and Story went ahead and presented evidence that there was no intentional segregation in MPS. He was arrogant enough to direct questions at Barbee's empty chair and began each question with "Mr. Barbee . . ." Barbee commented afterward that there was no point in staying for the meeting as, "It was all a show anyway since Story wanted to be the script writer, producer, and director."¹²⁶ He also again threatened to carry out the school boycott.¹²⁷ Story made feeble apologies to Barbee and CORE chairman Richard McLeod a few days later, but both men refused to compromise.¹²⁸

Barbee and his supporters launched a series of pickets at segregated schools that

¹²⁵ "NAACP Threatens Boycott," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 12, 1964, 1:1.

¹²⁶ Quoted in "NAACP Threatens Boycott," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 12, 1964, 1:1.

¹²⁷ "Rights Leader Walks Out of Meeting," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 22, 1964, 2:1,14, and "Rights Groups Walk Out," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 22, 1964, 2:1.

¹²⁸ "Story Explains Stand: Barbee Best Qualified," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 24, 1964, 2:7; Harold Story to Richard McLeod, January 30 and February 3, 1964; and Richard McLeod to the Board of School Directors, January 28 and February 4, 1964. All four letters are in CORE records, box 1, folder 1.

lasted about two weeks and drew support from some white Milwaukeeans.¹²⁹ Then, on March 1, Barbee and other members of the NAACP, CORE, and NNNPC joined with some Milwaukee parents and ministers who were concerned about racial segregation and formed the Milwaukee United School Integration Committee (MUSIC), of which Barbee was elected chairperson. Its purpose was to organize a grassroots movement against school segregation.¹³⁰ A rally was held the night of March 1 at St. Mark AME church. Barbee estimated that nine hundred people were in attendance, but the *Milwaukee Journal* put the number at approximately 350.¹³¹ Whatever the case, nearly everyone who spoke supported a boycott.¹³²

MUSIC demanded Story's committee be dissolved, and it organized two marches and a rally to drum up support for the proposed boycott.¹³³ The group researched the New York boycott,¹³⁴ chose a date of May 18, and laid plans to set up "freedom schools" for students to attend at churches and other sites, modeled after New York. If the school board would not give African American students a choice in where they attended school,

¹²⁹ "Community Action on the Issue of Intact Busing," 1–3 in Barbee Papers, box 73, folder 44; "Negro Teachers Sent to All-White Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 25, 1964, 1:3; and "Sherman School Site of Picket Line Again," February 5, 1964, 2:1.

¹³⁰ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 74; Dougherty 104–105; Montgomery, 149.

¹³¹ "School Boycott Backed at Rally," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 2, 1964, 2:7.

¹³² "School Boycott Backed at Rally," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 2, 1964, 2:7, and "School Boycott Group Invites Atty. Story," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 19, 1964, 2:2.

¹³³ "End Story Committee, Resolution Requests," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 26, 1964, 2:9.

¹³⁴ James Farmer to CORE contact list, CORE records, box 1, folder 1. See chapters 5 and 6 of Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) for information on the New York boycott. See Dionne Danks, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963–71* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3, 37–84, 80–87, and 117.

then African American parents would make school available.¹³⁵ The mainstream media opposed the boycott, calling it a violation of truancy laws.¹³⁶ Milwaukee labor unions, traditionally liberal but almost entirely white, could give only mixed support.¹³⁷

But Barbee did not yet have full support from the black community. Some African American ministers were reluctant to embrace Catholic members of MUSIC¹³⁸ and distrusted Barbee's atheism.¹³⁹ Historian William Dahlk has suggested black ministers were jealous of the power that Barbee and Groppi, who was white, exerted over the black community and were more concerned with preserving their power bases.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, many members of the black elite were anxious about MUSIC's confrontational tactics. Many of the elite were closely entwined with white-dominated businesses and public services and, as such, could not risk their privileged positions by becoming militant. Instead, they exhibited a leadership style that was conservative and quiet.¹⁴¹ One such individual was E'Allyne Perkins, an MPS teacher and president of the

¹³⁵ "Facts About the Freedom Day School Withdrawal, May 18, 1964," CORE records, box 1, folder 2.

¹³⁶ Bob Heiss, WTMJ-TV, February 25, 1964; Rod Synnes, WTMJ-TV, May 19, 1964; and Carl Zimmerman, WITI-TV, March 31, 1964 (all three editorials from Barbee Papers, box 195, folder 4); and "Wrong Target," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 2, 1964, 1:12.

¹³⁷ "The Case for Area Education," "Arguments Against 'De Facto,'" and "Former Nun Directs Freedom Schools," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 18, 1964, 1:1,4,8.

¹³⁸ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 84–85, and Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 84.

¹³⁹ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 93–95, and "Who is the Christian?" *Milwaukee Star*, February 5, 1966, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 94–97.

¹⁴¹ Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 16, 95–96. See also "City Relations Unit Opposed to Boycott," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 9, 1964, 1:1,10, and "Statement Issued" and "'Panel of 34' Will Support School Boycott," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 9, 1964, 1:10.

Milwaukee Council of Negro Women. According to newspaper accounts, rather than boycott, she urged African Americans to concentrate on solving black problems, such as blacks beating up whites at Wells Junior High, fights after high school football games, vandalism, juvenile delinquency, parental apathy,¹⁴² and excessive drinking and pool playing by black males. She also was very critical of emotional clergymen, whom she believed were unqualified to lead Milwaukee's civil rights movement.¹⁴³ James Dorsey, an attorney and active member of the NAACP, was also against the boycott, according to both black and mainstream newspapers. Being part of Milwaukee's older black elite, Dorsey decried the lack of "dignity" in Barbee's leadership style. He also criticized encouraging students to be truant and disrespectful toward school authorities, and he feared a white backlash.¹⁴⁴

Board president Lorraine Radtke, Committee on Educational Opportunity chairman Harold Story, and superintendent Harold Vincent refused to meet MUSIC's demands.¹⁴⁵ They thought of Barbee as something of a joke and actually welcomed a lawsuit, almost goading him into trying one.¹⁴⁶ Golightly tried to keep peace between the two sides, agreeing with most of MUSIC's points but preferring diplomatic work through

¹⁴² "Clergymen Urged to Support Boycott of Schools" and "Avoid School Boycott, Rights Leaders Urged," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 17, 1964, 1:13, 2:1, especially the latter article, and "School Gang Attacks 'Not a Race Problem'," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 20, 1963, 1:4.

¹⁴³ E'Allyne Perkins, "I Blame Us," *Milwaukee Star*, May 22, 1965, 18.

¹⁴⁴ "Censure Dorsey Resignation," *Milwaukee Star*, May 23, 1964, 1, 16; "Dorsey Answers Critics," *Milwaukee Star*, May 30, 1964; and "Views of a Negro Lawyer," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 29, 1964, 1:20.

¹⁴⁵ "School Board Study Won't Halt NAACP," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 7, 1963, 2:1,12, and "Only One Negro Plan Legal on Schools, Atty. Story Says," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 24, 1964, 2:1, 18.

¹⁴⁶ "Welcome Lawsuit, School Board Told," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 1, 1964, 1:1-2.

committees.¹⁴⁷ The role of peacemaker became an impossible task, however, after Radtke compiled and published a 247-page “bibliographical digest” of newspaper and magazine articles detailing problems in the African American community with the intention that it would show why integration would not be beneficial to Milwaukee,¹⁴⁸ a tactic liberal board member Elisabeth Holmes blasted as “racist,” “inflammatory,” “destructive and vicious,” and “preposterously one-sided.” Golightly, an associate professor of philosophy at UWM, said he was embarrassed as a scholar to have his name associated with the document, which he called “sheer gibberish.” He also said he could not imagine “any Negro seeing [the digest] and feeling good about it” and that it reinforced the negative feeling in the community that “nothing should be done.”¹⁴⁹ John E. Pederson, another liberal member of the school board, agreed with Holmes and Golightly, and Milwaukee Citizens for Equal Opportunity demanded Radtke’s resignation.¹⁵⁰ Radtke claimed she was doing a public service that would provide a “constructive” basis for committee deliberations. “I don’t want any glory on this,” she said. “That isn’t its purpose.”¹⁵¹ Corneff Taylor, executive secretary of the City Commission on Community Relations, said the digest “failed to include contributions from any of the widely known sociologists

¹⁴⁷ “School Board Study Won’t Halt NAACP,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 7, 1963, 2:1,12.

¹⁴⁸ “Negro Study Raises Ire of School Group,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 8, 1964, 2:1,12; “Value Seen in Rights Digest,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 11, 1964, 1:12; “Negro Digest Out, Stirs Flap,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 8, 1964, 2:1,9; and “Taylor Rips Digest,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 11, 1964. The bibliographic digest is in Lorraine Radtke Papers, 1947–1981, UWM Manuscript Collection 64, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as Radtke papers), box 1, folder 2.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in “Negro Digest Out, Stirs Flap,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 8, 1964, 2:1,9.

¹⁵⁰ “Rights Groups Asks Radtke Resignation,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 9, 1964, 1:6.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in “Negro Digest Out, Stirs Flap,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 8, 1964, 2:1,9.

in the nation” and it showed “some people have to be dragged along by progress.”¹⁵²

In a last ditch effort to save the situation, Mayor Henry Maier, known for his conservative positions on social issues, proposed arbitration through an independent panel. Barbee said he could work with such a panel but that the boycott would go on anyway. The school board, for its part, rejected Maier’s suggestion by a vote of nine to six,¹⁵³ and MUSIC went ahead with its boycott on May 18, 1964. Thirty freedom schools were opened in African American churches.¹⁵⁴ They offered a curriculum centered on black history and culture and functioned as normal schools for the most part. They had many typical classroom activities that regular schools would normally have, including reading, essay writing, attendance at lectures and films, small group discussion, and singing. Volunteers from the black community and a few whites served as teachers and principals and did everything one would normally expect of school officials. They even posted fire drill routes.¹⁵⁵ The volunteers included three ministers, two attorneys, a county supervisor, a social worker, and Marilyn Morheuser, a white woman who had been a teaching nun until 1963, whereupon she moved to Milwaukee, took up Barbee’s

¹⁵² Quoted in “Taylor Rips Digest,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 11, 1964.

¹⁵³ Laurie Van Dyke, “3 Act after Refusal by President,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 14, 1964, 2:1,8, and Laurie Van Dyke, “Won’t Postpone Boycott, But Panel Idea Accepted,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 9, 1964, 1:1,6. See Martin Gruberg, *A Case Study in U.S. Urban Leadership: The Incumbency of Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier* (Aldershot, Hants, England, and Brookfield, VT: Avebury, 1996); Gurda, 352–354; and Lee McMurrin, “Perspectives on Busing,” unpublished manuscript in author’s possession, 6–7, for more on Maier’s conservative policies.

¹⁵⁴ “11,500 Boycott Public Schools to Protest de Facto Segregation,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 18, 1964, 1:1,12.

¹⁵⁵ A “Program of Activities” for three grade level (primary, intermediate, and junior/senior high) and a “Teachers’ Guide for Freedom Schools” dated May 1964 are found in Helen I. Barnhill Papers, 1963–1965, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 4, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 1, folder 6.

crusade, and became his chief lieutenant and editor of the *Milwaukee Star*, a move that was considered very startling at the time. Because of her teaching background, she was chosen to write the freedom school curriculum.¹⁵⁶

According to MPS attendance figures, about 14,000 out of the district's 20,000 African American students were absent that day, about 11,500 more than usual. In other words, it would appear that 60 percent of all African American students participated in the boycott. In comparison, the day before the boycott, Perkins, Dorsey, and Judge Christ Seraphim sponsored an open meeting to foster opposition to the boycott, but it drew only forty-six people.¹⁵⁷

Whites Milwaukeeans still resisted change, and Harold Story and the other conservatives on the school board refused to budge. A group calling themselves "The Citizens" named Story "citizen of the month" in May 1964 and sent a petition with 732 signatures to the school board to "uphold and support the neighborhood school system as it now exists under law."¹⁵⁸ The neighborhood school system itself was still something that Story described as "sacred." Any proposals to change it died in committee. Students

¹⁵⁶"School Boycott Group Invites Atty. Story," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 19, 1964; "Boycott Team Includes Ex-Nun," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 18, 1964, 1:4; Marian McBride, "Former Nun Directs Freedom Schools," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 18, 1964; 1:4; and "Negro History Makers in Milwaukee," *Milwaukee Star*, February 26, 1966, 2.

¹⁵⁷ Ralph D. Olive, "Issue Is: Do School Leaders Refuse to Tackle Problem?," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 11, 1964, 1:1,13; "11,500 Boycott Public Schools to Protest de Facto Segregation," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 18, 1964, 1:1,12; "Schools Try to Go on in Usual Way" and Barbara Schmoll, "Equality Promoted at Freedom Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 18, 1964, 2:1,11; "Barbee: Boycott Data False; Vincent: Figures Accurate," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 19, 1964, 1:1, 11.

¹⁵⁸ *Proceedings*, May 5, 1964.

would not be allowed to choose their own schools.¹⁵⁹ Directors Golightly, Pederson, and Holmes, now referring to themselves as “the minority,” complained that the four-person majority on the Committee on Equality and Educational Opportunity deliberately blocked any proposals to desegregate the schools, allegations the majority of course denied.¹⁶⁰ This division reflected a similar fracture in the full school board, which frequently voted eight to seven on racial issues.¹⁶¹

The local mainstream media encouraged the NAACP to cooperate with the Story committee¹⁶² and advocated self-improvement as the only way for minorities to solve their problems.¹⁶³ Carl Zimmerman, director of news and public affairs for WITI-TV Channel 6, called the NAACP’s complaints about segregation “unjustified” and urged it “to put [its] energies to more productive use.” He also said:

The school board policy—and [Channel 6 believes] it’s a logical one—has always been to send the youngsters to the school closest to their home. If the area is predominantly Negro, of course there will be mostly Negro pupils in attendance. By the same token, if it’s a Puerto Rican neighborhood, the schools will have Puerto Rican children. If it’s an Italian neighborhood, most of the youngsters attending schools there will be of Italian descent. It’s a matter of geography! The youngsters go to the school nearest their home.¹⁶⁴

But criticism from the media was not very important to Barbee. The purpose of

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in “Story Committee OK’s Easing Transfer Rules,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 22, 1964, 2:1. See also *Proceedings*, May 15, 1964, and December 2, 1965.

¹⁶⁰ *Proceedings*, June 2, 1964.

¹⁶¹ See *Proceedings*, June 1, 1965.

¹⁶² Bob Heiss, WTMJ-TV, August 12, 1963, Barbee Papers, box 195, folder 4.

¹⁶³ Carl Zimmerman, WITI-TV, September 15, 1966, in Barbee Papers, box 75, folder 3.

¹⁶⁴ Barbee Papers, box 195, folder 4 (July 17, 1963).

the boycott, in his view, was not to change whites' minds, but to galvanize Milwaukee's black community, the way it had been throughout the South and in some other northern cities. With a school board election a year away, MUSIC started to mobilize candidates. Five seats, including Story's, were at stake. When MUSIC-backed candidates claimed integration would improve academic success for African Americans, Story countered with a claim that lack of achievement was caused by ineffective parenting skills.¹⁶⁵

Milan Potter, a Story ally and candidate for the school board, argued involuntary desegregation would result in "white flight." He proposed a program to encourage parent involvement instead, hoping that would improve the quality of education in black schools. He also advocated stricter discipline policies so teachers would have better control over their classrooms.¹⁶⁶

An informal poll conducted by the *Milwaukee Sentinel* shortly before the election showed that most voters supported neighborhood schools.¹⁶⁷ Potter came in first place in the general election. John F. Foley and Story (second and third place, respectively) also qualified, as did Frederick Mett and Walter Gerken, both of whom were endorsed by MUSIC.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the spring elections in 1965 were something of a mixed bag—only two of the five MUSIC candidates were elected.

Following the election, the board approved \$1 million for compensatory education

¹⁶⁵ "Candidates for School Board Give Views," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 29, 1965; 1:14.

¹⁶⁶ "School Board Race Takes Long Ballot," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 5, 1965, 2:1,2, and Joe Botsford, "No Policy Shift Foreseen in School Board Election," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 2, 1965, 2:1,14.

¹⁶⁷ Laurie Van Dyke, "32 Candidates Reply to School Race Quiz," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 2, 1965, 2:1,9.

¹⁶⁸ "Gerken, 4 Incumbents to Sit on School Board," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 7, 1965, 1:1,15.

programs for African American students, which included a low pupil-teacher ratio, tutoring, reading centers, full-time prekindergarten teachers, welfare and psychological counseling, and special orientation programs, on a nine to four vote.¹⁶⁹ The board majority cited the neighborhood school system, the mandate they believed they now had from the voters, their lack of faith in Barbee and MUSIC, support from state superintendent Rothwell, and the United States Supreme Court's decision in a Gary, Indiana, case that deliberate school segregation had not been adequately proved.¹⁷⁰ That July, when Radtke stepped down as president, the board elected attorney John F. Foley to fill her position. Foley promised to continue all of Radtke's policies, including the neighborhood school system with the open transfer option, which allowed students to attend schools outside of their neighborhood, if there was room available at the school and if the parents could provide transportation. Foley also appointed Radtke to take his place on the Story committee.¹⁷¹ The *Milwaukee Star* condemned the new president as a continuation of dictatorship and paternalistic racism.¹⁷²

MUSIC's protests continued and intensified. Barbee led sit-ins at school board meetings.¹⁷³ CORE did the same at Superintendent Vincent's office¹⁷⁴ and picketed

¹⁶⁹ "Schools Spend Million on Poor, Foley Says," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 7, 1965, 2:1.

¹⁷⁰ Ralph D. Olive, "Issue Is: Do School Leaders Refuse to Tackle Problem?," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 11, 1964, 1:1,13.

¹⁷¹ "School Board Picks Foley on 3rd Vote," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 7, 1965, 2:1,10.

¹⁷² "More of the Same," *Milwaukee Star*, July 10, 1965, 4. Foley was reelected in 1966. He defeated the pro-desegregation Elisabeth Holmes, eight to seven confirming that the board was split on racial questions. See *Proceedings*, July 5, 1966.

¹⁷³ "Barbee Threatens School Boycott," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 4, 1965, 2:1.

¹⁷⁴ "Sit-In Staged at Vincent's Office," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 6, 1965, 2:1.

Story's home.¹⁷⁵ At about the same time, Barbee started a protest at the MacDowell school site, charging the school would be almost entirely black if construction was completed.¹⁷⁶ On May 24, Barbee and ten other demonstrators were arrested for forming a human chain around an "intact" bus that was supposed to take students from Brown Street School to a white school.¹⁷⁷ This action led to several more demonstrations and dozens of arrests before the end of the school year.¹⁷⁸

The *Milwaukee Journal* published a major study in September 1965 called "Reading, Writing, and Race" that covered the battle over desegregation. The newspaper gave some attention to problems in black schools, such as the high dropout rate and the alleged psychological damage caused by intact busing, but it offered few solutions that MUSIC would support. All in all, the *Journal* study stood by the neighborhood school system. The school officials and board members the *Journal* interviewed cited several factors other than segregation as causes of low achievement among African American students, including economic problems, lack of strong family values, poor educational history, and few parents with an education. Interviewees also cited the new compensatory education programs and open transfer policy as evidence that the school board was doing

¹⁷⁵ "Rights Group May Hike Activities" and "CORE Members Picket Story," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 22, 1965, 2:8.

¹⁷⁶ "Construction of School in Negro Area Approved," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 8, 1965, 1:28.

¹⁷⁷ "11 Demonstrators Seized for Blocking School Buses," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 24, 1965, 1:1,4, and "Civil Rights Workers Halt Bus, 11 Seized," *Chicago Tribune*, May 25, 1965, A:2.

¹⁷⁸ Barbee Papers, box 73, folder 44; "11 Demonstrators Seized for Blocking School Buses," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 24, 1965, 1:1,4; "7 Chained in Front of Bus Arrested," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 28, 1965, 1:1,11; and "Rights Group Drops Plan to Disrupt Circus Parade," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 6, 1965, 2:7.

everything it could to help African American students succeed.¹⁷⁹ White parents filed petitions in support of neighborhood schools after the survey results were published. One petition had 1,573 signatures.¹⁸⁰

Shortly after the *Journal* study was published, Barbee announced a week-long school boycott to begin October 18. It unfolded almost exactly as the first one had. MUSIC went door-to-door and held grassroots-level meetings and rallies to get support. Churches volunteered space for freedom schools.¹⁸¹ The peaceful nature of the protests attracted whites and Catholics, including black Catholics.¹⁸² Father Groppi, nineteen other priests, thirty-five nuns, and four Catholic parishes volunteered to aid the boycott, despite contrary orders from Auxiliary Bishop Roman Atkielski, the top Catholic official in the absence of Archbishop William Cousins.¹⁸³

The second boycott, however, was not as successful as the first. Only 7,300 students stayed out of class, as opposed to 11,500 before. Forty-nine guidance counselors

¹⁷⁹ Charles E. Freidrich, "Reading, Writing, and Race," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 1965.

¹⁸⁰ *Proceedings*, November 2 and December 7, 1965.

¹⁸¹ Charles E. Freidrich, "Reading, Writing, and Race," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 16, 1965; *Milwaukee Journal*, September 16, 1965; letter to the citizens of Milwaukee, in Milwaukee United School Integration Committee Records, 1964–1966, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 5, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 1, folder 1.

¹⁸² Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 58; "Barbee Leads Picketing at Palmer School," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 1, 1965, 1:26; "School Defends Bus Policy," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 1, 1965, 2:2; "Women at School Bus Seized," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 3, 1965, 2:1; "Law Proves Rather Disorderly in Civil Rights Case," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 5, 1965, 1:7; "CORE Calls 2 Week Halt to Protesting," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 8, 1965, 1:4; "5 Sit-Ins Arrested in Schools Office," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 29, 1965, 1:1,7; "Picketing on School Bus Fails," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 3, 1965, 1:9; and Walter Jones, "Support MUSIC Protests," *Milwaukee Star*, June 12, 1965, 1, 4.

¹⁸³ "4 Parishes to Aid Boycott, Despite Orders by Bishop," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 17, 1965, 1:1.

were dubbed temporary truant officers and were sent to the freedom schools to seize students.¹⁸⁴ Some got into the schools, but others were physically barred from entering. By the second day of the boycott, the number of participating students was down to 4,300. On the same day, Atkielski gave Groppi and the other priests and nuns a direct order to desist, invoking their vow of obedience, which compelled them to comply.¹⁸⁵ A third boycott was attempted in March 1966, this time focused solely on North Division High School. Participation in this boycott was even lower than before, and a wide difference in North's absentee rate and attendance at the freedom school suggested that many absent students were simply using the boycott as an excuse to take the day off.¹⁸⁶

The third group of African Americans activists emerged at this time. They were part of the growing national trend of "black power," and became active in April 1967, as part of Groppi's Youth Council, which distributed leaflets at North Division, King, Riverside, and Lincoln High Schools that urged students to turn in their textbooks because they did not adequately reflect African history and culture.¹⁸⁷ Black power advocates also formed the United Community Action Group (UCAG) in 1967 on a platform of cooperation with MPS but ended up advocating for self determination, after getting frustrated with MPS's slowness to change.¹⁸⁸ In their view, African Americans

¹⁸⁴ "Extra 7,300 Students Out Officials Say," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 18, 1965, 1:1,12.

¹⁸⁵ "School Boycott Goes On," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 19, 1965, 1:1-2.

¹⁸⁶ "North High Boycott Doubles Absences," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 28, 1966, 2:1,8.

¹⁸⁷ "Textbook Turn-In Called For," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 29, 1967, 1:5. See Dougherty, especially chapters 6 and 7, for more information on the Afrocentric movement in MPS. Pages 142–148 provide useful information on Beason, North Division, and Afrocentrism.

¹⁸⁸ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 143–144.

needed to take charge of their own course in life. Integration was fine, but if that was not going to happen, then it was better to give African American families another choice, which was community control over schools.

Robert Harris and Jake Beason, both teachers at North Division, were two such advocates. Harris was head football coach, a physical education teacher, and a member of Groppi's parish, and Beason was a newly hired social studies teacher who advocated black pride and Pan-Africanism, rejected white leadership, even if it was duly elected, and took students on field trips to Islamic sites in Chicago. According to interviews, both were able to make strong connections with the students at North.¹⁸⁹ Then, in February 1968, students at Rufus King staged a walkout to demand black history be taught.¹⁹⁰ About a week later, about eight hundred students walked out of North Division.¹⁹¹ The NACCP Commandos lent their support as well.¹⁹² These protests marked a significant departure from the MUSIC boycotts, because they were organized by students, not adults, which paralleled a national trend of youth involvement in civil rights. Similar walkouts had occurred in Chicago, for example, in the same year as the Milwaukee walkouts.¹⁹³

Black power advocates continued to stage demonstrations at various schools

¹⁸⁹ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 155–164, and Dahlk, “Black Educational Reform,” 125–133.

¹⁹⁰ “King Students Stage Walk Out [sic]; Demand Negro History,” *Milwaukee Courier*, February 3, 1968, 1:1. This was a popular topic in the *Milwaukee Courier*, and many other articles can be found on the subject.

¹⁹¹ Ray McBride, “Your Letter from Home,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 10, 1968, The Green Sheet: 1.

¹⁹² “Groups Invited to Rally for Negro History,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 26, 1968, 1:5.

¹⁹³ Danna, 71–88, and Louis R. Mercer, “‘In Order to Form a More Complete Society:’ Black Students’ Efforts Towards Educational Decolonization in Chicago and Milwaukee, 1968” (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2012).

during the remainder of the decade. For example, students at Fulton Junior High staged a boycott of the school lunch program in December 1967 to protest the absence of African American cooks. According to Fulton's principal, all but two or three of the school's 1,400 students opted to bring lunches from home rather than buy food.¹⁹⁴ A similar boycott was successfully conducted at Wells Junior High in March 1968.¹⁹⁵ The following month, students at Wells protested when the school failed to hold a memorial service for Martin Luther King, who had recently been assassinated.¹⁹⁶ In May, parents petitioned the school board to remove the principal at Ninth Street Elementary for lack of sensitivity to African American students, parents, and culture.¹⁹⁷ In October, some African American students at West Division staged a walkout because their principal refused to allow them to start an African American club. Ironically, his decision was based on the fact that the club would not be integrated. At about the same time, some African American students at West Division refused to take a standardized test because, they claimed, it did not relate to them.¹⁹⁸

These protests, like Groppi's open housing protests that inspired them, achieved

¹⁹⁴ "Parents Vow to Empty Fulton Jr. High School if Demands Aren't Met," *Milwaukee Courier*, December 23, 1967, 1:1,3; "Lunch Protest to Continue at Fulton School," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 15, 1967, 2:1-2; and "Fulton School Faces Student Boycott," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 20, 1967, 2:1.

¹⁹⁵ "Wells Hit by Food and Table Dumping as Students Revolt for Black Books, Cooks," *Milwaukee Courier*, March 2, 1968, 1:1, and "Wells St. School," *Milwaukee Star*, March 2, 1968, 5.

¹⁹⁶ "No King Memorial; Students React," *Milwaukee Courier*, April 13, 1968, 1:1.

¹⁹⁷ "Group Charges Students Bribed to Frame Ninth Street Principal," *Milwaukee Courier*, May 11, 1968, 1:1.

¹⁹⁸ "Black Students Walk Out of West Division High," *Milwaukee Courier*, October 5, 1968 1:1.

some success. Steps were taken to promote cultural awareness.¹⁹⁹ For example, MPS introduced a ninety-two-page booklet written by district officials called “The Negro in American Life” in November 1967 to serve as a supplement to junior and senior high school history courses.²⁰⁰ A year later, Jake Beason was allowed to teach African American History at North,²⁰¹ and a similar class began at Wells.²⁰² Fulton’s administration made an effort to recruit African American cooks,²⁰³ and several new African American principals were appointed throughout MPS.²⁰⁴

One setback was when Beason was transferred from North Division to Lincoln High School in August 1969 for what were deemed disruptive activities, including advocating black power. He clashed with principal Walter Klaseser at Lincoln High School and was removed from MPS altogether after only one year. Reasons cited for his termination were failure to follow scope and sequence, excessive lecturing, and failure to control a study hall.²⁰⁵

An organization of African American parents and community members formed the Alliance for Better Education to get Beason reinstated and Klaeser fired. Following

¹⁹⁹ *Proceedings*, January 31, 1967.

²⁰⁰ Gerry Hinkley, “City Schools Get History of US Negro,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 2, 1967, 1:5. A copy is available in Radtke Papers, box 2, folder 15.

²⁰¹ “North Seniors Get African History,” *Milwaukee Courier*, October 5, 1968, 1:1–2.

²⁰² Mary Spletter, “Heritage Course a Difficult Sounding Board,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 25, 1969, 3:1.

²⁰³ “Fulton School Faces Student Boycott,” *Milwaukee Journal*, December 20, 1967, 2:1.

²⁰⁴ “OOO Eyes Election,” *Milwaukee Courier*, December 23, 1972, 1:3

²⁰⁵ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 169; Dahlk, “Black Educational Reform,” 134–135; and “School Boycott Planned,” *Milwaukee Courier*, August 29, 1970, 1:1,8.

the black power model, they also called for community control of schools, a black school board, and another communitywide boycott.²⁰⁶ The boycott never materialized, but Beason was reinstated in 1971 and assigned to Parkman Junior High. Later, Beason would be reassigned to North Division again, only to be removed in 1977 and assigned to substitute teaching. His health deteriorating, he was eventually confined to a wheelchair because of a wound incurred two decades earlier during the Korean War.²⁰⁷

Thus, lack of unity among African Americans, who were divided into those who wanted to cooperate with the school board, those who were led by Lloyd Barbee and wanted integration, and those who emphasized curriculum reform and the development of African American identity. This lack of unity, combined with the tradition of neighborhood schools and a school board that was resistant to change, allowed the board to continue to operate segregated schools into the 1970s. Fear of a white backlash also prevented integration, which is why, when integration did come, the school administration developed voluntary plan that relied on magnets schools to end the era of no choice.

²⁰⁶ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 170–171, and Dahlk, “Black Educational Reform,” 136–137.

²⁰⁷ Dahlk, “Black Educational Reform,” 137–138.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ERA OF NO CHOICE:

PLANNING FOR MILWAUKEE'S MAGNET SCHOOLS, 1967–1976

As Milwaukee searched for a way to improve the quality of education for African American students, a new curriculum fad—magnet schools—was sweeping the country. Magnet schools specialize in particular fields of academics—some might specialize in fine arts, while others might focus on math and science, technology, or business skills. Students choose their schools, instead of simply attending the school closest to their homes, and the schools are supposed to “attract” students from all parts of the school district. Actually, the idea that specialized schools should be available for students who wanted a vocational or college-preparatory curriculum not available in a comprehensive school had been around for a long time (see chapter 2). But magnet schools began to move beyond their original academic purpose in the early 1970s and into the venue of racial integration by attracting white students to schools in the parts of the city in which African Americans lived. Many African Americans looked forward to the possibility of their children attending integrated schools, and whites liked the idea that magnet schools were voluntary. Tacoma, Buffalo, Houston, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Boston were some of the best documented urban districts to adopt magnet programs, and Milwaukee learned from their experiences. Integration supporters spent a lot of time planning and involved a wide variety of people in order to cultivate community support for a voluntary plan that offered a wide variety of choices to students. However, they were only marginally successful in cultivating that support from the school board and the white community.

The circumstances surrounding magnet schools differed from place to place. In a few cases, such as Tacoma, school boards voluntarily developed magnet plans, but in most cases they were the result of court order. Some districts, such as Buffalo and Houston, sought broad community support for racial integration and magnet schools and developed plans that were generally well received. Other districts, such as Cincinnati, did not solicit much community input on integration, and white migration resulted. Pittsburgh converted most of its schools to magnet status, while Chicago had only one magnet high school. Boston represents an extreme example in which there was very little community involvement and violent confrontations between African Americans and whites.¹

Tacoma, Washington, claims to be the origin point of magnet schools.² The population of Tacoma was 147,979 in 1960, approximately 95 percent of which was white. In 1963, the first year in which the district compiled student enrollment by race, just less than 9 percent of the students were not white, but by 1969 that figure was more than 13 percent. Like most school districts in the North, Tacoma had a system of neighborhood schools that resulted in *de facto* segregation. Consequently, Stanley Elementary was 63 percent black in the early 1960s and McCarver Junior High was 84

¹ The sources used for the next few pages provide explanations for how and why integration occurred in their respective school districts. School boards made decisions based on a number of factors, including pressure from state and local government, churches, unions, professional organizations, and business organizations. See Michael Locke, *Power and Politics in the School System: A Guidebook* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

² Charles B. McMillan, a national expert on magnet schools, said Minneapolis was the first district to use magnet schools, in 1972. See Charles B. McMillan, *Magnet Schools: An Approach to Voluntary Desegregation* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1980), 9, but documentation from Tacoma shows it was using magnet schools in 1970.

percent, even though the overall percentage of minorities was small in the district.³

The school board appointed a seven-person study committee at the urging of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1964. The committee, which included two African Americans, recommended a program of compensatory education, such as tutoring and special curricula that might better meet students' needs at the majority African American schools. It did not, however, endorse desegregation until 1968. By that point, Tacoma's African American community had become much more vocal about change. According to then-superintendent Alex Sergienko, an extensive recruitment effort for magnet schools began in the summer. Counselors visited homes of white parents to explain what was going to happen—McCarver Junior High was going to become the first magnet school and would have the best teachers in the district and the most popular principal. Sergienko recruited students from affluent parts of Tacoma and suburban districts, and that fall, McCarver reopened with a minority enrollment of less than 64 percent. By 1970, African Americans made up less than half the school, and there was a waiting list for white children. According to Sergienko, "After 36 years, I'm still struck by what we were able to get done. It is wonderful to think that good things can be accomplished in this world."⁴

Desegregation went well in Tacoma, but Buffalo was more difficult. Like

³ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *School Desegregation in Tacoma, Washington: A Staff Report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights* (Washington, DC: The Commission on Civil Rights, 1979), 1–4.

⁴ Alex Sergienko, "How a Small City in the Pacific Northwest Invented Magnet Schools," *Education Next* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 49.

Milwaukee, Buffalo was segregated by residential pattern.⁵ Elementary school attendance zones were set up on a neighborhood basis. They in turn fed into specific high schools. New schools were constructed as overcrowding occurred at existing ones, and they were almost always segregated. School attendance area lines were manipulated to further isolate students.⁶ The NAACP mounted a legal challenge against the Buffalo school board in 1962, and community groups, such as Build Unity, Integrity, Leadership, and Dignity (BUILD), formed to take direct action such as protests and sit-ins. This was met by a “law and order” platform from white elected officials in city government and on the school board, which resisted racial integration.⁷

The court case began in 1972 and ended in 1976. The judge found *de jure* segregation present. The school board was ordered to develop an integration plan. It recruited influential citizens from a variety of ethnic groups and worked with concerned parents to develop a plan that both the court and white parents could accept. The school board implemented a three-phase desegregation plan. In the first phase, which began in 1976, some white schools and some black schools were closed and their students bused elsewhere to create racial balance in some schools. Feeder patterns were also adjusted to aid desegregation. In the second phase, which began in 1977, magnet schools were created. Finally, in the third phase, which began in 1980, white students in pre-kindergarten through grade two would be bused to black schools to create integrated

⁵ Steven J. L. Taylor, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo: The Influence of Local Leaders* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 61.

⁶ Taylor, 56–58.

⁷ Taylor, 96–98.

classes. After grade two, the racially integrated classes would be bused to white neighborhoods until they finished eighth grade, after which each student would choose a magnet high school.⁸ White elected officials reversed their opposition to busing when they recognized that integration was inevitable.⁹ Local media aided the program by promoting magnet schools on the radio and running positive or neutral articles in newspapers. Thus, intensive community involvement helped win acceptance of magnet schools.¹⁰

Desegregation in Houston was similar to desegregation in Buffalo. The city began its school desegregation in 1970 when directed to by a court order. The school board's original plan paired twenty-two schools, generally one in a white neighborhood and one in a black neighborhood. All students would attend one school in one of the pairs for a few years and would then attend the other school for a few years more. For example, a school in a white neighborhood might be designated kindergarten to grade three, and a school in black neighborhood might be designated fourth to sixth grades. All the students in the pair—African American and white—would go to the white school through third grade and would then go to the black school afterward. Buses were used to transport students when necessary. Parents of white students panicked and moved to the suburbs. The total white enrollment in the twenty-two paired schools declined from 1,783 in

⁸ Taylor, 94–96.

⁹ Taylor, 107–109, 116.

¹⁰ Taylor, 126, 130.

August 1970 to 539 in November 1974.¹¹

Houston Superintendent Billy Reagan asked the school board to appoint a task force of school and community representatives to come up with a new plan. The task force held meetings throughout the city, visited other cities, and analyzed survey data. The task force recommended a twenty-six-part plan that called for curriculum changes, optional bilingual and year-round programs, an average class size of fifteen in elementary schools, and magnet schools. A sixteen-person committee was appointed to develop the magnet plan. Its membership consisted of central office staff, assistant superintendents, and building administrators. Teachers, parents, and community leaders were not included. The city implemented thirty-four magnet programs at thirty-one campuses in September 1975, the most prominent of which was the High School for the Visual and Performing Arts. Eleven more programs were added the following year. Programs emphasized foreign languages, ecology and outdoor education, music, science and petrochemicals, aviation, engineering, literature, art, and remedial course work. More than seven million dollars was budgeted to implement the program between 1975 and 1977, and the school district's internal census data showed an improvement in diversity of the magnet schools.¹²

Other districts, such as Cincinnati, experienced more resistance to integration.

¹¹ John Brandstetter and Charles R. Foster, "Quality Integrated Education in Houston's Magnet Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 57, no. 8 (April 1976): 502–506. See also Pamela J. Sampson; Forward [sic] by Miriam G. Palay and Lois Quinn, *Options, School Desegregation* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Urban Observatory, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1976), 26–27.

¹² Connie Campbell and John Brandstetter, "The Magnet School Plan in Houston," in *The Future of Big-City Schools: Desegregation Policies and Magnet Alternatives*, ed. Daniel U. Levine and Robert J. Havinghurst (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing, 1977), 124–137.

The NAACP sued the Cincinnati Board of Education in 1963 on behalf of Tina Deal, an African American student who wanted to attend a white school. Litigation lasted until 1969. During that time, it became clear to many white parents that desegregation would occur, whether they wanted it or not. As a result, white neighborhoods tried seceding from the Cincinnati district and joining suburban districts, which the school board steadfastly refused to allow.¹³

Cincinnati municipal officials wanted to keep white families in the city. They represented a middle-class economic base and had children who were academically successful. But with so much white opposition to integration, there would have to be a powerful incentive for these parents to remain in the city rather than move to the suburbs. Magnet schools were that incentive. Fourteen different programs were developed at thirty locations in Cincinnati. Implementation occurred during the 1975–76 school year.¹⁴ The Cincinnati district organized college preparatory schools, trade schools, and other schools with innovative options such as ecology, zoology, and horticulture. It set up a math and science high school and brought in scientists and mathematicians for special lectures and demonstrations. It also implemented extensive bilingual and language immersion programs at the elementary level. Some schools used the Montessori method, and others experimented with multi-age classrooms.¹⁵ All these plans sounded very good, and they

¹³ Virginia K. Griffin, “Desegregation in Cincinnati: The Legal Background,” in Levine and Robert J. Havinghurst, 87–88.

¹⁴ Brandstetter and Foster, 503.

¹⁵ Griffin, 96–100. See also Sampson, 27–28. Magnet schools were called “alternative” in Cincinnati in the 1970s and should not be confused with “at-risk” programs, the modern connotation of “alternative schools.” See chapter 10 of Hayes for a biographical sketch of progressive theorist Maria Montessori, an explanation of her teaching methods, and how she differed from John Dewey.

received favorable reviews from African American parents, but most white parents still objected to integration, and an exodus to the suburbs began.¹⁶ Some experts recommended metropolitan integration—Cincinnati was one of twenty-three school districts in Hamilton County. But suburban districts did not agree to countywide busing, and the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Milliken vs. Bradley* (1974) that suburban districts could not be ordered by a court to integrate with urban districts unless they had deliberately contributed to segregation.¹⁷

Pittsburgh did not want to be another Cincinnati, so it based its plan on the successes of Houston and similar school districts. Superintendent Jerry Olson assembled a four-man team of experts from all over the nation in 1977, including Dr. Billy Reagan, the superintendent of the Houston school district, and Lee McMurrin, both passionate advocates of magnet schools. The Pittsburgh school board held public meetings and distributed surveys. Parents responded favorably to the magnet idea, and the school board approved a plan 8–0, with one member absent. The school board brought in consultants from nearby universities to help develop curriculum and formed a citizens’ advisory committee. These people made recommendations on program type and locations, and the school board and court approved their recommendation in 1979.¹⁸

The Pittsburgh plan called for a three-year phase-in. In the first year, nineteen

¹⁶ Joseph L. Felix and James N. Jacobs, “Issues in Implementing and Evaluating Alternative Programs in Cincinnati,” in Levine and Havinghurst, 105–115.

¹⁷ Duane Holm, “The Metropolitan Context for Reducing Racial Isolation” in Levine and Havinghurst, 116–123. See Joyce A. Baugh, *The Detroit School Busing Case: Milliken v. Bradley and the Controversy Over Desegregation* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011) for the best history of *Milliken v. Bradley*.

¹⁸ Marcella DeMarco, “Magnet Programs in the Pittsburgh Schools: Development to Implementation, 1977 through 1982” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1983), 82–102.

magnet schools would be established at the elementary level, including eleven schools that would have the then-revolutionary full-day kindergarten, four that would receive bilingual programs (French, German, Italian, and Spanish), two that would be set aside for gifted and talented students, and three that would have “open” classrooms, an educational phenomenon popular in the 1970s in which students could choose to study whatever they wished with a teacher acting as facilitator to individuals or small groups of students. The plan also designated three magnet middle schools, one of which was an arts school for grades four to eight. The other two had gifted programs for grades six to eight. Ten high schools would become magnet schools, with specializations in computer science, ROTC, college-preparatory, math and science, health careers, law and government service, journalism and publishing, engineering and architecture, business and management, and creative and performing arts. Dozens of other programs would be added in 1980 and 1981. Some would be full-fledged magnet schools, while others would remain neighborhood schools with specialized programs.¹⁹ Outside experts and internal reviewers evaluated the success of the magnet program in 1981 and made recommendations for adjustments to program locations, staffing, and feeder patterns from 1982 to 1984.²⁰

Tacoma, Buffalo, Houston, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh are examples of the typical districtwide model used to implement a magnet school plan. Chicago’s plan, on the other hand, was completely different. Originally, a plan to pair and cluster schools had been

¹⁹ DeMarco, 208–215. See chapter 11 of Hayes for a summary of gifted and talented education.

²⁰ DeMarco, 103–106.

introduced in 1965, but it was quickly withdrawn in the face of voracious white protest.²¹ It took until the mid-1970s to formulate a new plan, which would have opened several magnet high schools. The plan should have been more acceptable to the white community than pairing and clustering, but lack of funding, among other reasons, meant that only one of the planned schools—Whitney Young Magnet High School—actually came into being. Whitney Young was part of a larger program of urban renewal in Chicago. It was a brand new building, located in a neighborhood west of the downtown area that was easily accessible by public transportation from all parts of the city. The neighborhood had been a major center of light manufacturing and warehousing prior to the 1960s but had been in a state of decline since. At a cost of \$31 million, Whitney Young was not only supposed to rejuvenate the Chicago Public Schools, it was supposed to revitalize an entire neighborhood. Three specializations were available: medical arts, science, and performing arts. There was also a special program for students with hearing impairments. Each program used experts from the community and offered specialized courses not available at other schools. Eighty percent of applicants were required to score in the top half on standardized achievement tests to be admitted. Students who were admitted represented a geographic cross section of the city. But each student had to provide his or her own transportation, and no student was admitted midway through the school year, which limited accessibility for lower-income students whose families moved frequently.²²

²¹ Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 119.

²² Connie Campbell and Daniel U. Levine, "Whitney Young Magnet High School of Chicago and Urban Renewal," in Levine and Havinghurst, 140–143.

As Chicago's lone magnet high school, Whitney Young was supposed to have the best of everything. Staff development was crucial. The school opened in September 1976. But the principal began working there in January 1974, and twenty persons were employed over the summer to develop curriculum, meeting daily for workshops on individualization, learning theory, and other subjects taught by university consultants. These twenty teachers worked with the rest of the faculty, which was recruited from all over Chicago, during the 1974–75 school year for two hours per week to plan the school. Whitney Young would open as a well-oiled machine, so to speak.²³

The school received 5,400 applications for its five hundred ninth-grade seats. About four-fifths of the applicants were African American. School administrators blamed their low white recruitment on lack of publicity. Whitney Young also had to compete with fifteen specialized neighborhood public high schools (including vocational and technical schools) and several private and parochial schools for white students. On a more positive note, administrators reported that the admissions process was very competitive among African American students.²⁴

All the cities described thus far in this chapter resulted in peaceful integration, but the same cannot be said about Boston, a city with several parallels to Milwaukee. Boston, like Milwaukee, was a city divided into very specific ethnic enclaves in the early twentieth century. The major groups were the descendants of Puritan settlers, Yankees,

²³ Campbell and Levine, 143–145.

²⁴ Campbell and Levine, 145–146.

and the Irish.²⁵ The Irish assumed control of local politics and moved into the more affluent neighborhoods at the beginning of the twentieth century as the Puritans and Yankees migrated to the suburbs. As more African Americans came north during the Great Migration, they moved into the former Irish ghettos.²⁶ Again, as in Milwaukee, Boston had a neighborhood school system at the elementary level and a feeder system for the upper grades that created “black schools” and “white schools.”²⁷ Similarly, Boston’s school board manipulated district lines to maintain segregation, restricted transfers, and discriminated in the hiring and promotion of staff.²⁸

Boston’s white residents did not accept desegregation as well as the people of Tacoma and other cities had. Nonetheless, seeing the inevitable court decision on the horizon, local officials decided to act before they were required. Magnet schools seemed like a palatable alternative to mandatory busing. To that end, the Boston School Committee created a “model demonstration subsystem” in 1968 that consisted of three new magnet schools: Trotter Elementary School, Wheatley School, and Copley High

²⁵ George R. Metcalf, *From Little Rock to Boston: The History of School Desegregation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 205, and Steven J. L. Taylor, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo: The Influence of Local Leaders* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 14–15, 168. See also chapters 2–7 of Ronald P. Formisano and Constance K. Burns, eds., *Boston, 1700–1980: The Evolution of Urban Politics* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1984).

²⁶ Taylor, 18–19.

²⁷ Metcalf, 197–198, and Taylor, 44–45.

²⁸ Taylor, 48–49, 52–53. See J. Anthony Lukas, “All in the Family: The Dilemmas of Busing and the Conflict of Values” in Formisano and Burns; J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York: Knopf, 1985); and Jeanne Theoharis, “‘I’d Rather Go to School in the South’: How Boston’s School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Rights Paradigm,” in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980*, eds. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) for more on black activism, boycotts, the *Morgan* case, and the very violent white reaction. See chapter 3 of Adam R. Nelson, *The Elusive Ideal: Equal Educational Opportunity and the Federal Role in Boston’s Public Schools, 1950–1985* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) for an analysis of segregative methods in Boston.

School.²⁹

The three magnet schools were popular with elected officials and Boston's white citizenry, but integrationists pressed for a stronger remedy. The Harvard Center for Law and Education filed suit against the City of Boston's School Committee in 1972 on behalf of fifteen parents and their forty-three children. In the case, originally known as *Morgan vs. Hennigan* (later *Morgan vs. Kerrigan*), Judge W. Arthur Garrity ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in 1974. Garrity took over the school system himself and appointed a special master to monitor implementation of a multi-part desegregation plan that included changes to student, faculty, and administrative staff assignments; school capacities and program locations; construction, renovation, and closing of school facilities; changes in special education, bilingual education, and vocational and occupational education; student transportation; school safety and security; and student discipline. Garrity ordered a massive busing plan that paired schools in white parts of the city with schools in black parts of the city.³⁰ He also ordered that at least 35 percent of the students admitted to Boston Latin (see chapter 2) be African American or Latino.³¹ The Boston School

²⁹ Scott Gelber, "'The Crux and the Magic': The Political History of Boston Magnet Schools, 1968–1989," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 41, no. 4 (December 2008): 456.

³⁰ Finding aid, "Morgan vs. Hennigan Working Files" City of Boston, <http://www.cityofboston.gov/archivesandrecords/morgan.xml> (accessed August 8, 2010); Peter W. Cookson and Barbara L. Schneider, *Transforming Schools* (New York: Garland, 1995), 477; Finding aid, "Desegregation-Era Records," City of Boston, <http://www.cityofboston.gov> (accessed August 8, 2010); David H. Rosenbloom and Rosemary O'Leary, *Public Administration and Law* (New York: M. Dekker, 1997), 284–285; "School Committee Secretary Desegregation Files," City of Boston, http://www.cityofboston.gov/archivesandrecords/SC_Sec.xml (accessed August 8, 2010); and Lauri Steel, Roger Levine, and the American Institute for Research, *Educational Innovation In Multiracial Contexts: The Growth of Magnet Schools in American Education* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Education, 1994), 4.

³¹ The quota system was lifted in 1987 by a judge who determined the school met the criteria established in *Green* (see chapter 3), but school officials left the quota system in place until they were sued in 1995 and 1999 by white students who were denied admission based on their race. See Nancy Conneely,

Committee proposed establishing an “intra-city voluntary transfer program” featuring fifty-five magnet schools in lieu of mandatory busing in 1974. Garrity rejected the voluntary component but accepted magnet schools in 1975 and predicted that magnet schools would prove to be an “enormous safety valve” that could vent anti-busing anger.³²

Garrity was wrong. Whites rioted in the streets of Boston and in the high schools in 1975, the first year of desegregation. Some riots lasted several days. Molotov cocktails flew through windows, and some African Americans were afraid to leave their homes. Hundreds of students were suspended for rioting at South Boston High School. When white students and residents tried to block the buses, the police were called, and when the officers arrived, the white mob turned on them. African American students were openly beaten up in the streets for months. White racists threatened to blow up bridges to keep buses from crossing into white territory. Some African Americans responded with violence of their own, throwing stones at white buses and beating up white students. Leaders of both the black and white communities tried to calm people down to no avail. Just being a person of a different race in the wrong place was enough to bring on an assault. Innocent motorists were attacked, their cars overturned and burned. Civil officials and law enforcement had lost control. Pandemonium reigned.³³

The white student population declined 17 percent in Boston public schools from 1974 to

“After PICS: Making the Case for Socioeconomic Integration,” *Texas Journal of Civil Liberties and Civil Rights* 12, no. 1 (2008): 113–114, and Finding aid, “Desegregation-Era Records,” City of Boston.

³² Quoted in Gelber, 456. See also “Education: Integration by Magnets,” *Time*, June 16, 1975; chapters 6 and 7 of Adam R. Nelson, “The Elusive Ideal: Equal Educational Opportunity and the Federal Role in Boston’s Public Schools, 1950–1985” (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) and Charles B. McMillan, “Magnet Education in Boston,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 59, no. 3 (November 1977): 158–163.

³³ Metcalf, 207; Arthur L. Stinchcombe and D. Garth Taylor, “On Democracy and School Integration” in Stephan and Feagin, 164–169; and Taylor, 135–145.

1976 as whites families left the city.³⁴ The First Circuit Court of Appeals denied the city of Boston a writ of certiorari in 1976, effectively declaring magnet schools a constitutional means to desegregate schools.³⁵

Milwaukee learned from the Boston example and would not make the same mistakes. It was necessary to cultivate some level of community buy-in to stave off a violent response. Milwaukee's model for integration would look much more like Buffalo, Houston, and Pittsburgh. It was peaceful, though not well received by all people. In 1967, the Milwaukee school board paid the New York-based Academy for Educational Development (AED), a nonprofit educational think tank, to conduct a study on school problems. AED made several recommendations to improve the schools, including changes in curriculum, more flexibility in curriculum, an increase in counseling and psychological services, expansion of Advanced Placement (AP) classes, professional development for teachers, decentralization of supervision and decision making, an increase in school spending of more than double by 1972, and steps to end *de facto* segregation.³⁶

The last recommendation was the one that garnered the most attention. The report said Milwaukee lagged behind other northern cities on racial integration in schools. In fact, a slim majority of the school board did not even recognize segregation as a problem.

³⁴ Gelber, 456.

³⁵ See Crockett, Gordon, Kluger, Lukas, Patterson, and Wilkinson for more information. See Sampson, 30–36, 53–56, 66–68, for a legal summary of the Boston case, statistics on busing, planning for integration, and financial costs.

³⁶ Academy for Educational Development, *Quality Education in Milwaukee's Future: Recommendations to the Citizens Advisory Committee to Comprehensive Survey of Milwaukee Public Schools and the Milwaukee Board of School Directors* (New York: Academy for Educational Development, 1967), especially pages 83–91.

AED described the board's highly touted "compensatory education program" as "nice" but lacking "the necessary air of emergency and urgency."³⁷ Some of the programs were inadequately funded, understaffed, or aimed at groups of students instead of focusing on individual needs. None of them provided college preparatory opportunities to students with high potential nor did any provide interracial experiences. Lloyd Barbee said the report was "being nice" when it came to describing racial problems and expressed doubt toward school board action on the report.³⁸ Eight school board members, including Harold Story, Lorraine Radtke, John Foley, and the new school board president, Margaret Dinges, refused to make any comments on the report, other than that it should be referred to a study committee.³⁹ But while this lack of action on the AED report may have been another stalling tactic, the board was also beginning to shift toward reform.

The Milwaukee desegregation lawsuit was in full swing by 1967. Federal judge John Reynolds had a long history of liberal activism and opposition to segregation as state attorney general and governor of Wisconsin.⁴⁰ It was, therefore, obvious to some school board members that he was going to rule against the district. Reynolds appointed Irvin Charne, a friend of his who was a moderate Democrat, as Lloyd Barbee's co-counsel. According to people who were close to the case, Reynolds did this because

³⁷ Quoted in David Bednarek, "Race Mixing Called Duty of Education," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 17, 1967, 1:1,26.

³⁸ David Bednarek, "Race Mixing Called Duty of Education," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 17, 1967, 1:1,26. See related articles on page 22.

³⁹ "Proposals on Schools Get Mixed Reaction," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 18, 1967, 2:1-2.

⁴⁰ Barbara Dembski, "Judge No Stranger to Tough Decisions," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 19, 1976, 1:1,9, and "Wisconsin Governor John. W. Reynolds," *The National Governors Association*, accessed April 8, 2012, http://www.nga.org/cms/home/governors/past-governors-bios/page_wisconsin/col2-content/main-content-list/title_reynolds_john.html.

Charne could help control Barbee's temper and make desegregation more palatable to Milwaukee's white community.⁴¹ The school board, therefore, decided to take a two-pronged approach to implement reform so it would not have desegregation forced on it by Reynolds. Its first step was to hire a superintendent in 1967 who would work better with the black community, and later, it allowed citizens and parent groups at each school to formulate reform plans. These plans were met with opposition and were rejected by the board, but they started discussions about integration in the Milwaukee community. Those discussions laid the groundwork for a much larger citywide discussion about integration in 1976 and helped cultivate community support for the integration plan that the district eventually adopted.

Superintendent Richard Gousha assumed office on July 1, 1967, after a thirteen-to-one school board vote in May. Superintendent Gousha was more progressive than his predecessor Harold Vincent. He was willing to work with diverse groups of people to accomplish goals and had experience with desegregation, as he had been state superintendent of public instruction in Delaware, which had implemented a desegregation plan.⁴² Historian Bill Dahlk has said that Gousha kept quiet on controversial issues like

⁴¹ Bruce Murphy and John Pawasarat, "Why it Failed: Desegregation 10 Years Later," *Milwaukee Magazine*, September 1986, 36–37. Reynolds did not comment on why he appointed Charne co-counsel but said it was not a negative reflection on Barbee. See United States, District Court (Wisconsin Eastern District), "Craig Amos [and Other] Plaintiffs vs. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee (and Others) Defendants: Decision and Order / John W. Reynolds Presiding" (Milwaukee: The Court, 1976), 11–12 (hereafter cited as Amos).

⁴² Milwaukee Board of School Directors, *Proceedings of the Board of School Directors* (Milwaukee: The Board of School Directors), May 17, 1967 (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*).

busing and did what he could to reform the system the school board had given him.⁴³

Gousha assumed office in the midst of a civil disturbance that conservative whites described as a race riot. Though their assessment of the situation may have been overblown, Mayor Henry Maier put the city under curfew and called in the National Guard for a few days in the summer of 1967 to keep the peace. The freeways were closed and National Guard tanks rolled down Wisconsin Avenue.⁴⁴ Given this context, Gousha believed the city was not ready to desegregate the schools, so he compromised.⁴⁵

Gousha did a number of things to try to improve the quality of education for African Americans and prepare the city for integration. He spoke to community groups in black churches, recruited more African American teachers and administrators, and engaged in curriculum reform. Most significantly, Gousha was the architect of the North Division subsystem, which gave an unprecedented degree of autonomy to the African American community surrounding North Division High School and its feeder schools. The subsystem included a community relations specialist; advisory councils made up of parents, teachers, principals, and high school students; special federal funding; and an

⁴³ Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans and the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963–2002* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), 171, and William John Dahlk, “The Black Educational Reform Movement in Milwaukee, 1963–1975” (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1990), 130.

⁴⁴ John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee*, 3rd ed. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 2008), 371–376. See also chapter 4 of Greg J. Carman, “Wall of Exclusion: The Persistence of Residential Racial Segregation in Metropolitan Milwaukee” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2010), and John M. McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier: Planning and the Politics of Growth, 1910–1960* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 218–219.

⁴⁵ Richard Gousha, telephone interview with author, May 17, 2011.

innovative curriculum with its own curriculum specialists.⁴⁶

Eventually, Gousha planned to decentralize the district's fourteen high schools into seven subsystems, called "program service areas," each of which would have included one inner-city high school and related feeder schools and one outlying high school and related feeder schools. The program service areas would have shared curriculum specialists, supervisory personnel, and support service personnel, such as psychologists and social workers. The purposes of the plan were to improve continuity in teaching and learning from elementary school through high school, to foster greater understanding between families and schools in the inner city and the outlying areas, and to promote community and parent involvement in the schools.⁴⁷ There was some speculation that if the program service areas led to a greater degree of understanding developed between the races, then students might voluntarily choose to integrate.⁴⁸ As chapter 3 indicated, however, the black integrationists blasted the plan as racially "isolating."

Many Milwaukeeans were more concerned about radical shifts in demographics

⁴⁶ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 172–180; Gousha interview; and "What is the North Division Cluster?," Milwaukee Urban League Records, 1919–1979, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection EZ, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as Urban League Papers), box 23, folder 5.

⁴⁷ "Board Hears Praise of Decentralization," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 18, 1971, 2:2; "Cluster System Reviewed Before School Board," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 18, 1971, 1:5; "Decentralization Developments in Milwaukee Public Schools," Urban League Papers, box 23, folder 5; Gousha interview; "Gousha Asks Decentralization," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 18, 1968, 1:1,18; "Gousha Proposes Massive Revision," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 18, 1968, 1:1–2; "A Plan for Improvement of Milwaukee's School Operations" (Milwaukee Public Schools, undated but written in 1967, according to Gousha), in author's possession; and Gousha interview.

⁴⁸ Steven Baruch, interview with author, Glendale, WI, July 9, 2010, and Office of the Superintendent, "A Subsystem Approach to the Problems of a Large City School System: An Application for a Title III Grant" (Milwaukee Public Schools: Milwaukee, March 1968) in Barbee Papers, box 74, folder 22, and Urban League Papers, box 23, folder 5; and *Proceedings*, July 1, 1969.

than they were about integration. Milwaukee's black population increased 68.3 percent between 1960 and 1970, while the white population declined 3.2 percent.⁴⁹ Part of this change can be attributed to continued black migration from Chicago and the South, and part can be attributed to changes in demographics. Milwaukee had a young black population and an aging white population, which caused a change in birth rates—young families have more children; old families have few children.⁵⁰ There was also movement from the city to the suburbs—Milwaukee County's white population actually increased 6.3 percent in the 1960s, even though the number of whites in the city decreased.⁵¹

More specifically, the number of African Americans living in previously white neighborhoods had increased dramatically in the 1960s, and school demographics reflected that change. For example, Rufus King High School had a small minority population in the 1960s, but the neighborhood surrounding the school was changing and minority enrollment reached 33 percent in 1964, which was King's "tipping point" (see chapter 3). Once at that level, a large number of white families left the school, and King was 70 percent black by 1967. Thus, true integration, which is supposed to be voluntary, as defined in this dissertation, never happened at King—it went straight from white to black.⁵² West Division, Riverside, and Washington high schools experienced similar

⁴⁹ Beverstock and Stuckert, 46.

⁵⁰ Beverstock and Stuckert, 44.

⁵¹ Beverstock and Stuckert, 28.

⁵² David F. Behrendt, "Transition Is Swift on Edge of Core," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 16, 1967, 2:1,13, and "Nonwhite Pupils in More Schools," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 3, 1965, 2:1,12.

demographic shifts, though they were more gradual.⁵³

Many schools embarked on plans to slow the swift demographic shift that occurred at King. Riverside High School is particularly interesting. Because the school is on Milwaukee's east side, a significant number of Riverside parents were politically liberal and wanted their children to attend integrated schools, but as more inner-city students transferred to Riverside under the school board's open transfer policy (see chapter 3), more white students from less liberal families left. The remaining white parents wanted to prevent the white migration that had happened at King, so on January 10, 1972, after a sometimes-heated two-and-a-half hour debate, the Riverside Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) recommended a plan to the school board that would have capped black enrollment at 25 percent. Any other African American students desiring transfers to Riverside would have to go elsewhere. The idea behind the plan was to stabilize black enrollment to create an integrated high school, rather than one that was predominantly black. School board member Anthony Busalacchi said he would introduce the plan to the school board, with the intention that it would apply to King and Washington as well. African American parents were outraged. Some said it denied their children due process, others cited the fact that it was in violation of the school board's open enrollment policy, and others simply blasted it as racist.⁵⁴ The school board did not approve the plan. But it is significant nonetheless, because it marked the closest attempt

⁵³ Donald Pfarrer, "Is Racial Balance Only a Precarious Pause?," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 26, 1971, 1:1,18.

⁵⁴ "Plan to Stabilize Schools Backed," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 11, 1972, 2:2; *Milwaukee Journal*, February 11, 1972, and "Quota System at Riverside Rejected," *Milwaukee Courier*, January 29, 1972, 1:1,8.

to creating an integration plan up to that point in time, and it did not use magnet schools in any way.

The Washington High School case was much more volatile. As explained in chapter 3, the area surrounding Washington was changing. Washington's students came from two junior high schools—Steuben, which was located in the Sherman Park neighborhood, and Peckham, which was in the Midtown neighborhood and east of Washington and Steuben. Once predominantly German and Jewish, the neighborhood surrounding Washington, especially the Midtown neighborhood,⁵⁵ was primarily African American. In fact, the neighborhood's African American population increased by 1,076.8 percent between 1960 and 1970 because of migration from the central city.⁵⁶ Peckham Junior High's African American enrollment increased 14 percent in 1967 to 67 percent in 1970.⁵⁷ Washington had once been considered one of the best high schools in Wisconsin, but its new African American students did not perform as well as white students. They also caused more disruptions, and their attendance was poor. The English department added fifteen new courses in topics they hoped would arouse student interest in reading, but they did not improve behavior or attendance.⁵⁸ Racial fights, initiated by members of both races, broke out at Washington. Some white students were reportedly afraid to go

⁵⁵ Michael Kirkhorn, "What's Ahead for Washington Area?" *Milwaukee Journal*, December 27, 1971, 1:1,8.

⁵⁶ Frances Beverstock and Robert P. Stuckert, eds., *Metropolitan Milwaukee Fact Book: 1970* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Urban Observatory, 1972), 190–191.

⁵⁷ "'Get Whitey Day' Declared at Peckham Jr. High," *Milwaukee Courier*, May 30, 1970, 1:1,6, and *Milwaukee Journal*, November 4, 1971.

⁵⁸ Donald Pfarrer, "Is Racial Balance Only a Precarious Pause?," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 26, 1971, 1:1,18.

into school restrooms alone.⁵⁹ Black students also complained about the lack of an Afro-centric curriculum and said white teachers were out of touch with African American student needs.⁶⁰

Harold Jackson, the only African American member of the school board since Cornelius Golightly, decided to get involved before things got worse. Jackson had been appointed to fill a vacancy on the school board in 1970 and was elected to a full term in 1971, as were reformers Anthony Busalacchi, Ronald San Felippo, and Robert Wegmann, all of whom were in their twenties and thirties. In voting, they were frequently joined by Donald O'Connell and, after the 1973 election, new board members Doris Stacy and Maurice McSweeney. This liberal coalition gave themselves the name "the young Turks" because they challenged traditional school board positions on issues and criticized Superintendent Gousha for his quiet leadership style. The young Turks were instrumental in the election of Jackson as president of the school board.⁶¹

Unlike most school board members, who tried to stay above the fray of the daily operation of schools, Jackson visited Washington several times to talk with students,

⁵⁹ Donald Pfarrer, "Is Racial Balance Only a Precarious Pause?," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 26, 1971, 1:1,18, and Gregory D. Sandford, "Judge Hears of Ills of High School," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 16, 1972, 1:1,10.

⁶⁰ Florence I. Bryant, letter to the editor, *Milwaukee Courier*, February 19, 1972, and "Racial Battle Erupts," *Milwaukee Courier*, November 22, 1969, 1:1. See chapter 7 of Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans and the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963–2002* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010) and Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 133–137, for additional information on racial problems at Washington High School.

⁶¹ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 274–275. Wegmann was a professor at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. He and his graduate students developed a metropolitan integration plan that would become the basis of the Conta Plan, which is described later in this chapter. See also Doris Stacy, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 30, 2010. See "Mrs. Stacy's Stands Win Friends, Foes," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 1, 1977, 1:5, for a profile of Stacy, including her position on several educational issues.

staff, and parents, so they could help him identify the problems in the school.⁶² Jackson decided the best way to put an immediate stop to the racial violence was to increase the number of security aides. He also wanted adjustments to the curriculum and an open discussion of racial issues to build long-term understanding and stability.⁶³

Many people, including Lloyd Barbee, criticized Jackson's plan as repressive, because it centered on security aides.⁶⁴ The interracial Sherman Park Community Association (SPCA), which included representatives from the Midtown neighborhood, tried to come up with its own plan. Like the Riverside PTSA, the members of the SPCA wanted to stabilize racial integration and minimize white flight.⁶⁵ They believed two things were necessary to make this happen. First, the school board's open transfer policy (see chapter 3) had to end. Adopted in 1964 to ease black entry into white schools, the open transfer policy also provided white students with an easy way of fleeing to other schools. Second, in the view of the SPCA, the way to get African Americans and whites

⁶² "Board President Outlines Progress at Washington," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1972, 2:6; *Milwaukee Journal*, January 16, 1972; Marylyn Kucer, "School Officials Try Distinct Tacks," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 29, 1972, 1:5; "Washington Security Discussion Continues," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 9, 1972, 2:2; and Tom Wyatts, "Pupils at Washington Talk, Listen During Jackson Visit," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 29, 1972, 1:1,14.

⁶³ "Board President Outlines Progress at Washington," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1972, 2:6; Marilyn Kucher, "Test Plan OK'd for High School," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 28, 1972, 1:1,10; *Milwaukee Journal*, January 16, 1972; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 29, 1972; "Plans OKed for Washington," *Milwaukee Courier*, April 1, 1972, 1:1,3; "School Security Planned," *Milwaukee Courier*, February 5, 1972; and "Washington Security Discussion Continues," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 9, 1972, 2:2.

⁶⁴ Lloyd Barbee, "From the Legislature," *Milwaukee Courier*, March 4, 1972; Edward H. Blackwell, "In the Inner City," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 28, 1972, Accent on the News:1,10; and Lauri Wynn, "Armed Guards in Schools Won't Fit," *Milwaukee Courier*, January 29, 1972, 1:1,4.

⁶⁵ Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 184; Michael Kirkhorn, "What's Ahead for Washington Area?" *Milwaukee Journal*, December 27, 1971, 1:1,8; Donald Pfarrer, "Is Racial Balance Only a Precarious Pause?," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 26, 1971, 1:1,18; and "Race Issue Ends Meeting," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 3, 1971, 2:6.

to peacefully coexist at Washington was to introduce them to each other in junior high school⁶⁶ and to hire a human relations coordinator.⁶⁷

At the urging of the SPCA, the school board authorized creation of a volunteer study committee composed of parents, school staff, and community members from Washington's two feeder junior high schools, Peckham Junior High School, which was mostly African American, and Steuben Junior High School, which was 80 percent white. The original committee had twenty-six whites and eleven African Americans.⁶⁸ After several months of discussions, the Peckham-Steuben committee came up with a plan. All seventh graders in the Washington district would be assigned to Steuben, all eighth graders would be assigned to Peckham, and the ninth grade would be moved to Washington, which, it was hoped, would solve several problems. It would integrate the junior high schools; foster better racial relations in the earlier grades, thereby reducing antagonism at Washington; and, by moving all ninth graders to Washington, it would reduce severe overcrowding at Peckham. Some committee members from Steuben, voted

⁶⁶ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 282; Dahlk, "Black Educational Reform," 185; and "Group Criticizes 'Open Enrollment,'" *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 15, 1972, 1:5.

⁶⁷ Education Committee of the Sherman Park Community Association, "Educational Recommendations," April 21, 1976, in Kathleen Mary Hart, Milwaukee Public Schools Desegregation Collection, 1975–1987, UWM Manuscript Collection 90, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 1, folder 1 (hereafter cited as Hart Papers); Sherman Park Community Association, "Recommendations re: Desegregation/Integration of Milwaukee Public Schools," A Collection of Papers Relating to the Desegregation/Integration of the Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Public Library Humanities Room, 1976; and *Sherman Park News* 3, no. 3 (March 1973), 5 in Sherman Park Community Association, Sherman Park Community Association Records, UWM Manuscript Collection 72, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as SPCA papers), box 6, folder 1. The SPCA would later advocate a quota of no more than 50 percent African Americans at Washington in an effort to stabilize enrollment and slow white migration. See also "McMurrin, Critics Meet on '78 Plans," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 9, 1972, 2:1, and "Washington High To Be 49% Black," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 17, 1978, 2:2.

⁶⁸ Michael Kirkhorn, "OK on School Study a Victory for Citizens," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 1, 1973, 2:6, and "Peckham-Steuben Panel Asked," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 31, 1973, 2:2.

against the plan on the grounds that it called for what they called “forced busing,”⁶⁹ but the plan went to the school board anyway.⁷⁰ In the face of Steuben’s opposition, however, there was no way the school board could approve the plan, and it was voted down, thirteen to one.⁷¹

With the failure of both the Riverside plan and the Peckham-Steuben plan, several other individuals and organizations recommended their own plans in the early 1970s to improve race relations, none of which involved magnet schools. Gousha continued to push his 1968 plan of pairing schools together in clusters until 1972.⁷² It even received endorsement from WITI-TV, reversing that television station’s long-standing position on the issue of school redistricting.⁷³ The plan was never approved, though something similar would be adopted for elementary schools in the late 1970s. Four-year-old kindergarten, not in use in Milwaukee since 1956, was floated as a means of leveling the playing field, so to speak, but it was too expensive to make universal, even with federal

⁶⁹ The term “forced busing” was probably adopted from national media coverage of the Boston case. Although casually used in the vernacular of the 1970s, it is considered highly controversial today because it was used as a tactic to scare whites. In light of this troubling connotation, I have chosen to use the term “involuntary busing” when describing situations in which children were assigned to ride buses against their parents’ wills.

⁷⁰ Lloyd A. Barbee, Papers, 1933–1982, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 16 and Milwaukee Micro Collection 42, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as Barbee Papers), box 74, folder 26; Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 283–285; and Dahlk, “Black Educational Reform,” 186–187. See Dougherty, 137–142, for additional background information on the SPCA and the Peckham-Steuben Plan.

⁷¹ Dan Carpenter, “Blacks Nix School Site,” *Milwaukee Courier*, July 7, 1973 1:1,4; Rick Janka, “New Plan Submitted for North Division,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 6, 1973, 1:1,11; and “Washington Committee Adopts Plan to Achieve Racial Balance,” *Milwaukee Courier*, June 16, 1973. 1:1. Wegmann was the only affirmative vote.

⁷² *Proceedings*, August 4, 1970, August 3, 1971, and November 2, 1971, and Gary C. Rummeler, “North Cluster: Is It All Over?” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 25, 1972, 2:1,4.

⁷³ Carl Zimmerman, WITI-TV, August 22, 1972.

Head Start funding.⁷⁴ Additional compensatory education programs (see chapter 3) were discussed for Lincoln High School, which was in a state of decline similar to that of North Division.⁷⁵ North's students, for their part, continued to protest inadequate facilities.⁷⁶ The school board decided to commission a new North Division building, though construction was delayed due to internal debate in the school board over site selection⁷⁷ and dissatisfaction within the black community (see chapter 6).⁷⁸ Newly elected school board president Ronald San Felippo came up with a gerrymandered school redistricting plan in 1973, but it did not go anywhere in the approval process.⁷⁹ Board member and UWM professor Robert Wegmann resurrected the Riverside plan and proposed that African American enrollment be capped at 50 percent in schools that were transitioning from white to black.⁸⁰ But his proposal lost by one vote and white families continued to move out of the city.⁸¹ Noted conservative Lorraine Radtke predicted this demographic shift would continue and proposed metropolitan integration in 1973 as a

⁷⁴ Marilyn Kucer, "Board Action Due on School at 4," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 5, 1972, 1:5,8. Head Start is a federally funded program that provides education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families.

⁷⁵ "Ms. Sarah Scott May Be Next Principal at Lincoln," *Milwaukee Courier*, June 24, 1972, 1:1, and Ralph D. Olive, "Students Who Start Behind Stay There, Tests Indicate," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 27, 1972, 2:1,5. See also Barbara A. Koppe, "Core Pupils Drop in Ability Year by Year, Tests Show," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 27, 1972, 1:1,10.

⁷⁶ "North Students Set Walkout Monday," *Milwaukee Courier*, April 28, 1973, 1:1.

⁷⁷ *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 6, 1973.

⁷⁸ Dan Carpenter, "Blacks Nix School Site," *Milwaukee Courier*, July 7, 1973, 1:1,4.

⁷⁹ Barbara A. Koppe, "Shift School Lines, Board Chief Urges," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 1, 1973, 1:1,10.

⁸⁰ David I. Bednarek, "School Panel Backs Segregation Curbs," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 30, 1973, and "School Racial Plan Offered," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 7, 1973, 2:3.

⁸¹ David I. Bednarek, "School Transfer Plan Rejected," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 7, 1974, 2:1,3.

means of bringing white students back to the city,⁸² but no action was taken by the school board.

Two years later, state representative Dennis Conta proposed a metropolitan integration plan that would have merged the Whitefish Bay and Shorewood school districts with Milwaukee's Riverside and Lincoln districts.⁸³ This plan was based on an earlier plan devised by Wegmann, who had proposed cutting the Milwaukee metropolitan area into eight pie-piece-shaped districts.⁸⁴ Conta's plan was met with fierce opposition from suburbanites who did not want to give up local control of their schools⁸⁵ and probably did not want their children to attend school with low-achieving African Americans. The Shorewood school board said the new district would be too large and unmanageable, would decrease parent involvement, would erode the tax base by diverting

⁸² Ralph D. Olive, "Student Swapping Proposed for Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 30, 1975, 2:1,5; and "Redistricting Eyed to Aid Racial Balance," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 7, 1973, 1:15.

⁸³ Dennis J. Conta, "The East Shore District Plan: A City-Suburban School Merger Proposal," in Barbee Papers, box 24, folder 8, and many other locations. Additional support documents are in folders 8–9. See also David I. Bednarek, "Area School Chiefs Cool to Conta Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 24, 1975, 2:1,3, and "Integration Bill Expands," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 19, 1975, 2:1,12; "City-Suburb Model Proposed for Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 6, 1975, 2:1,3; "Conta Defends His Plan Against Attack," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 28, 1975, 2:3; "Conta Stirs Up a Hornet's Nest," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 14, 1975, 2:1,4; and "School Merger Proposal Scores Flat Zero in Bay," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 9, 1975.

⁸⁴ "Conta Will Present Broader School Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 18, 1975, 2:6; Linda B. Malman, "New School Board Members—New Ideas," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 6, 1975, 2:1,16; and "Transfer Options at School Asked," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 17, 1975, 2:1.

⁸⁵ Rick Janka, "Blacks Hear Attack on School Merger," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 21, 1975, 1:5; Rick Janka "Peril of 'Do Nothing' Led to Integration Planning," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 11, 1975, 1:5; and miscellaneous correspondence in Barbee Papers, box 24, folders 8–9. Chapter 4 of Kathryn M. Kubacki, "An Attempt at Metropolitan Desegregation in Milwaukee County: The History of the East Shore District Plan" (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2005); Miriam G. Palay, *Chapter 220, Student Exchanges Between City and Suburb: The Milwaukee Experience* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Urban Observatory, 1978), 7; and Nancy Sidon Smuckler, *Chapter 220: A Study of the Academic Achievement of Minority Interdistrict Transfer Pupils* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1984), 25, also detail the opposition to the Conta plan.

funds to Milwaukee students, and would accelerate white flight.⁸⁶ The Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA, the local teachers union) did not support the plan, because removing two districts from Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) would dilute MTEA's bargaining strength when engaged in contract negotiations.⁸⁷ There were also some people who suspected Conta's plan was really just an excuse to stop Riverside High School, which was in his assembly district, from going all black.⁸⁸ The school board eventually voted seven to three against the plan.⁸⁹

The University of Wisconsin Extension, the Greater Milwaukee Conference on Religion, and the League of Women Voters proposed that the city be broken into fourteen districts, each containing a high school. Each district would direct its own operations, with the Milwaukee school board overseeing all of them. Each of the city districts would be paired with a suburban district for purposes of integration and would be supervised by a new City-Suburban Council.⁹⁰

State Senator F. James Sensenbrenner proposed a compromise in which districts would not merge but would receive financial incentives to bus students across district

⁸⁶ Special Committee to the Shorewood School Board, Peter Barry, Chairman, *Report of the Special Committee Established by the Shorewood School Board to Prepare an Analysis of the Educational, Financial, Legal, and Community Implications of the Proposed Merger of the Schools in Whitefish Bay, Shorewood, and Certain Areas in Milwaukee* (April 7, 1975). The report is thirty-seven pages long. The page preceding page 1 has a short summary of arguments. See Mikel Holt, *Not Yet "Free at Last": The Unfinished Business of the Civil Rights Movement—Our Battle for School Choice* (Oakland: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 2000), 33–34, for an acerbic response from an African American viewpoint.

⁸⁷ Kubacki, 65–66.

⁸⁸ "Conta Defends His Plan Against Attack," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 28, 1975, 2:3.

⁸⁹ "School Appointees Give Conservatives the Edge," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 7, 1975, 2:1,10.

⁹⁰ Rick Janka "Peril of 'Do Nothing' Led to Integration Planning," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 11, 1975, 1:5

lines. Larry Harwell, of the Organization of Organizations (Triple O), criticized the Conta plan and all other plans that would have involved metropolitan integration as “lessen[ing] the number of blacks that whites have to deal with.” Harwell represented the growing sense of black consciousness in Milwaukee (see chapter 3).⁹¹ He had helped organize the North Division cluster, organized parent groups at Rufus King High School and several other black schools, and lobbied MPS to hire more African American aides.⁹²

Harwell, however, did not speak for everyone in the black community. State Representative Marcia Coggs proposed a radical plan in 1978 that would have merged all the school districts in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington, and Ozaukee counties into a giant district.⁹³ Coggs was an integrationist and Barbee’s protégée (see chapter 7).

With two sides so opposed to each other, magnet schools might have been an adequate compromise because they could have been a voluntary means to integrate in a non-disruptive way. There were some precedents for them too. Milwaukee had several neighborhood “specialty schools,” mostly for language immersion or special teaching methods, that had existed at the elementary level for decades (see chapter 2).⁹⁴ Under the open transfer policy, students from other neighborhoods could enroll in those schools, if

⁹¹ Quoted in Rick Janka, “Blacks Hear Attack on School Merger,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 21, 1975, 1:5

⁹² See chapters 9 and 12 of Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, and Dougherty, 159–163, for more on Harwell. See Phyllis M. Santacrose, “Rediscovering the Role of the State: Housing Policy and Practice in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1900–1970” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2009), 294–295, 305–309, for background information on Triple O.

⁹³ “Bill Asks Giant School District,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 17, 1978, 1:1,12.

⁹⁴ Rick Janka, “Specialties Preceded Busing,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 31, 1977, 1:1,16. See also Steven A. Baruch, “Factors Affecting the Process of Curriculum Formation in the Milwaukee Public Schools, July 1955 to June 1976,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1982).

there was room for them and if parents provided transportation. And Milwaukee already had one citywide high school—Boys Trade and Technical High School had had the designation since 1941.⁹⁵ Perhaps these early magnet schools, which had been created strictly for academic reasons, could be replicated on a districtwide level to achieve racial integration as had happened in other districts across the United States.

Conservative board members seemed to like the idea. In their view, it was better than something imposed by Judge Reynolds. Cornelius Golightly, the only African American school board member in the 1960s, had proposed magnet schools and voluntary integration in 1963,⁹⁶ and Margaret Dinges had been talking about magnet schools since 1970.⁹⁷ The board also considered converting three neighborhood high schools to citywide magnet schools in 1973: Lincoln Junior-Senior High School would have focused on business and trade and technical education,⁹⁸ another school would become a school for the visual and performing arts,⁹⁹ and long-troubled Washington would get a magnet program of some sort.¹⁰⁰ Gerald Farley, another conservative, floated a compromise idea in 1973 that would have left each of the high schools as attendance-area schools but also

⁹⁵ *Proceedings*, May 6, 1941, and April 5, 1961.

⁹⁶ “Integration Proposals Lag Here,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 24, 1967, 1:4; “Stronger Schooling, Dispersal of Pupils is Urged for Core,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 5, 1963, 2:1; and “We Are Losing a Major Social Resource,” *Milwaukee Courier*, February 25, 1967, 1.

⁹⁷ David I. Bednarek, “School Idea Rooted in Toledo,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 21, 1975, 2:1,6; *Proceedings*, June 2 and 22, 1970; and “McMurrin’s Aim on Target,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 22, 1975, 1:16.

⁹⁸ *Proceedings*, September 4, 1973.

⁹⁹ *Proceedings*, August 7, 1973.

¹⁰⁰ *Proceedings*, June 5, 1973.

establish citywide magnet programs within five schools. Riverside would have a college-bound program; Custer would receive a trade and technical program; Washington would acquire a program on science, mathematics, and graphics; West Division would become the arts school mentioned earlier in this paragraph; and Milwaukee Trade and Technical would retain its normal program. If a student lived outside of the high school attendance area, he or she would have to enroll in the magnet program. All other students would have been neighborhood students. Thus, busing would have been kept to a minimum.¹⁰¹ This plan died in committee like every other integration plan.¹⁰² A few other plans for desegregation were brought to public attention throughout 1974 and 1975,¹⁰³ most of which recognized that busing would have to be used¹⁰⁴ and the neighborhood school system set aside.¹⁰⁵ Nothing came of them. Moderate conservatives on the board tried to reach out to liberals and form coalitions, but they could not come to a consensus on what

¹⁰¹ David I. Bednarek, "Race Plan for Schools Modified," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 5, 1974, 1:1,8; David I. Bednarek, "School Board Isn't Leaping into Integration Plans," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 12, 1974, 2:1,5; David I. Bednarek, "School Transfer Plan Rejected," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 7, 1974, 2:1,3; and *Proceedings*, March 6, 1973.

¹⁰² David I. Bednarek, "Race Plan for Schools Modified," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 5, 1974, 1:1,8; David I. Bednarek, "School Board Isn't Leaping into Integration Plans," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 12, 1974, 2:1,5; David I. Bednarek, "School Transfer Plan Rejected," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 7, 1974, 2:1,3; and *Proceedings*, October 30, 1973.

¹⁰³ David I. Bednarek, "City Schools Push Integration Aid," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 15, 1976, 2:1, 7; Rick Janka, "McMurrin Calls for Major Revamping," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 21, 1975, 1:1,8; Joel McNally, "Conta Opposition Found in All Areas," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 18, 1975, 1:1,10; and Kenneth R. Lamke, "School Plan Heads List," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 21, 1975, 1:5,7.

¹⁰⁴ Rick Janka, "School Integration Rift Looms," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 7, 1973, 1:5, and Joel McNally, "Riding a Bus to School is Hardly New," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 27, 1975, 1:1,21.

¹⁰⁵ "Board to Weigh Plans for Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 24, 1974, 2:3.

plan to adopt.¹⁰⁶

Gousha left Milwaukee after seven years as superintendent to assume the position of Dean of the School of Education at the University of Indiana in July 1974. Long-time MPS administrator Dwight Teel was acting superintendent until June 1975. Teel could not do much to ameliorate the racial situation in MPS, because he was not permanently appointed. Also, he had a much more pressing problem—the first of three teacher strikes occurred in the 1974–75 school year.¹⁰⁷

Demographics continued to shift. The city’s African American population increased 17.7 percent between 1970 and 1975,¹⁰⁸ while the nonblack population decreased by 10.9 percent.¹⁰⁹ The rate of decrease in the white population in 1970–75 was more than three times the rate of decrease in the entire decade of the 1960s.¹¹⁰ However, not all white neighborhoods experienced a population decline—Granville (on the northwest side of the city) and Lake (on the far south side of the city) actually experienced increases in population,¹¹¹ indicating a trend of white migration to the edges of the city and beyond. The neighborhoods that increased in population tended to have

¹⁰⁶ David I. Bednarek, “City Schools Push Integration Aid,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 15, 1976, 2:1, 7; “Board to Weigh Plans for Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 24, 1974, 2:3; Rick Janka, “McMurrin Calls for Major Revamping,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 21, 1975; Rick Janka, “School Integration Rift Looms,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 7, 1973, 1:5; Joel McNally, “Conta Opposition Found in All Areas,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 18, 1975, 1:1,10; and Joel McNally, “Riding a Bus to School is Hardly New,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 27, 1975, 1:1,21.

¹⁰⁷ Baruch, 303.

¹⁰⁸ Percentage derived from Miriam G. Palay, *Census Update, City of Milwaukee, 1975* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Urban Observatory, 1977), 15.

¹⁰⁹ Percentage derived from Palay, 17.

¹¹⁰ Beverstock and Stuckert, 46.

¹¹¹ Palay, 17–18.

high numbers migrants and school-age children and higher birthrates, whereas the neighborhoods that decreased in population had few or no migrants, high numbers of senior citizens, and low birth rates.¹¹² In some neighborhoods, the black birth rate was six times that of the white birth rate, though the city as a whole had twice as many white births as black births.¹¹³ Other census data show that the city's population declined by 11.3 percent between 1970 and 1980. During that same period, an estimated 18.1 percent of city residents migrated out of Milwaukee. By comparison, Milwaukee county suburbs only lost 6 percent of their population due to migration, and Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha counties experience a 15 percent increase in population due to in-migration.¹¹⁴ These census data indicate that white enrollment in MPS would decline due to outward white migration and a lower white birthrate, while black enrollment would greatly increase due to a higher black birth rate.

The school board recognized the outward white migration and discussed a racial balancing plan in which black schools and white schools would trade students on a one-for-one basis, but board members were uncomfortable with such a quota system, especially if it did not include suburban schools, given the fact that so many white students were moving out of Milwaukee in the 1970s.¹¹⁵ Some African American parents

¹¹² Palay, 50–54.

¹¹³ Palay, 55–56.

¹¹⁴ Milwaukee Urban Atlas Population Characteristics, (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Library, 2003), 8, available April 14, 2012, <http://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cityDCD/planning/data/pdfs/UrbanAtlasPopulation.pdf>. See also Miriam G. Palay, *Census Facts: Milwaukee Areas and Neighborhoods, 1970–1980 Statistics Compared* (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and University of Wisconsin–Extension, 1984).

¹¹⁵ See Belden Paulson, “School Segregation and the Metropolitan Issue,” 1978, in Barbee Papers, box 216, folder 22, for an early study on demographic changes and metropolitan integration.

criticized the plan for not including improvements in curriculum, funding, or academic achievement.¹¹⁶ The racial transfer plan died in committee.

As school demographics changed, so did the composition of the electorate, and the spring school board elections saw three African Americans elected—Marian McEvelly, Leon Todd, and Clara New.¹¹⁷ All three supported integration but only if it was voluntary.¹¹⁸ They brought with them a new spirit of cooperation, and it was in that spirit that Lee McMurrin, deputy superintendent of Toledo, Ohio, was chosen as the new superintendent, taking office in July 1975.¹¹⁹

McMurrin was chosen for his experience in racial integration, congenial personality, and “smiling disposition.” The board majority believed that McMurrin was the best person to create a voluntary plan and win over all major interest groups in the city. McMurrin knew the desegregation suit would be decided during his tenure and was aware of the volatile nature of race relations in Milwaukee (see chapters 2 and 3), so he immediately began building links to the community. He went on a whirlwind speaking tour to civic, political, and religious groups so that they would accept him as well intentioned.¹²⁰ He attended PTA meetings, chatted with parents in his office, listed his home phone number in the phone book, and even wore a button that said “Everything is

¹¹⁶ “Racial Balance Transfer Plan Goal,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 18, 1975, 1:5.

¹¹⁷ Rick Janka, “3 Blacks Win School Board Jobs,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 28, 1975, 1:1,7.

¹¹⁸ “Candidates Speak Out on Busing,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 28, 1975, 2:1,4.

¹¹⁹ David I. Bednarek, “School Lunch for New Boss,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 17, 1975, 1:1,22; Rick Janka, “School ‘Boss’ Lends Ear, Smile to Inquisitive Pupils,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 17, 1975, 1:5; and “Our New Superintendent,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 8, 1975, 1:22.

¹²⁰ Baruch, 415.

Beautiful.”¹²¹ McMurrin said he received a warm welcome from most Milwaukeeans, but he also said uniformed representatives of the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis greeted him at his first school board meeting to silently oppose the coming integration that McMurrin would facilitate.¹²²

A good desegregation plan would require a school board and superintendent that could work well together, which has not always a given in MPS (see chapters 7 and 8). But board members described McMurrin as a man who was very easy with whom to work. Leon Todd, for example, said McMurrin borrowed ideas from him. Doris Stacy, also on the board, said he was a lovely man.¹²³ Anthony Busalacchi was another big supporter and was something of a swing vote on the board, so his support was essential.¹²⁴

McMurrin wrote and encouraged the school board to adopt a “Statement on Education and Human Rights,” which declared, in part, that “Our multi-ethnic population is potentially one of the richest resources available in our schools” and that “All school districts have the responsibility to overcome within their capabilities any [racial] barriers that may exist and to maximize the achievement potential of the children under their care.” He also said that schools had a responsibility “to work to a more integrated society” and that schools must “carefully consider . . . the potential benefits or adverse

¹²¹ Murphy and Pawasarat, “Why it Failed: Desegregation 10 Years Later,” *Milwaukee Magazine*, September 1986, 38.

¹²² Lee McMurrin, “Big City Rookie,” unpublished manuscript in author’s possession, 1–2. My thanks to Dr. McMurrin for sharing his manuscript with me.

¹²³ Stacy interview; Anthony Busalacchi, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, July 7, 2010; and Leon Todd, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 28, 2010. See also “Desegregation Ruling Comes 10 Years after School Suit is Filed,” *Milwaukee Courier*, January 24, 1976, 1,6.

¹²⁴ Busalacchi interview.

consequences that [their] decisions might have on the human relations aspects of all segments of society.”¹²⁵ The Statement on Human Rights was condemned by the Nazis but brought accolades from the League of Women Voters and other civic organizations.¹²⁶

McMurrin had five goals in mind for the desegregation plan that he would develop. Those goals, in his own words, were:

1. a desegregation plan which was acceptable to the board, the court, and the community
2. a way to effectively meet the needs of the “old” as well as the “new” clientele of the system
3. an opportunity for all interested Milwaukeeans to “roll up their sleeves” and “get into the act”
4. a set of alternatives rather than a singular approach to education
5. a rallying point for those who needed their spirits lifted¹²⁷

McMurrin submitted a statement on “alternative schools” to the school board. (At this time, magnet schools were still referred to as alternative schools in some circles. This term should not be confused with the modern-day connotation of alternative schools as schools for “at-risk” students.) McMurrin’s statement made it clear that he wanted to end the chaotic series of desegregation and compensatory education proposals. As he said: “the Administration concludes that there is a significant merit in almost all these proposals, but that they lose their momentum toward implementation for lack of a comprehensive model for establishing alternative schools.” McMurrin held several meetings with community leaders, businessmen, and other various groups within the first three months of assuming the superintendency. He said, “The community must be

¹²⁵ *Proceedings*, September 2, 1975.

¹²⁶ Lee McMurrin, telephone interview with author, July 7, 2010.

¹²⁷ Lee McMurrin, “Educational Change: It Can Work to Your Advantage,” *Theory into Practice* 20, no. 4 (1981): 265–266.

involved in the active planning along with School Board members and staff.” He also indicated that citywide magnet schools would be made available at the elementary and secondary levels and that busing would be a prime of part his plan.¹²⁸ He made these statements despite that fact that few Milwaukeeans supported magnet schools at that point.¹²⁹ McMurrin, aware of the fractured school board, decided to craft a plan without the board’s active involvement.¹³⁰

McMurrin proposed a plan similar to the one he had implemented in Toledo. Deputy Superintendent David Bennett assisted him and was responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the plan.¹³¹ A concept called “High Schools Unlimited” was at its heart. Yet, the program he proposed for Milwaukee would be unlike the magnet schools in any other American city. The level of choice available to students would be unprecedented. Instead of sponsoring just a few magnet schools, each of the fifteen high schools would offer some kind of specialized program in addition to a basic curriculum of art, business education, driver education, English, foreign languages, health, home economics, industrial education, mathematics, music, physical education, science, and social studies. Two or three schools would offer advanced math and science courses for students who desired to go to college. Each of the remaining schools would specialize in some sort of job training classes. These specialities would be unique to each school and could include aerospace-astronomy, business-computer technology, communication arts,

¹²⁸ *Proceedings*, September 2, 1975.

¹²⁹ McMurrin, July 7, 2010.

¹³⁰ David Bennett, telephone interview with author, August 25, 2010.

¹³¹ Baruch, interview, and Doris Stacy, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 30, 2010.

distributive education (which includes both classroom education and on-the-job training), energy and power, fine arts, performing arts, and medical-health occupations. McMurrin said such a plan would give students an unprecedented level of choice in their curriculum and foster voluntary integration. For example, the medical specialty might be assigned to North Division High School. This speciality would be a unique learning opportunity in the city and might draw in white students from the south side. Thus, a curricular need would be met, and North Division, a high school that was at or near 100 percent black enrollment, would show an increase in integration.¹³²

The plan McMurrin and Bennet crafted for Milwaukee also placed some magnet schools at the elementary and junior high school levels. The elementary school program, called “Options of Learning,” would include “basic” (also known as “fundamental”) education, open education (a program in which individual students choose their own topics of study), Montessori (similar to open education), bilingual, year-round, and “multi-unit individually guided education.”¹³³ McMurrin used concentric circles to show the anticipated inward movement of white students to the magnet schools and the outward movement of black students to the new buildings in the outer areas of the city

¹³² David I. Bednarek, “McMurrin Offers Plan for Diversity,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 21, 1975, 1:5; David I. Bednarek, “School Idea Rooted in Toledo,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 21, 1975, 2:1, 6; Rick Janka, “McMurrin Calls for Major Revamping,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 21, 1975; *Proceedings*, November 4, 1975, and “Policy Statements Passed by the Milwaukee Board of School Directors Relative to Racial Balance and Equality of Educational Opportunities,” 1976, in Lorraine Radtke Papers, 1947–1981, UWM Manuscript Collection 64, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as Radtke papers), box 2, folder 20, and “Recommended September Plans for Providing Expanded Educational Opportunities and Initiating the First Phase of the School Desegregation,” 1976, box 2, folders 5 and 25, and in other repositories.

¹³³ *Proceedings*, February 3, 1976.

vacated by the white students who would be attending the new magnet schools.¹³⁴ The junior high school program, called “Schools for the Transition,” would bridge the elementary schools and high schools, as the name of the plan implies. The junior high schools would continue to offer exploratory classes in different careers and fine arts but would do so in innovative ways so that parents and students could choose the learning style that best fit them. Nothing more was specified in McMurrin’s plan at that point.¹³⁵

The plan won high praise from local media and many elected officials. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* said it “deserve[d] the wholehearted support of the board and the community at large” because it not only addressed racial integration but also improved academics by offering specialized curricula not available in other school districts.¹³⁶ The *Milwaukee Journal* was a bit more cautious, pointing out that magnet schools had not been effective at desegregating other school systems in other parts of the country, but nonetheless predicted improvement in student achievement due to the wide variety of choices offered to students.¹³⁷ WTMJ and WITI television and radio reversed longstanding policies, and while acknowledging that the plan was not perfect, they said it was the best plan that could be devised and that people should support it.¹³⁸ State Representative Conta and State Senator Sensenbrenner introduced legislation to give

¹³⁴ *Proceedings*, January 6, 1976.

¹³⁵ *Proceedings*, February 3, 1976.

¹³⁶ “Workable Plan,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 22, 1975, 1:16

¹³⁷ “McMurrin’s Aim on Target,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 22, 1975, 1:16.

¹³⁸ Ed Hinshaw, WTMJ-TV, March 9, 15, 17, and 22; June 23, 28, and 29; July 7 and 15; August 9; and December 29, 1976, and Carl Zimmerman, WITI-TV, May 3, 24, and 30, 1976, in Radtke Papers, box 2, folder 5, and Ed Hinshaw, WTMJ-TV, February 16 and 23, 1979, in Radtke Papers, box 2, folder 7.

MPS money to help fund busing expenses, thus demonstrating bipartisan support.¹³⁹

Milwaukee school board members liked the voluntary aspects of the plan.¹⁴⁰ Some suburban superintendents indicated their students would also be attracted to such magnet schools, and McMurrin said he was willing to enroll suburban students, making countywide integration possible, even if only on a low level.¹⁴¹

Critics raised doubts about the effectiveness of magnet schools in fostering integration. As chapters 3 indicates, Milwaukee was a divided city, both geographically and racially. The magnet school experiment had not been conclusively successful in Toledo, and McMurrin admitted that he had no evidence that his plan would lead to integration in Milwaukee.¹⁴² Lloyd Barbee, serving as a state representative in the Wisconsin legislature at the time, was particularly skeptical and warned African Americans to beware of allegedly voluntary programs: “You expect your enemies to wear the clothing of liberality. You expect them to say they’re your friends.”¹⁴³

But by 1975, the direction of the trial made it appear that Judge John Reynolds was going to rule against the school board, and McMurrin felt it was better to implement

¹³⁹ “Senator Criticizes Conta Plan, *Milwaukee Journal*, January 2, 1976, 2:1,4. See also Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA), Minutes of the Special MTEA Building Representative Assembly, February 2, 1976, in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 1.

¹⁴⁰ Bennett, Stacy, and Todd interviews.

¹⁴¹ David I. Bednarek, “Suburbs Attracted by Magnet Concept,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 26, 1975, 1:1.5.

¹⁴² David I. Bednarek, “School Idea Rooted in Toledo,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 21, 1975, 2:1, 6, and “McMurrin’s Aim on Target,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 22, 1975, 1:16. These *Milwaukee Journal* articles are the only references to the effectiveness of the Toledo magnet schools that I can find. No scholarly studies have been published, and the effectiveness of Toledo magnet schools does not appear to have been a popular topic in the *Toledo Blade*, the local newspaper.

¹⁴³ Quoted in Dan Carpenter, “Barbee: Beware Phoney Desegregation Plans,” *Milwaukee Courier*, March 13, 1976, 1,4,7.

his own desegregation plan before the court imposed one. The board had been split eight to seven every time desegregation plans had been proposed since 1963 (see chapter 4 and appendix A, table 1), so all McMurrin really needed was to convince one school board member to switch from the conservative majority to the liberal minority and to vote for his plan. The board preferred the certainty of McMurrin's voluntary plan over the possibility of a court-mandated involuntary plan, so it approved McMurrin's plan by a vote of ten to five on April 15, 1976.¹⁴⁴

McMurrin said community involvement was key to making an integration plan work. The *Milwaukee Journal* conducted a major public opinion study in 1975. A total of 1,220 Milwaukee County residents were surveyed via telephone, including 780 city residents and 440 suburbanites. The gender split was almost 50 percent, and all age, income, and occupational groups were represented, though "housewives" made up the largest group of respondents (28.1 percent). More than 75 percent of all respondents had completed high school, and some of those had gone on to college. The racial breakdown was 88.0 percent white, 10.3 percent black, 1.1 percent "other," and 0.5 percent "no answer." Thomas F. Pettigrew, a Harvard professor of social psychology, served as a consultant, and Cardell Jacobson, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM), assisted.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ *Proceedings*, April 15, 1976, and Stacy interview.

¹⁴⁵ Donald Pfarrer et al., "Reading, Riding and Race: Public Opinion and School Segregation in Milwaukee County," Milwaukee: *Milwaukee Journal*, 1975, 1. Excerpts appear in the newspaper, but the citations here are from the complete study. The raw data are available in John H. Blexrud and Paul Tsao, eds., *Data Reference Book for Political, Desegregation, and Crime Studies in Milwaukee and Wisconsin, 1975–1976* (*Milwaukee Journal/Milwaukee Sentinel* and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1977), 125–142.

The study concluded that slightly more than half of all county residents supported the goal of racially integrated schools, but few could agree on how to achieve that.

Findings included:

- Seventy-two percent of all black respondents said racial integration of schools was a desirable goal, but only 53 percent of all whites agreed with that idea.¹⁴⁶
- When examining residence patterns, people who lived in the northern suburbs, reflecting higher levels of education, were most strongly in favor of integration,¹⁴⁷ though 77 percent were against the Conta plan of merging Shorewood, Whitefish Bay, and the east side of Milwaukee.¹⁴⁸
- One-third of all respondents who supported integration would object if students of a race other than their own rose above 50 percent in a given school.¹⁴⁹
- People who lived in racially diverse neighborhoods were more likely to support school desegregation than those who did not live in diverse neighborhoods.¹⁵⁰
- People who identified themselves as Republicans tended to view integration less favorably than those who identified themselves as Democrats or independent. Likewise, a person who was older and lived in the same house for a long period of time was less likely to support integration.¹⁵¹
- Of the respondents who were thinking about moving in the next two years, only 2 percent cited schools as the prime factor in their decisions. More than 60 percent cited housing or neighborhood concerns.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Pfarrer et al., 2.

¹⁴⁷ Pfarrer et al., 2.

¹⁴⁸ Pfarrer et al., 4–5, 21–22.

¹⁴⁹ Pfarrer et al., 2.

¹⁵⁰ Pfarrer et al., 2.

¹⁵¹ Pfarrer et al., 2.

¹⁵² Pfarrer et al., 8.

- Fifty-three percent of all white respondents thought public schools in Milwaukee County were “good” or “very good,” but only 32 percent of all black respondents felt the same way. Seventy-nine percent of all respondents thought suburban schools were as good as or better than city schools. Only 4 percent thought city schools were better than suburban ones.¹⁵³
- Nine percent of all respondents said white students would get better educations in integrated schools, and 30 percent said they would get worse. On the other hand, 41 percent said education would improve for black students, while only 8 percent thought it would get worse.¹⁵⁴
- When asked about cases in which they would approve or disapprove of busing children (either theirs or someone else’s) to a school outside their neighborhoods, people gave the following responses:¹⁵⁵

	Approve/Disapprove	
To attend classes for gifted children	67%	28%
To relieve overcrowding	65%	30%
To provide instruction in art, music, and multiculturalism	67%	29%
To achieve racial integration of schools	25%	70%
To provide special classes for handicapped children	98%	1%
For athletics, band, and other extracurricular activities	65%	32%

On a more qualitative side, the *Milwaukee Journal* report acknowledged that segregation did exist in the Milwaukee Public Schools. It also summarized the views of all the key players, including Lloyd Barbee, Lorraine Radtke, School Board President O’Connell, State Representative Conta, and the NAACP. It acknowledged that the school board had taken steps to maintain segregation and cited prejudice as the main reason for its failure to remedy the situation.¹⁵⁶ It also pointed out that about half of

¹⁵³ Pfarrer et al., 5.

¹⁵⁴ Pfarrer et al., 2.

¹⁵⁵ Pfarrer et al., 3.

¹⁵⁶ Pfarrer et al., 14–16.

Wisconsin's schoolchildren were already riding a bus to school in 1975, including 28,000 MPS students who were bused to relieve overcrowding.¹⁵⁷ A reporter who rode a bus with 47 pupils from Victor Berger Elementary on the north side to U.S. Grant Elementary on the south side observed no deleterious effects. In other cases, parents and school officials reported name calling on the part of both black and white students when they were introduced, and in some cases, black students provoked fights. But this behavior died down once the students got to know each other. The Grantosa PTA reportedly welcomed parents from outside the neighborhood.¹⁵⁸ The study also pointed out that Jackie Robinson Junior High School was a multiracial citywide school with innovative "open" classrooms, in which students could choose what they wanted to learn rather than study teacher-chosen topics. Parents and students reported high satisfaction with the school, though its standardized test scores were not available in 1975, so the level of academic achievement in that "open" environment remains unknown.¹⁵⁹

That was where Milwaukee stood on the issue of racial integration in schools in 1975. Opinion was mixed. Most people wanted to improve the quality of education, but few agreed on how to do it. Some people had successfully tried integration on a small scale, but there was much opposition to citywide change. Then, on Monday, January 19, 1976, Federal Judge John W. Reynolds issued a decision in favor of Barbee's clients. He said that segregation was present in MPS and was the cumulative result of the decisions made by various school officials over a twenty-year period. Milwaukee was, therefore, in

¹⁵⁷ Pfarrer et al., 18.

¹⁵⁸ Pfarrer et al., 19–20.

¹⁵⁹ Pfarrer et al., 22–24.

violation of the U.S. Constitution.¹⁶⁰

In terms of case law, Reynolds cited the United State Supreme Court decision *Keyes vs. School District 1 of Denver, Colorado*. Like the Milwaukee school board, the Denver board had unsuccessfully argued that segregation was the result of residence pattern and therefore not illegal.¹⁶¹ Reynolds also cited a decision of the Court of Appeals of the Eighth Circuit involving schools in Omaha, Nebraska. So similar were the two cases that the Milwaukee school board's attorney had cited the Omaha case in a portion of his defense. Perhaps he was shortsighted, because the appellate court found Omaha's neighborhood school system unconstitutional.¹⁶²

Judge Reynolds appointed his friend John Gronouski as the special master to oversee desegregation. Gronouski had a strong background in diplomacy and legal matters. While Gronouski was not from Milwaukee, Reynolds hoped Gronouski's Polish ancestry would appease south-siders, most of whom were Polish American.¹⁶³ The powers of the special master included "the authority to collect evidence, to conduct hearings, to seek the advice of experts, to commission studies and reports, to consult with community groups and civic organizations, and to subpoena witnesses and records." The special master was to solicit input from both the plaintiffs and the defense and present a plan to the court by May 1, 1976. Once Reynolds approved the plan, the special master

¹⁶⁰ Amos, 123, 128–129. The school board officially acknowledged receipt of Judge Reynolds's decision on January 24, 1976, according to *Proceedings*, January 24, 1976.

¹⁶¹ Amos, 113, 120, 124, and 126–127, and David I. Bednarek, "Schools Told to Integrate," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 19, 1976, 1:1,9.

¹⁶² Amos, 118, and David I. Bednarek, "Schools Told to Integrate," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 19, 1976, 1:1,9.

¹⁶³ Murphy and Pawasarat, 36–37.

would be responsible for supervising the implementation of the plan and for evaluating its effectiveness.¹⁶⁴

McMurrin hoped to work cooperatively with Gronouski, and plans for magnet schools accelerated as a result of Reynolds's decision. Reynolds said Gronouski was supposed to get input from both parties, so with the judge's decision in hand, McMurrin formed a "Committee of 100" (C/100), representing people from all schools and interest groups from all over the city, to help him flesh out his plan. McMurrin had hoped that getting community input would make integration palatable to white Milwaukeeans. Once the plan was complete, McMurrin would forward it to the school board, which would approve it and send it on to Gronouski, who could make whatever changes he saw fit. Lastly, Gronouski would give the plan to Reynolds for final approval. Each of the fifteen high schools formed a cluster committee with its feeder middle and elementary schools. Two parents or citizens, one high school student, and one staff member were chosen from each cluster committee, giving the schools sixty representatives. Thirty-six representatives were drawn from business and industry, civic groups, community organizations, educational agencies, government, labor, media, MPS employee groups, religious groups, and veterans organizations. McMurrin appointed the remaining four representatives himself.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Amos, 134–135.

¹⁶⁵ David I. Bednarek, "Panel of 100 Suggested to Map Integration Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1976, 1:1, 20; McMurrin interview; and Theodore V. Montgomery Jr., "A Case Study of Political, Social, and Economic Forces Which Affected the Planning of School Desegregation Milwaukee 1976" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1984), ii. The teacher representative spot was filled by the MTEA building representative (referred to as a union steward in other unions) in schools that elected representatives. MTEA President Guzniczak appointed the representative in the few buildings that did not hold elections. See "MTEA Fact Sheet" in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 1. A memo from MPS dated March 16, 1976, Hart Papers, box 1, folder 1, provides procedures for electing parents and community

A majority of C/100's membership was moderately liberal. According to a survey conducted by local desegregation scholar Ian Harris, 90 percent of C/100 members supported desegregation, and 53 percent were willing to use involuntary busing to do it, though Harris admitted that a survey by the *Milwaukee Journal* showed that only 29 percent of C/100 members supported involuntary busing.¹⁶⁶ Harris also found that most of C/100 was fairly well educated—the average committee member had a college degree, while the majority of Milwaukeeans had only high school diplomas.¹⁶⁷ Forty-one percent of its membership consisted of white-collar workers, compared to 16.8 percent of Milwaukee's total population.¹⁶⁸

The school board accepted C/100 coolly and made plans to appeal Reynolds' decision. If students had to be integrated, the board supported magnet schools, but if the board could get away with not integrating students, that is what it would do.¹⁶⁹ As chapter 3 indicated, a majority of the board was conservative and did not want to end the segregated neighborhood school system. Lorraine Radtke, for example, maintained her belief that compensatory education programs, such as the Superior Ability program, the Upward Bound college preparatory program, and the school for unwed mothers, were

members.

¹⁶⁶ Ian M. Harris, "The Committee of 100: Citizen Participation in Desegregation," (unpublished report, Milwaukee Public Library, 1977), 5.

¹⁶⁷ Harris, 8.

¹⁶⁸ Harris, 8–9.

¹⁶⁹ Stacy interview; Anthony Busalacchi, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, July 7, 2010; and Leon Todd, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 28, 2010.

better than integration as a remedy for underachievement.¹⁷⁰ One must also keep in mind that the school board was still elected on an at-large basis at this time, which meant board members had to follow the wishes of the majority of Milwaukeans if they wanted to stay in office. This system is unlike a district system in which board members might have to appeal to particular groups. At-large systems make it hard for minorities—racial or otherwise—to sway an election, and, as previously indicated, a majority of Milwaukeans did not support busing, which would be necessary if students did not volunteer for integration.

The first cluster committee meetings were held at each cluster's local high school on March 16, 1976. Nearly six thousand people attended and viewed a presentation about magnet schools and desegregation on closed-circuit television. The tone of the meetings varied from school to school. The two hundred parents at Washington were generally supportive of integration but complained about Reynolds' May 1 deadline for submitting an integration plan. According to newspaper accounts, most of the 431 people at Marshall were concerned about white flight. North Division's parents and teachers, reflecting Larry Harwell's black power philosophy, were less concerned about integration and more concerned about improving the quality of education and building a new school to replace their current building, which had been damaged in a fire. Only slightly more than one hundred parents attended that meeting, which was consistent with the chronic problem of low parental involvement in Milwaukee's African American community. The

¹⁷⁰ Lorraine Radtke, "In My Opinion," Radtke Papers, box 2, folder 1. "Superior Ability" was the name of the program for gifted and talented students in some middle schools and high schools. It was succeeded by the Program for the Academically Talented (PAT) in the 1980s and honors classes at the high school level in the 1990s.

275 parents at the South Division meeting were strongly opposed to busing. One man said, “The blacks are scared to go into our neighborhoods, and we are scared to go into their neighborhoods.” Perhaps most alarming were the 1,300 parents at Hamilton, which was the newest, whitest, and farthest south of the high schools. Some of the parents at the Hamilton meeting said Reynolds violated the Constitution, and they complained about the tax increase that would be necessitated by busing. One man likened involuntary busing to Nazi war crimes and predicted a race war if “our kids [were bused] into that colored area, that high crime area.”¹⁷¹ Clearly, many Milwaukeans did not support magnet schools, as magnet schools require busing to transport students from residence to school.

So volatile was the Hamilton situation that Gronouski personally addressed Hamilton-area parents at a separate meeting held across the street at Bell Junior High School a few days after the initial cluster meeting. Parents questioned his ties to the city—he was a University of Texas professor and a former U.S. ambassador to Poland—as well as his \$50-per-hour pay rate. Several parents feared a decline of academic standards if African American students were bused to the south side of the city and did not want their children taking long bus rides to the north side. Ten uniformed members of Milwaukee’s Nazi party requested speaking time but were turned down. They hurled insults at the people in charge of the meeting and did not leave until the police arrived.¹⁷²

Despite the opposition, the cluster committees elected representatives to the

¹⁷¹ Quoted in “Integration Planning Begins Amid Complaints by Many,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 17, 1976, 2:1,15. See also McMurrin, July 7, 2010.

¹⁷² Ralph Olive, “Gronouski Repeats Theme to Hamilton High Residents,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 20, 1976, 1:24.

planning committees on March 18, which then elected representatives to C/100 on March 30.¹⁷³ C/100 had its first meeting on April 2 and elected cochairpersons, one black and one white. The African American was Cecil Brown, a state assemblyman and member of the Milwaukee United School Integration Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality, and the white man was Grant Waldo, an attorney and political liberal who had unsuccessfully run for city, state, and national offices.¹⁷⁴ Economically speaking, according to Harris, C/100 started out with a mix of upper-middle-class and working-class individuals, but the working class (both black and white) felt “alienated by the formal proceedings, by Robert’s Rules of Order, and by the endless haggling over parliamentary procedure.” As a result, the number of working-class people who participated in C/100 meetings—which was already low—declined after the first few months.¹⁷⁵

Harris was very critical of C/100’s composition and agenda. The committee did not adequately represent middle-class African Americans or whites, according to Harris. Affluent, well-educated, liberal representatives controlled the agenda and pushed out what few middle-class people there were. They also refused to listen to the concerns of conservatives. In other words, C/100 only represented a fraction of Milwaukeeans, and without broad community support, any desegregation plan would be difficult to implement. Furthermore, by not directly connecting C/100 to Judge Reynolds or Special

¹⁷³ “Integration Meetings Show Positive Spirit,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 31, 1976, 1:1,8.

¹⁷⁴ Ralph D. Olive, “Two Liberals Head Committee of 100,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 8, 1976, 2:1,2.

¹⁷⁵ Harris, 9.

Master Gronouski, C/100 could be only advisory—neither the school board nor the superintendent had to accept its recommendations.¹⁷⁶

John Semancik was a parent on the Hamilton cluster committee. He said he and the other parents on the committee had been promised input into the desegregation plan but that Gronouski was unwilling to listen to their concerns. According to Semancik, many of the parents were open-minded about African Americans attending Hamilton, but they were concerned that money would be diverted from classroom teachers to busing and would, therefore, increase class size. Some board members, such as Margaret Dinges, were willing to listen to parent concerns, but ultimately, Gronouski was going to do what he wanted to do. According to Semancik, “It was just a big smokescreen.”¹⁷⁷

C/100 asked the school board to drop its appeal of Reynolds’s decision and requested more time from Gronouski to formulate a desegregation plan. The student representative from South Division voted along with the majority to halt the appeal, and was then grabbed by a woman who called him a traitor and warned him to not go to school if he valued his life. Finally, in an apparent power play, Claire Riley, the student representative from Riverside, and daughter of Lois Riley, a member of the school board, said that McMurrin’s magnet plan would not accomplish integration and that C/100 should draw up its own independent plan.¹⁷⁸

Each of the clusters went to work on school-specific desegregation plans and

¹⁷⁶ Harris, 15–19.

¹⁷⁷ John Semancik, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 5, 2011.

¹⁷⁸ David I. Bednarek, “Committee of 100 Opposes Appeal of Reynold’s Decision,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 7, 1976, 1:1,4, and Rick Janka, “Drop Appeal of Ruling, Committee of 100 Asks,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 7, 1976, 1:5. See also Harris, 5–6.

submitted them to C/100. The diversity of plans indicates different priorities and levels of acceptance of Reynolds's decision. For example, the committee at South Division barely mentioned integration, preferring to stick with traditional talk of compensatory education programs, including extended-hour day care to help parents who could not pick up their children after school due to work conflicts, an extra year of kindergarten for six-year-olds who were not ready for first grade, tutoring programs for fifth- and sixth-graders who needed help in reading and writing, work-experience centers in the high schools, and expansion of Spanish classes. It also explicitly said busing should be kept to a minimum. On the other hand, the cluster committee at Pulaski, another southside high school, was fairly progressive. Though its plan was most concerned with establishing "human relations committees," it supported a voluntary integration plan, including magnet schools, consolidating or closing schools with low enrollment, redistricting, changing feeder patterns, pairing of schools, and busing, where necessary.¹⁷⁹ Marshall, a racially diverse school on the north side, also endorsed magnet schools and asked that a technical school be built in each quadrant of the city. Under such a plan, African American students would likely have left Milwaukee Trade and Technical High School on the south side to attend a trade school closer to their homes. The Marshall cluster also requested that high school seniors not be bused, as it would be disruptive to their last year of high school, and that kindergartners and first graders not be bused at all.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the South Division and Marshall plans did not call for magnet schools and stood in contrast

¹⁷⁹ Pulaski Cluster Resolution, April 12, 1976, in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 1.

¹⁸⁰ Kathleen Hart, interview with author, Greendale, WI, August 23, 2010, and *Milwaukee Journal*, April 9, 1976.

to what McMurrin wanted.

Washington and Riverside had much more aggressive plans. The Washington cluster supported the McMurrin plan for magnet high schools but argued that genuine integration would be possible only if it began at the elementary level and believed it should be done by midyear, even if that disrupted the educational process. Boundaries would have to be adjusted; no school would be allowed to have less than 30 percent nor more than 60 percent minority enrollment; human relations programs would have to be put on for faculty, staff, parents, and community members; and MPS would implement an affirmative action program and hire a black and/or female deputy superintendent.

Riverside's cluster, with its active PTSA, suggested a high degree of parental and student involvement in desegregation, including an inter-racial car pool and a student advisory committee. It also wanted a racial quota system similar to what was in Washington's plan, but it would have included Latinos. All "tracking" (programming students into classes based on ability level) would have ended, and the curriculum would have been revised to include improved math instruction, bilingual education, and the cultural histories of African Americans, Latin Americans, Native Americans, and women.

Finally, the Riverside plan called for more minority representation on the school board.¹⁸¹

With so many people in the community preferring compensatory education over

¹⁸¹ Cluster plans from Custer, Pulaski, Riverside, South Division, Washington, and West Division are scattered in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 1. Some additional information is contained in folder 2, including the Madison cluster plan. Minutes from the Committee of 100 are available in folders 2–5. Minutes from the South Division Cluster are scattered in box 1, folders 1–4, including a South Division "Guide for Students, 1977–78" in folder 4. A detailed plan for Riverside's feeder schools called the "Four-Grade-Level and One Open Education Magnet Plan" can be found in People United for Integrated and Quality Education Papers in possession of Robert Peterson, Milwaukee, WI. Other documents in the collection call for bilingual education and an end to tracking.

McMurrin's plan, the school board established an "Ad Hoc Human Relations Committee" as an adjunct to C/100. The committee supported a transformation of education, not just integration. It broadly declared that the school board's goal was to meet the needs of not just the students, but surrounding community in which he or she resided. The way to do this was to ensure equal educational opportunities by working with PTAs, promoting voluntary integration, and most of all, by establishing human relations committees across MPS to promote understanding among racial groups. Each school would have its own committee that would welcome new students, encourage voluntary transfers, initiate programs on cultural awareness, and work for open housing laws to integrate neighborhoods as well as schools. Each school would be represented on a clusterwide human relations committee, and the cluster committees would be represented on a citywide committee. The ad hoc committee also supported magnet schools, redistricting, and pairing of schools to encourage integration. However, those aspects of integration are given only slight attention in the committee's proposal, another indication that there was not much support for radical desegregation.¹⁸²

Several other plans from outside C/100 were introduced to the public at this time. In addition to proposing magnet schools, Superintendent McMurrin suggested closing North Division and other dilapidated black schools and busing their students into white areas. C/100 listened to North Division parents and staff, voted to keep the school open,

¹⁸² "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee to the Board of School Directors, Milwaukee Public Schools," June 1, 1976, in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 2, and Radtke papers, box 1, folder 6.

and rejected what it thought of as “one-way” busing.¹⁸³ According to a 1995 interview with Cecil Brown, C/100 was caught in the middle between McMurrin and Howard Fuller, who not only wanted to keep North Division a neighborhood school, but actually wanted pull North Division and its feeder schools out of MPS to form their own school district. Brown called Fuller and his followers “crass opportunists”¹⁸⁴ and said African Americans would have to bear a greater burden of busing if integration was going to be achieved.¹⁸⁵ Finally, the school board, in an attempt to hold on to its power, rejected everything else in McMurrin’s plan and adopted its own plan, independent of C/100. The plan would have created one magnet high school for computer data processing at Washington and a feeder pattern that would have included Steuben, Wright, and fifteen unidentified elementary schools. Other than that, the school board’s plan relied on an expanded open enrollment to achieve nearly every other aspect of desegregation.¹⁸⁶

Despite the grand vision behind C/100 and the plans of the superintendent and the school board, it was Gronouski’s opinion that mattered most. He favored the superintendent’s plan for the 1976–77 school year but made some modifications. The following points were drawn directly from McMurrin’s plan into Gronouski’s plan:

- a computer specialty program would be established at Washington High School

¹⁸³ David I. Bednarek, “McMurrin’s Proposal Would Bus 7,500,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 14, 1976, 1:1,4; Rick Janka, “Integration Formula Caution Earned,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 14, 1976, 1:5; and Marilyn Kucer, “Keep N. Division Open, Panal Asks,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 14, 1976, 1:1,4.

¹⁸⁴ Jack Dougherty, *More than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 29.

¹⁸⁵ Murphy and Pawasarat, 40.

¹⁸⁶ Montgomery, 451–452.

- high school juniors and seniors would be allowed to spend a half day in school and a half day at one of five racially balanced “satellite specialization centers,” which specialized in the following: art, broadcast communications, exploring the American economy in the Milwaukee area, state and local government, and the American legal system
- Peckham Junior High School would be closed, and the Jackie Robinson Junior High School open education program would move into the old Peckham building
- Eighth Street School (an elementary school located downtown) would become a “multi-unit” junior high school (in other words, a middle school instead of a traditional junior high school)
- a sixth grade would be added to the Steuben multi-unit school, thus fully converting it to what is now viewed as a middle school
- Wilbur Wright Junior High School would become a “fundamental” school for grades seven and eight, in which students would be grouped according to ability level in “fundamental” subjects, such as mathematics, reading, and history
- there would be five magnet schools at the elementary level: open education at McKinley, fundamental education at Philipp, Montessori at MacDowell, gifted and talented at Fourth Street, and a “teacher-pupil learning center” at Jefferson¹⁸⁷

Gronouski also modified a number of elements of McMurrin’s plan:

- white students would not be allowed to transfer to schools that were less than 35 percent black
- black students would not be allowed to transfer to schools that were more than 35 percent black
- students enrolled in schools other than their neighborhood schools could remain there if they were entering their last year of school (twelfth grade in high school, for example) or if their presence at the non-neighborhood school improved its racial diversity
- old North Division High School would be phased out and its students

¹⁸⁷ “Program Descriptions: Options for Learning and Schools for the Transition,” July 28, 1976, Hart Papers, box 1, folder 3; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 17, 1976; Montgomery, 396–398; and *Proceedings*, May 11, 1976.

allowed to choose magnet schools, a suggestion that would prove to be very controversial (see chapter 6)

- a medical, dental, and health program, originally intended for North Division, would go to Rufus King High School
- the planning of the new North Division would be suspended to allow time to rethink the appropriate magnet program to be placed there, including the possibility of a trade and technical school¹⁸⁸

Gronouski also proposed in-service training for school personnel to prepare them for integration.¹⁸⁹ The school board passed a “human relations” plan shortly thereafter, which included mandatory workshops for staff members, optional workshops for parents and community groups, curriculum guides for teaching human relations and cultural awareness, and a human relations coordinator and committee in each school. A human relations office was also established at the MPS central office to provide support to schools,¹⁹⁰ including workshops, curriculum, and mediation of racially charged student conflicts.¹⁹¹

Gronouski stated that further desegregation would require C/100 and other community groups to be a part of future planning. He also included a plan for teacher desegregation that the MTEA, the local teachers’ union, submitted to him—no school would be allowed to have a racial balance of the teaching staff that differed more than

¹⁸⁸ *Proceedings*, May 11, 1976.

¹⁸⁹ *Proceedings*, May 11, 1976.

¹⁹⁰ *Proceedings*, June 1, 1976.

¹⁹¹ Steven Baruch, interview with author, Glendale, WI, July 9, 2010. Baruch was a human relations coordinator at Rufus King High School in 1978–79 and was one of the chief people assigned to prepare the staff for its transformation to a magnet school. He also spent one semester at North Division before going to MPS’s human relations office, where he would be in charge of human relations curriculum.

five percent from the overall ratio of black to white teachers in MPS.¹⁹² The League of Women Voters, the MTEA, and the NAACP also endorsed metropolitan integration, but Gronouski did not take action on that matter.¹⁹³ Judge Reynolds set June 9 for a hearing on the matter.¹⁹⁴

Dissatisfied with Gronouski's plan, which included involuntary busing, some of the school board members decided to submit their own plan, which would have been purely voluntary, to Judge Reynolds.¹⁹⁵ Frustrated by the roadblocks the board was putting in front of him, Gronouski gave up and withdrew his plan.¹⁹⁶ Reynolds ruled against the school board's plan and said it smacked of "the rankest form of deception."¹⁹⁷ He ordered the board to give him a new plan with specific goals for desegregation and specific methods for achieving those goals and set September 30, 1978, as the target date for full desegregation.¹⁹⁸

The new plan, crafted primarily by McMurrin, would phase in desegregation

¹⁹² "Faculty Integration" in a Collection of Papers Relating to the Desegregation/Integration of the Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Public Library Humanities Room, 1976, and *Proceedings*, May 11, 1976. As chapter 3 indicated, MPS had racially segregated its teachers in the 1960s.

¹⁹³ Minutes from the League of Women Voters on February 5, 1976, an "MTEA Fact Sheet," and a NAACP position statement in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 1. Some duplicate records are found in folder 2.

¹⁹⁴ David I. Bednarek, "Judge Gets School Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 24, 1976, 1:1,12.

¹⁹⁵ David I. Bednarek, "Clashes Plague School Board," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 30, 1976, 1:1,19, and David I. Bednarek, "Reynolds Schedules Hearing on Proposal," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 25, 1976, 1:1,4.

¹⁹⁶ David I. Bednarek, "School Plan Withdrawn" or "Judge Rejects School Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 9, 1976, 1:1,9. (The title changed between editions.)

¹⁹⁷ David I. Bednarek, "53 City Schools to Be Integrated," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 10, 1976, 1:1,20, and James Parks, "Board Lawyer Tastes Reynolds' Wrath," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 10, 1976, 1:20. See also Harris, 11.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Stolee, "The Milwaukee Desegregation Case" in *Seeds of Crisis*, ed. John L. Rury and Frank A. Cassell (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 252.

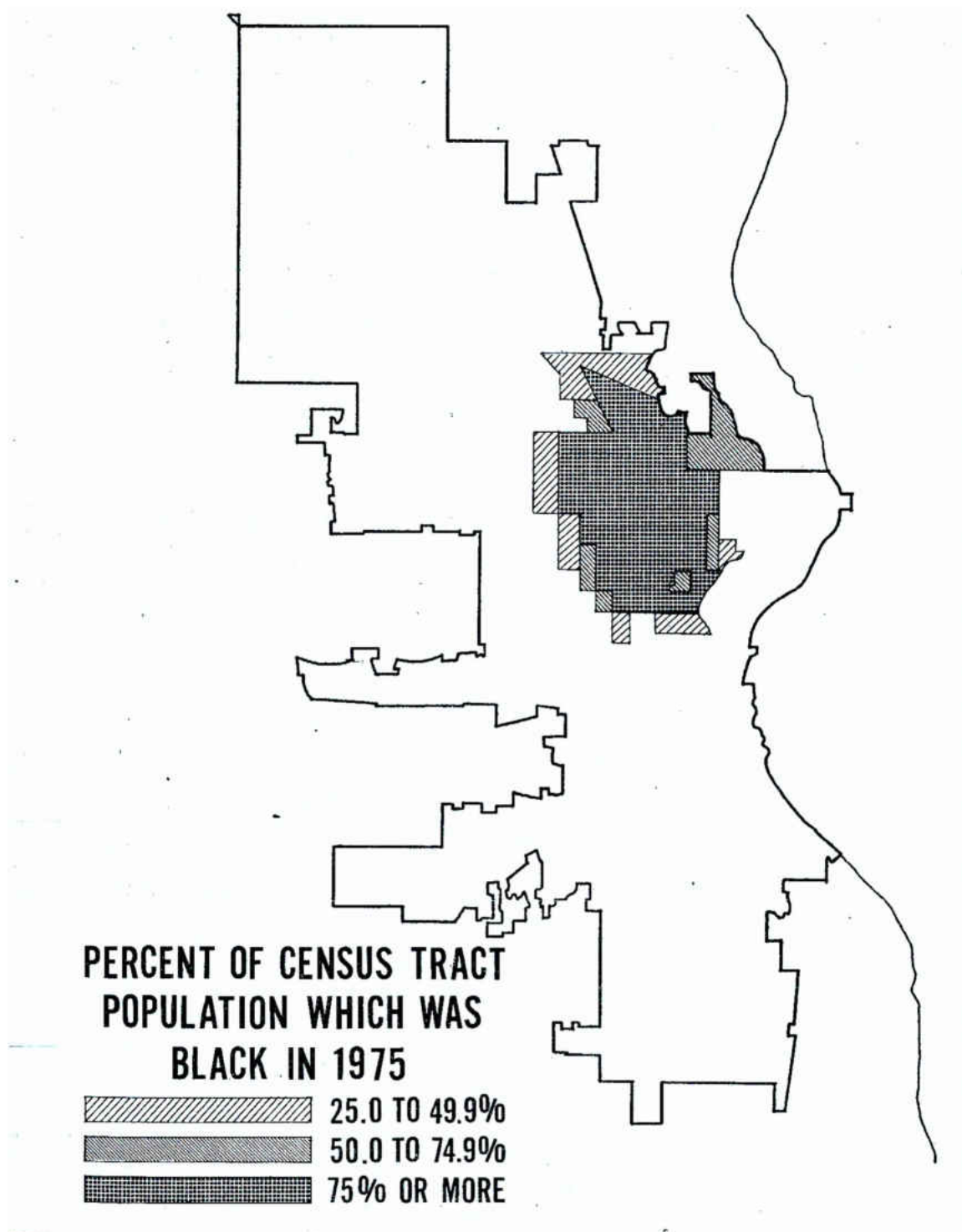
through magnet schools at the high school level, beginning with Washington and Hamilton, the latter of which would acquire a business and marketing specialty, in 1976 and expanding to all high schools by September 1978.¹⁹⁹ Milwaukee would be divided into three zones in 1977, each of which would contain a portion of the central city. The zones would be divided into four leagues, each of which have about twelve elementary schools. The leagues would develop desegregation plans and would not be contiguous. Thus, integration was possible. Each league also would get one of the new magnet schools, which would serve the entire zone.²⁰⁰ In other words, some students would be involuntarily bused, but they would be confined to the leagues and the zones—there would not be involuntary citywide busing. McMurrin hoped the new plan would provide enough integration to make each school 25 to 45 percent black without busing students all the way across town. Reynolds accepted the 1976 component of the plan but wanted a thorough investigation into the 1977–78 aspect of the plan, though he ultimately accepted it after Gronouski made a few modifications.²⁰¹ McMurrin said that he had one of the best curriculum staffs in the United States and that they could develop curriculum that

¹⁹⁹ Montgomery, 453–454.

²⁰⁰ Harris, 12, and Montgomery, 441–517. This plan is not unlike Gousha’s pairing plan, described earlier in this chapter. See figure 9 for a map that shows the African American population in Milwaukee in 1975, figure 10 for a map of the leagues, and figure 11 for a draft of the distribution of elementary magnet schools within the zones. Figures 10 and 11 also show the zones. Original maps found in Office of the Superintendent of Schools, “Preliminary Recommendations for Increasing Educational Opportunities and Improving Racial Balance” (Milwaukee Public Schools, June 25, 1976, printed with corrections on July 15, 1976), 44–47, in John A. Gronouski Papers, 1953–1983 (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Archives), part 4, box 8. Additional copies are in part 4, box 9, and part 5, box unnumbered. An untitled and undated planning document in Gronouski Papers, part 4, box 9, provides a list of schools by league and possible sites for citywide magnet programs. There appear to be a few minor discrepancies between the planning document and the plan that was published in 1977, copies of which are in Hart Papers, box 2, folder 1.

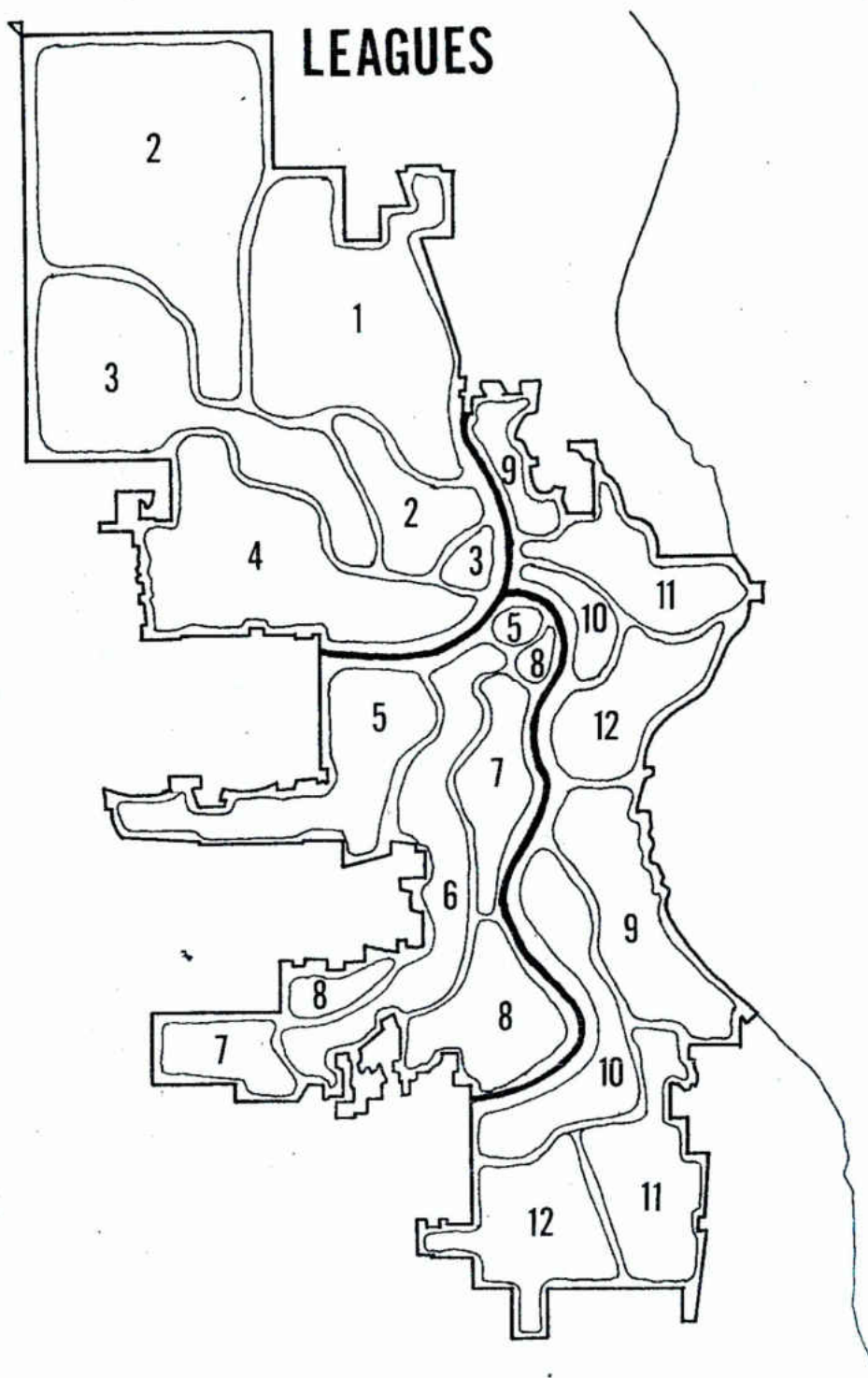
²⁰¹ Stolee, 252–253. See also Harris, 12.

Figure 9



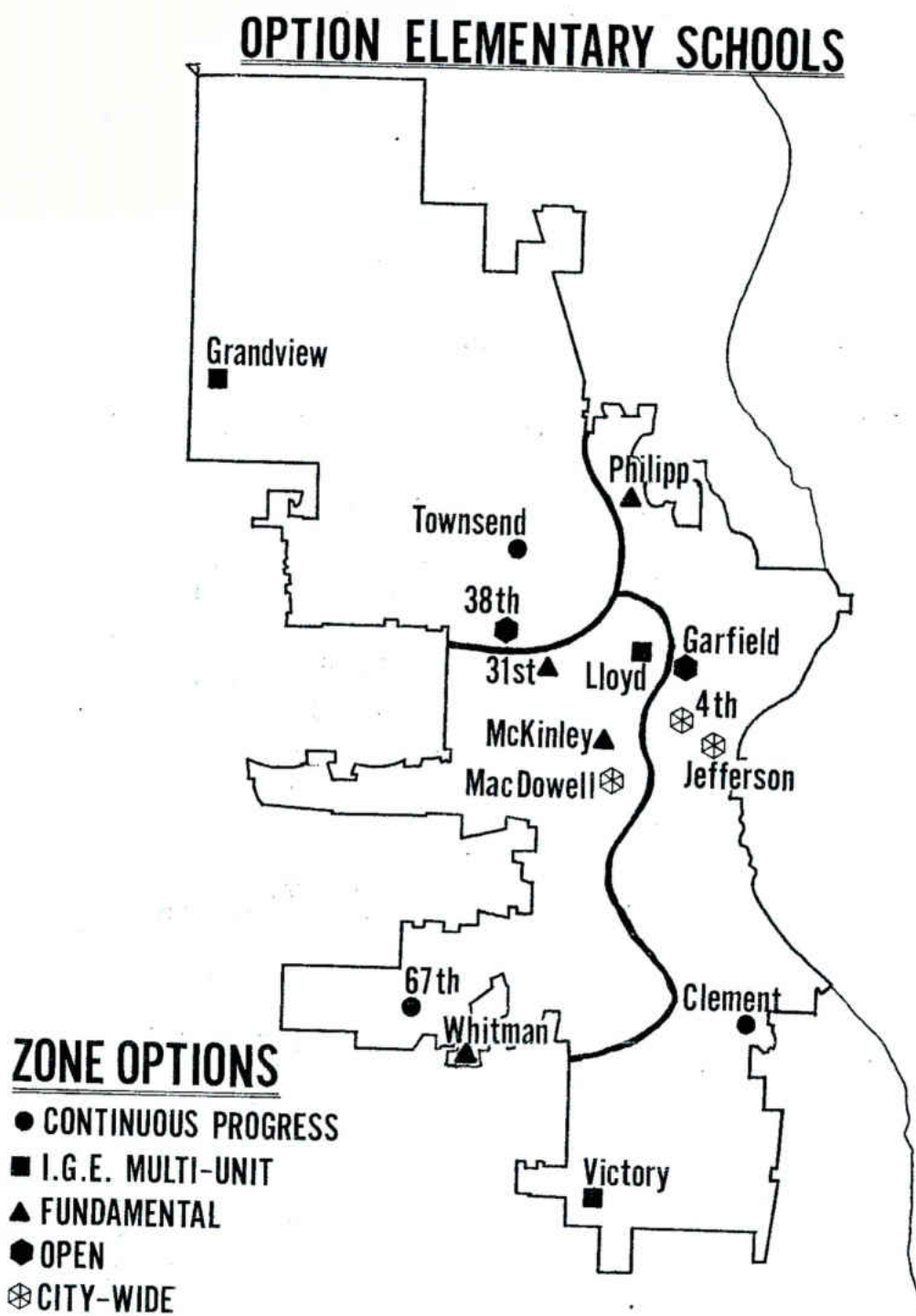
Source: Office of the Superintendent of Schools, "Preliminary Recommendations for Increasing Educational Opportunities and Improving Racial Balance" (Milwaukee Public Schools, June 25, 1976, printed with corrections on July 15, 1976).

Figure 10



Source: Office of the Superintendent of Schools, "Preliminary Recommendations for Increasing Educational Opportunities and Improving Racial Balance" (Milwaukee Public Schools, June 25, 1976, printed with corrections on July 15, 1976).

Figure 11



Source: Office of the Superintendent of Schools, "Preliminary Recommendations for Increasing Educational Opportunities and Improving Racial Balance" (Milwaukee Public Schools, June 25, 1976, printed with corrections on July 15, 1976).

would make students want to choose magnet schools.²⁰² The final plan was about three hundred pages long and included a budget for personnel, training, travel, and equipment for magnet schools, as well as enrollment figures and an evaluation tool, as the judge wanted.²⁰³

Thus, the labyrinth-like planning had concluded. The magnet plan was approved by the school board and Judge Reynolds, though it was designed mostly by the superintendent with only marginal input from C/100. No one else had really devised a comprehensive plan. The cluster committees within C/100 varied based on neighborhood constituencies. Some clusters, like Pulaski and Marshall, were open-minded about magnet school but not about busing. Other clusters, like Washington and Riverside, were more concerned about transforming the nature of education and functions of schools. Still others, like South Division and Hamilton, maintained that there should be no busing and only minimal integration, while the black power movement gained ground in the area around North Division, which was beginning to coalesce around the ideas of community control of schools and self-determination for African Americans. A majority of the school board still did not accept integration but was willing to accept McMurrin's magnet plan out of fear that Judge Reynolds's might impose a plan that used involuntary busing like John Gronouski wanted. However, they also appealed the ruling to the United States Court of Appeals of the Seventh Circuit, which affirmed Reynolds's decision on July 23,

²⁰² Lee McMurrin, "Perspectives on Busing," unpublished manuscript in author's possession, 4.

²⁰³ "Integration Through Educational Alternatives," 1976, in Radtke Papers, box 2, folder 9. See also "Magnet School Program," undated, in folder 11 and "Memorandum in Response to Court Order Requiring Defendants to Devise and Submit a Plan for Desegregating the Public School System," 1977, in folder 11.

1976. They then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.²⁰⁴

McMurrin won—at least temporarily. Students would have a wide array of choices in schools, as long as enough of them did not choose their neighborhood schools. This one restriction on a fundamental choice, which was cherished by so many Milwaukeeans, both black and white, would stick in the craws of many parents (see chapter 6), but implementation began in 1976 anyway (see chapter 5).

²⁰⁴ David I. Bednarek, “New School Appeal Could Go to Voters,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 24, 1976, 1:1,8; “Busalacchi Replies to Critics,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 24, 1976, 1:5; James Parks, “School Panel Unsure of Next Move,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 24, 1976, 1:1,8; *Proceedings*, October 5, 1976; and Michael Stolee, “The Milwaukee Desegregation Case” in *Seeds of Crisis*, ed. John L. Rury and Frank A. Cassell (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 247.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ERA OF FORCED CHOICE:

IMPLEMENTING MILWAUKEE'S MAGNET PLAN, 1976–1986

September 7, 1976, the first day of desegregation, was peaceful but confusing. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) officials desegregated fifty-four schools, one more than what was required by Judge Reynolds's order, which defined racial balance as 25 percent to 45 percent black enrollment. However, over time, whites did not volunteer in the expected numbers, which would make it hard to integrate schools in the second and third year of the integration plan.

Administrators universally reported positive results,¹ but careful examination of the evidence indicates that the success of the magnet program was mixed. The curriculum was mostly well received. There were several problems, however, that did not become apparent until later in the school year. There were problems with teachers, students, transportation, and expensive busing costs. Another complication was that when students did not volunteer, the board had to remove students from neighborhood schools and bus them against their wills, which a student at North Division High School referred to as a "forced choice."² Various advocacy groups raised issues regarding the scale of integration. For, example, on a microscale, even supposedly "integrated" schools

¹ David I. Bednarek, "Schools Hit Mark for Integration," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 8, 1976, 1:1,5; Damien Jaques, "A Day of 'Getting to Know You,'" *Milwaukee Journal*, September 8, 1976, 2:1,5; "Many Laud Smoothness of First Day," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 8, 1976, 2:1,12; and Stuart Wilk, "Integration Off to a Peaceful Start but Delays, Confusion Abound," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 8, 1976, 1:1,13.

² Quoted in *Forced Choice: The Milwaukee Plan: A Model for Northern School Desegregation*, VHS, produced and directed by Jones Cullinan (Milwaukee, WI: Medusa Veritape, 1980).

still experienced racial stratification in that African American students were almost never placed in Superior Ability classes. And from a macroscale, the school board struggled with white migration to the suburbs and proposed metropolitan integration as a corrective measure. What looked like choice in the mid-1970s looked appeared to look like no choice to some people by the mid-1980s.

Surveys show that most Milwaukeeans professed nominal support for integration, but they resented busing as a mechanism for achieving this goal. No one has published more research on this issue than Christine Rossell, a political scientist at Boston University. According to her 1988 study of Boston, Los Angeles, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, white enrollments declined by 21 to 55 percent in schools in these cities in the first year of desegregation—the higher the percentage of African Americans at a particular school, the greater the degree of white flight. Rossell’s study and others like it found that many white families were willing to send their children to schools with African Americans but only under a certain set of conditions. In the view of white parents, African American students could come to “white schools,” but white students should not be forced to ride a bus, especially if the bus had to travel a great distance. In Los Angeles, for example, distance was almost as important as racial composition of a school when parents decided where to send their children to school. In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, it was the third most important criterion, right behind reading test scores. Level of income (social class) was also an important factor in all three districts.³

³ Christine H. Rossell, “Is It the Busing or the Blacks?” *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1988): 139–145. Even proponents of magnet schools recognize that magnets are not enough to draw white students into the inner city. See Charles B. McMillan, *Magnet Schools: An Approach to Voluntary Desegregation* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1980), 23.

Rossell followed her 1988 study with a book in 1990. She analyzed survey data from parents and school personnel in 119 districts across the United States and found that voluntary integration programs were superior in equity, efficiency, and effectiveness to mandatory programs. Rossell cited three sets of evidence to support her claim. First, survey data showed that voluntary programs were seen as more equitable because both African American and white parents were given choices in schools, and parents responded favorably to such choice. Second, the voluntary plan was more effective over time because white students who selected their own schools almost always enrolled, whereas in mandatory plans, on the average, as many as half of the white students assigned to predominantly minority schools failed to enroll. Third, voluntary plans were more effective because they produced greater interracial exposure, which is defined by the proportion of white students in an average minority child's school. Mandatory assignments, on the other hand, usually resulted in white flight from the city, which ultimately increased segregation. Perhaps most strikingly, Rossell found the longer the voluntary plan was in place, the stronger the level of black-white interaction. For example, even though interracial exposure tended to decline over time due to lower birth rates among whites, it remained higher than it would have been in the absence of the plan. Rossell also found that white parents would send their children to magnet schools with rigorous curricula. Using sampling data, Rossell found that magnet schools in heavily minority neighborhoods had white enrollments of 37 percent on average if they had college-preparatory programs. White enrollment declined to 32 percent if students were forced to choose the school, and white enrollment declined even further to less than 10 percent in some schools if they offered career/vocational specialties instead of a college

preparatory specialty.⁴

Other studies support Rossell's findings. James Rosenbaum and Stefan Presser published a study of an anonymous large urban school district in the northeastern United States in 1978 and concluded that when the district chose to move gifted and talented programs from the periphery of city to the inner city, the district actually encouraged white migration. Families left the city for the suburbs to find schools that they thought were better than what remained in their neighborhoods.⁵ Four years later, David Morgan and Robert England published a broader study of fifty-two districts and found opening magnet schools to be less effective than adjusting attendance boundaries and pairing schools.⁶

Milwaukee's experience is also consistent with Rossell's findings. While Rossell did not study Milwaukee, Belden Paulson, a professor of political science at UWM and chair of the Center for Urban Community Development of the UW–Extension studied Rossell's early work, before she published any books, and concluded that Rossell's theories fit Milwaukee.⁷ Additionally, a detailed study of demographics prepared by Dr. Maria Luce, also from the Center for Urban Community Development, showed that

⁴ See Christine H. Rossell, *The Carrot or the Stick for School Desegregation Policy: Magnet Schools or Forced Busing* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), especially 10–19, 115–126, 208, and 211.

⁵ James E. Rosenbaum and Stefan Presser, "Voluntary Integration in a Magnet School," *The School Review* 86, no. 2 (February 1978): 156–186.

⁶ David R. Morgan and Robert E. England, "Large District School Desegregation: A Preliminary Assessment of Techniques," *Social Science Quarterly* 63 (December 1982): 698–700.

⁷ Belden Paulson, "White Flight and School Desegregation," November 3, 1977, in Kathleen Mary Hart, Milwaukee Public Schools Desegregation Collection, 1975–1987, UWM Manuscript Collection 90, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as Hart Papers), box 1, folder 1.

MPS's enrollment was declining, and the decline was particularly sharp among whites and in schools in impoverished neighborhoods. Luce therefore concluded that a magnet school, even one of good quality, would not attract whites to a poor neighborhood.⁸

There was also a consensus on the school board that a school had to have both a good academic reputation and substantial number of white students if it was going to attract other white students.⁹

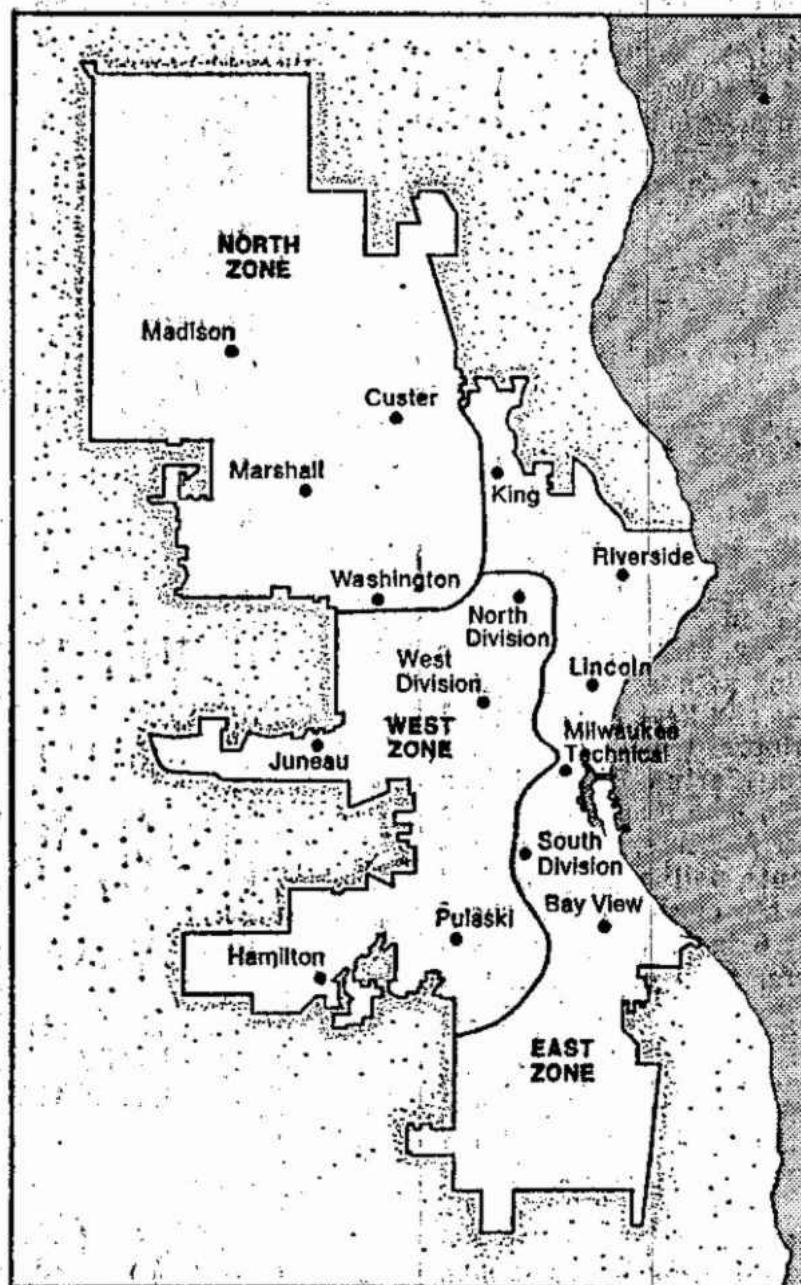
There were only three magnet high schools (Hamilton, Washington, and Milwaukee Trade and Tech) in 1976, the first year of integration. Washington was racially integrated for the moment but the percentage of African American students was rising rapidly. Juniors and seniors enrolled at any high school in MPS were eligible to apply for full- or half-time status at Washington, where they would be able to use computer equipment not available at any other school in the district, including eight computer connections, several (then) high-speed computer terminals, a data entry video terminal, key-to-disk units, and key-to-tape units. Four computer classes were offered—computer applications in business and industry, keyboard data training, introduction to computer science, and advanced programming.¹⁰ In his unpublished

⁸ Maria Luce, "Supportive Data to Facilitate School Integration Planning for the City of Milwaukee" (Center for Urban Community Development, University of Wisconsin–Extension, April 1976), 22–23, in *People United for Integrated and Quality Education Papers* in possession of Robert Peterson, Milwaukee, WI (hereafter cited as *People United*).

⁹ David I. Bednarek, "Panel Orders Talks on North Division," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 31, 1979, 2:1,3.

¹⁰ "Older Pupils Have Role in Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 17, 1976, 1:12. See figure 12, for a map of the high schools. Course descriptions for these courses and other specialized courses available in "High Schools Unlimited: Special Courses Available at Milwaukee's 15 Public High Schools," in *People United*. Specialized courses were offered in art, business, English, foreign languages, home economics, industry, music, physical education, science, social studies, and technical education. Social Studies course titles, for example, included Anthropology; Afro-American Heritage; the Corporation; Environmental Education; Hispano-American Culture, Language, and History; Indian American Culture;

Figure 12



—By a Journal Artist

Map shows the three districts proposed for a new school desegregation plan.

Source: Undated *Milwaukee Journal* article in Kathleen Mary Hart, Milwaukee Public Schools Desegregation Collection, 1975–1987, UWM Manuscript Collection 90, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 1, folder 2.

Minorities in American Society; Philosophy; Political Philosophies; Simulated Social Problems; Water, Air, and Man; Wisconsin History and Geography; and Women's Studies.

manuscript, McMurrin recounts that a student at Washington won a national computer science competition that carried with it a four-year scholarship to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology worth \$48,000. McMurrin lamented that this and other success stories were not given adequate coverage by the media.¹¹

Hamilton, located on the far southwest side, was entirely white but had space available for African Americans. Two courses were offered in word processing and marketing. The word processing classes emphasized (then) modern technologies like electric typewriters, transcribing machines, dictation units, and text editing devices. The other course, Opportunities and Techniques in Marketing, was a double-period class and including training on personnel counseling, public relations, advertising and sales promotion, and purchasing. The curriculum was designed in partnership with the Sales and Marketing Executives Club, the Milwaukee Advertising Club, and the Kiwanis Club. An intern program was scheduled to start in the summer of 1977.¹²

The opportunities at Washington and Hamilton sounded excellent, and Hamilton's program was well received, but few white parents were willing to put their children on a bus to Washington or any other northside school. As Christine Rossell reports, white parents will send their children to magnet schools if the curriculum is rigorous, the bus ride is short, and there are a substantial number of other white students at the school. In the case of Washington, the school was not perceived as good or safe (see chapter 4), and it was an hour away from Hamilton by bus. Hamilton, on the other hand, was viewed as a

¹¹ Lee McMurrin, "Big City Rookie," unpublished manuscript in author's possession, 14.

¹² "Older Pupils Have Role in Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 17, 1976, 1:12.

good school, it was within walking distance for most of its students, and it was very white. Simply put, Hamilton parents had no real incentive to send their children out of their neighborhoods.

The same can be said of the other southside schools—the schools were perceived as good and were close and white. Thus, there was no real reason for whites to change. According to a report from the Milwaukee Urban Observatory at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee only 3 percent of MPS’s white population opted to transfer to specialty schools in 1976, and most inner-city magnet schools were more than 40 percent empty. Black schools were closed to force African American students to choose southside schools.¹³

The superintendent planned to increase the number of magnet high schools from three to nine in the fall of 1977 despite these mixed results. Rufus King High School would be closed as a neighborhood school and would reopen as a citywide school with a college-preparatory program, as a complement to Milwaukee Trade and Technical High School, which was already citywide. An entrance exam would be required for admission to King, and students would take four years of English and two to three years of mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign language. All King students would be expected to participate in extracurricular activities and other supplementary learning opportunities.¹⁴ The other specialties were as follows:

¹³ Pamela J. Sampson; Forward [sic] by Miriam G. Palay and Lois Quinn, *Options, School Desegregation* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Urban Observatory, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1976), I. This is how the term “forced choice” originated. See chapter 6 for more information.

¹⁴ Milwaukee Board of School Directors, *Proceedings of the Board of School Directors* (Milwaukee: The Board of School Directors), January 6, 1976, and February 24, 1977 (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*). The subject of admissions tests for magnet schools has been controversial from the 1970s

- Marshall—communications and media
- Riverside—community, human services, and education
- West Division—law, law enforcement, and protection services
- Juneau—small business management
- South Division—tourism, food service, and recreation¹⁵

South Division High School, the school with the highest percentage of white students on this list above, was assigned the specialty that was least likely to require a college education, while the most demanding specialty went to Rufus King, a majority black school. The intent was obvious, although not spelled out in any of the board documentation—King’s program would attract students from the south side and would integrate the school. The low-skill program at South Division was supposed to attract African Americans to the south side.

Five satellite centers were established to handle 250 juniors and seniors. Students were transported from their schools to the satellite centers for half a day of instruction and received credit for two classes. They attended their regular schools the other half of the day. These satellite centers reflected both the classical and vocational curricula philosophies that had been established at the beginning of the century (see chapter 2). The Milwaukee Art Center hosted an art studio center where students met notable Wisconsin artists. Junior Achievement hosted the other four satellite centers. Students enrolled in the American Legal System Satellite Center met and learned from city, county, state, and federal court officials, law enforcement officers, and law students. Students enrolled in the Broadcast Communications Satellite Center studied broadcasting

until the present time. There have been periods in which no entrance examination was required. An exam is required for most students entering King as of this writing.

¹⁵ *Proceedings*, February 24, 1977.

law, radio and television production and engineering, and sales and business aspects of broadcasting. The satellite center on the American economy in the Milwaukee area had students visit banks, stock exchange offices, factories, and distribution centers to gain an understanding of Milwaukee business and industries. Also, business executives and labor leaders were on hand to discuss their careers. Students in the fifth satellite center, which was on state and local government, were split into small groups in which they would discuss topics and job potentials with various public officials.¹⁶

There also were four magnet junior high schools. As many as 345 students could attend Eighth Street School in downtown Milwaukee. Students were organized into units by grade level in a format that is now referred to as a middle school.¹⁷ The small size was supposed to help the students and faculty get to know one another, and the downtown location was to provide students with learning experiences at Milwaukee's central library, YMCA, and Marquette University, which were all nearby. Open education continued to be the sole mode of instruction at Jackie Robinson, which expanded and moved into the old Peckham building near Washington High School. Because students choose their own course of study in an open environment, it would be possible to find one student working on mathematics, another one reading, and others listening to records or watching a movie. Some of Jackie Robinson's seats were reserved for neighborhood students, but the rest were citywide. Steuben Junior High School, also near Washington High School, would

¹⁶ "Older Pupils Have Role in Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 17, 1976, 1:12.

¹⁷ The Milwaukee School Board approved Superintendent McMurrin's plan to convert junior high schools to middle schools and end the use of six-year junior-senior high schools by September 1978 on April 6, 1977, according to *Proceedings*, April 6, 1977, but some of the junior high schools remained until 1986, according to *Milwaukee Journal*, November 6, 1985.

continue to follow the middle school model it had used for years, but a new feature would be that each unit would emphasize one of four different teaching techniques—open classroom, traditional, individually guided instruction, or science. Finally, Wilbur Wright Junior High, on the northwest side of Milwaukee, would become a “fundamental school,” emphasizing the “basics” of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students would be expected to adhere to a strict dress code and complete all homework assignments, unlike some urban schools in which homework has been optional since the 1970s. Students would be grouped according to ability, and promotion to the next grade level would be based on academic achievement rather than age.¹⁸ As with the other magnet schools, the intent behind the junior high locations was never given, but it seems obvious that all of them were placed in black or transitional neighborhoods in the hope of attracting white students.

Finally, there were fifteen magnet schools at the elementary level. Three of the schools were citywide—a gifted and talented program at Fourth Street Elementary, a Teacher-Pupil Learning Center at Jefferson, and a Montessori program at MacDowell. The other twelve magnet schools were each assigned to one of the twelve elementary school leagues and had programs similar to the ones at the three citywide schools. Although the citywide schools were popular with both black and white students, the

¹⁸ “Older Pupils Have Role in Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 17, 1976, 1:12, and Office of the Deputy Superintendent, “Report to the Special Master on the First Phase of School Desegregation,” Milwaukee Public Schools (October 8, 1976) in Lorraine Radtke Papers, 1947–1981, UWM Manuscript Collection 64, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 2, folder 31 (hereafter cited as Radtke Papers). See LouAnn S. Dickson et al., *Focus on Fundamentals: A Longitudinal Study of Students Attending a Fundamental School* (Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service, 1993); Philip Jones, “All about Those New ‘Fundamental’ Public Schools, What They’re Promising, and Why They’re Catching On,” *American School Board Journal* (1976): 24–31; and Larry Weber et al., “An Evaluation of Fundamental Schools,” *Evaluation Review* 8, no. 5 (1984): 595–614 for more on fundamental schools.

twelve league schools lagged behind in white enrollment—only 219 whites filled the 1,630 seats set aside for them by mid-August. Likewise, fewer than half the necessary number of white students enrolled in any of the four magnet junior high schools as required by Judge Reynolds and Special Master Gronouski. African American enrollment was stronger in the magnet schools—477 African American students occupied 1,198 seats at the elementary level, and the number of African American students in junior high schools exceeded the requirements.¹⁹ In other words, the magnet schools succeeded in attracting some black students but not white ones. It is also worthy to note that African American parents were more likely to bus their older children to magnet school than they were to bus their elementary-age children.

Experts were not surprised in the disparity between black and white enrollment. Herman Goldberg, associate director of the U.S. Office of Education, spoke at a symposium at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee in the summer of 1976 and said voluntary desegregation plans, such as magnet schools, were usually ineffective because too few students volunteered to make the plans work.²⁰ Robert L. Green, dean of the College of Urban Development at Michigan State University and a court expert on more than a dozen desegregation cases, advised Milwaukee teachers that white students simply would not attend black schools no matter how good they were: “Black magnet schools . . .

¹⁹ “Older Pupils Have Role in Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 17, 1976, 1:12. Office of the Superintendent of Schools, “League and Council Proposals for the Development of a Comprehensive Plan for Achieving Racial Balance in Milwaukee’s Schools” (Milwaukee Public Schools, November 15, 1976) and “Preliminary Recommendations for Increasing Educational Opportunities and Improving Racial Balance” (Milwaukee Public Schools, June 25, 1976, printed with corrections on July 15, 1976), 72–78, in John A. Gronouski Papers, 1953–1983 (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Archives), part 4, box 8 (hereafter cited as Gronouski Papers). See also Joseph M. Cronin, “City School Desegregation and the Creative Uses of Enrollment Decline,” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 15, no. 1 (January 1977): 10–12.

²⁰ Rick Janka, “Voluntary Plans Called Failures,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 28, 1976, 1:11.

could have Beethoven teaching music and Einstein teaching math, and they still aren't going to attract whites."²¹

Also, despite what sounded like innovative curricula, some schools could not fully implement their specialty programs. According to Gregory Strong, not all principals provided adequate leadership. Successful principals created cultures that fostered acceptance of all students and emphasized elimination of stereotypes, individualized curriculum, heterogeneous classroom groups, consistent discipline, intra- and extracurricular activities, appropriate training for staff, and parental input and participation. Principals who were successful in those seven areas usually had excellent human relations programs coupled with tutoring and other academic supports. Unfortunately, not all principals were successful in these areas.²²

Another problem, according to the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA, the teachers' union) was that the court had ordered that 14.7 percent of the district's teachers be minorities, but the district had used a figure of 16 percent. When the district could not find enough minority teachers, it left vacancies unfilled that could have gone to white teachers. Seventy-one substitute teachers had to be used to temporarily fill these positions, rather than the district employing available white teachers.²³

Furthermore, the programs were set up so quickly there was not enough time to

²¹ Quoted in Keith Spore, "Voluntary Integration Plan Working, Most Parents Say," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 5, 1976, 1:1,7.

²² Gregory E. Strong, "Metropolitan Desegregation: Administrative Practices and Procedures" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1980), 75–82.

²³ James Coulter, executive director, MTEA, to John Gronouski, November 17, 1976, in Gronouski Papers, part 4, box 9. The substitute teachers could have been of any race.

match teachers and students to the correct schools. Some teachers were waiting in March for materials they had ordered the previous September. A *Milwaukee Journal* reporter observed that most teachers were working hard but that some did not like their school's specialty, and so they made only minimal attempts to implement it. At the time, seniority determined a teacher's assignment, and if a senior teacher wanted to be in a particular school because it was closest to his or her home or because he or she had been at the school prior to the specialty program's implementation, then the senior teacher usually received his or her desired school. Some parents at southside schools reported that African American students had behavior problems. This may have stemmed from what school officials referred to as "misplaced" students. Such students signed up for schools that did not fit their personalities or skills. For example, some students with severe attention problems registered for open education programs, which allow students to pick whatever they want to study and how they want to study it. Those students were poor fits for open education because they needed a lot more supervision and regimented activity than other students.²⁴

There were also major problems with transportation. The costs were very high. For example, four thousand junior and senior high school students would be transported in the first year—a small number compared to the transportation that would come in future years. The board paid \$2.50 per student per week—that is \$10,000 each week for the entire program. Most of the junior and senior high students had to crowd on to existing Milwaukee County Transit System bus routes during rush-hour traffic, while

²⁴ Barbara Koppe, "Problems Still Plague Specialty Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 12, 1977, 2:1,4. The reporter kept the identities of the schools anonymous, probably to encourage teachers to speak freely.

elementary children took regular yellow school buses. The county transit system also had to create twenty special bus routes for hard-to-reach schools, such as Hamilton and Vincent. This forced the county to press spare buses into service, which increased the county expenditures on maintenance, fuel, and drivers.²⁵ Seventy-three bus routes were planned at the elementary school level, fifty-three of which were contracted to Schoolways Transportation, which was nowhere close to prepared to meet its requirements. Some drivers were responsible for more than one simultaneous route because of a driver shortage. The extra routes made them an hour and a half late in the mornings and two hours or more late in the afternoon. In some cases, students on the first route were actually delivered to school very early, to allow drivers to make the second run, and then picked up late, giving them a twelve-hour school day. School staff had to supervise the children in the meantime.²⁶ Taxis were used for emergency work. This cost a minimum of \$6 per ride. There were more than a hundred rides on some days in the first three weeks.²⁷ Although more drivers were eventually hired, Schoolways charged the school district twice the \$2,108 bid in the original contract.²⁸ African Americans were reluctant to join athletic teams at Hamilton because the buses did not run late enough

²⁵ Jeff Browne, "Busing Grows Complex for City Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 17, 1976, 2:1,5, and Dan Patrinos, "Integration Gain Viewed as Loss for Victory School," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 21, 1976, 1:5,7.

²⁶ David I. Bednarek, "Bus Firm Stumbles Over School Pact," *Milwaukee Journal*, 2:1,2; "Bus Wait Gives 5 Year Old a 12 Hour Day," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 9, 1976, 1:1,18; and "Schools Start Switch to Other Bus Firms," *Milwaukee Journal*, 1:1,15.

²⁷ "Bus Woes Ironed Out, Aides Hope," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 15, 1976, 1:5.

²⁸ "Busing Costs Twice as High as Planned," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 24, 1976, 1:8, and "Desegregation Planners Hit Snag," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 23, 1976, 2:1,4.

after school, so some team practices were rearranged to accommodate the bus schedule.²⁹

Also, an odd trend called “double busing” by MPS officials occurred in some places—some students who volunteered for the new magnet schools were sometimes already attending integrated schools. When these students transferred to the magnet schools, they created vacancies at their original schools, and replacement students *of the same race* had to be bused to fill the vacant seat. Thus, the school was not any more integrated than it had been before, but one student was bused out, another was bused in, and MPS covered the cost of two bus rides to keep the status quo.³⁰ Conservative taxpayers—both black and white—later criticized this practice for financial reasons.³¹

The superintendent ordered planning for the 1977–78 school year in the fall of 1976, despite the unexpected problems. Meetings were conducted in each league and coordinated by the Committee of 100 (C/100). One issue that had to be addressed was the needs of Latino students. Some people considered Latinos white in 1976, but other people said they were a minority group. If they were white, then the school board would have to send some of them to northside schools as part of the integration plan. But state and federal law also required the board to provide Latino students with bilingual education, which would be difficult to do if Latinos were dispersed to schools across the city. Therefore, the board declared Latino students a minority group. Doing so allowed the board to create bilingual programs at magnet schools and count them as part of the

²⁹ Arlo Coplin, interview with author, Greendale, WI, August 17, 2010.

³⁰ *Proceedings*, December 7, 1976.

³¹ “Recommendations for the Milwaukee Public Schools Integration Plan” in People United papers.

integration effort.³² This approach also allowed students to attend school close to home, which, as explained in previous paragraphs, is something parents wanted.

Magnet programs would continue to develop at the high school level in 1977. Because Marshall was going to become a broadcasting school, the satellite center in that field could be eliminated. The other four satellite centers continued and were joined by four additional programs for a total of eight centers. The four new programs were in environmental science, “Exploring the Consumers’ 3Rs/Role, Rights, and Responsibilities,” library media, and “Writing Laboratory in Advertising.”³³

While the school board was holding all these meetings and community groups were writing all these plans at the superintendent’s request, the school board was still appealing its case to the United States Supreme Court. The appeal became the major issue in the spring school board elections. Six of the fifteen seats were open. Anthony Busalacchi, now considered part of the conservative board majority, was running for reelection and was very vocal. He was a moderate conservative and said he supported integration but also that involuntary busing would cause “middle and upper income families [to] abandon the cities.”³⁴ Reynolds wanted the schools fully integrated by 1979. Busalacchi agreed that students should be integrated, and he supported magnet schools.

³² *Proceedings*, October 5, 1976. The two best histories of bilingual education in MPS are Luis Antonio Báez, “From Transformative School Goals to Assimilationist and Remedial Bilingual Education: A Critical Review of Key Precedent-Setting Hispanic Bilingual Litigation Decided by Federal Courts Between 1974 and 1983” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1995) and Juana Alejandrina Vargas-Harrison, “A History of Hispanic Bilingual Education in Milwaukee’s Public Schools: People, Policies, and Programs, 1969–1988” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1995).

³³ *Proceedings*, February 24, 1977.

³⁴ Quoted in Rick Janka, “15 Hopefuls State Views on Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 7, 1977, 1:5,6.

But he also believed that three years was not enough time to change whites' opinion about sending their children to school with African Americans. Thus, any three-year plan could be fulfilled only if it included involuntary busing. Busalacchi preferred a much longer time line that would give residence patterns time to change. If neighborhoods integrated on their own, then schools would integrate without involuntary busing.³⁵ Most of the other fifteen candidates, including two other incumbents³⁶ and newcomer Lawrence O'Neil, who lived in the all-white Hamilton High School neighborhood, agreed.³⁷

O'Neil reflected the prominent opinion in the Hamilton neighborhood. Jeff Kartz, the student representative to the Hamilton Cluster, recalled that many parents were opposed to any kind of integration. He said it was as though they were fighting a battle they had already lost. He also recalled that he was often the only representative from the Hamilton cluster who voted in favor of integration policies and that an angry mother actually hit him at a C/100 meeting because she did not agree with his votes. He said Police Chief Harold Brier lived in the Hamilton neighborhood and had expressed concern that integration would increase crime.³⁸

MPS moved ahead anyway. The Hamilton Cluster relented and asked for a medical speciality, rather than wait for a specialty to be imposed. But Superintendent McMurrin turned Hamilton down, so that he could later assign the medical speciality to

³⁵ Anthony S. Bussalacchi, "Busalacchi Defends Appeal," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 9, 1977, 1:14.

³⁶ Rick Janka, "15 Hopefuls State Views on Schools," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 7, 1977, 1:5,6.

³⁷ "O'Neil Decries Forced Busing," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 29, 1977, 1:5, and Lennox Samuels, "Says Integration Can't Be Forced," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 28, 1980.

³⁸ Jeff Kartz, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, October 10, 2010.

North Division in the hope that he could attract white students to the north side of the city. Hamilton then asked for two specialties—business and performing arts.³⁹ While Hamilton did receive the business speciality, the superintendent gave Bay View High School was given the performing arts program. The rigorous college preparation programs were all assigned to northside schools, and were thus not available to hold southside white students in place and reduce their migration to the suburbs (see “High Schools Unlimited” later in this chapter). Frustrated with the whole process, the Hamilton cluster committee declared it was abstaining from further C/100 activities until new guidelines were issued by the school board and new elections were held for C/100.⁴⁰

According to a survey by the Social Science Research Facility at UW–Milwaukee, 60 percent of all Milwaukeeans supported integrated schools, though support was stronger in the black community (77 percent) than in the white community (57 percent). This was an improvement over a survey from 1976 that showed only 46 percent of Milwaukeeans supported integration.⁴¹ But, as the board majority had indicated, that was not the important issue. Of greater concern was what to do if Gronouski’s quota for the second year of integration could not be met. Gronouski had proposed the following for the 1977–78 school year:

- 106 elementary and junior high schools would have black enrollments of 25 to 50 percent
- 26 schools would have black enrollments of 20 to 65 percent
- 26 schools would have black enrollments of 15 to 75 percent

³⁹ Memo from Hamilton Cluster Delegates to the Committee of 100 and the Board of School Directors, June 2, 1976, in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 1.

⁴⁰ “Hamilton Cluster to Quit C-100,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 5, 1976, 1:8.

⁴¹ Kenneth R. Lamke, “Support Stays for Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 5, 1977, 1:1,9.

- all high schools would have to fit one of the three categories above by the fall of 1978⁴²

McMurrin, who, unlike the board majority, actually had a good working relationship with Gronouski, did not believe it was possible to desegregate that many schools by fall. North Division High School, for example, had an entirely African American student population, which means the school would have required high degrees of busing both in and out of the neighborhood. McMurrin instead proposed that one-third of the schools be desegregated in addition to the first third that had already been desegregated, which was a few schools less than Gronouski's quotas.⁴³ Without this latitude, McMurrin might have had to involuntarily remove students from neighborhood schools.⁴⁴

Ian Harris, a local expert on desegregation, conducted a survey of Milwaukeeans in 1977. According to his data, seventy-four percent of all respondents opposed involuntary busing. The racial breakdown was 78 percent for whites and 65 percent for African Americans. Thus, fewer than half of all African Americans in the poll supported involuntary busing. Furthermore, 61 percent of the white respondents said the school

⁴² "Reconsider, McMurrin Asks Gronouski," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 21, 1977, 1:5. See also "Milwaukee Board of School Directors' Milwaukee-Austin Plan for the Desegregation of Court Determined Identifiable Constitutional Violations with Present Segregative Effects" [sic] and "Memorandum in Response to Court Order Requiring Defendants to Devise and Submit a Plan for Desegregating the Milwaukee Public School System by September 30, 1978," January 3, 1977, in Gronouski Papers, part 4, box 8. Some duplicate documents are in Radtke Papers, box 2, folder 13.

⁴³ Lee McMurrin to the Milwaukee Board of School Directors, April 1, 1977, in Office of the Superintendent, "Specific School Plans Recommended to the Board of School Directors Pursuant to the March 17, 1977 Order of the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Wisconsin," April 6, 1977, in Gronouski Papers, part 4, box 8; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 6, 1977; and *Proceedings*, December 28, 1966.

⁴⁴ Ian M. Harris, "The Committee of 100: Citizen Participation in Desegregation," (unpublished report, Milwaukee Public Library, 1977), 13.

board should continue the appeal (though only 38 percent of African American respondents felt the same way).⁴⁵ These data fit well with the work of Christine Rossell and others who show that parents support integration when the program is voluntary, schools are good, and the bus rides are short.

Not surprisingly, when voters went to the polls they reelected Busalacchi and two other conservative incumbents. They also voted for O'Neil. Therefore, the conservative majority widened from 8–7 to 9–6. Voters in several suburban districts also defeated referenda that would have authorized the creation of voluntary transfer plans with the city.⁴⁶ Thus, integration suffered setbacks on two fronts. The new, larger board majority vowed to continue the appeal, and McMurrin vowed to go ahead and desegregate the schools no matter the outcome of the appeal.⁴⁷ However, newspapers and interviews do not indicate a strained relationship between the board and superintendent. Everyone still seemed to think he was a nice, easy-going man.⁴⁸

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling on June 29, 1977. It agreed with the plaintiffs that MPS was deliberately segregated, but it ruled that the scope of the remedy had to match the scope of the offense. In other words, the final plan Reynolds approved

⁴⁵ Kenneth R. Lamke, "Support Stays for Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 5, 1977, 1:1,9. The raw data are available in John H. Blexrud and Paul Tsao, eds., *Data Reference Book for Political, Desegregation, and Crime Studies in Milwaukee and Wisconsin, 1975–1976* (Milwaukee Journal/Milwaukee Sentinel and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1977), 173–188.

⁴⁶ Rick Janka and Marilyn Kucer, "Conservatives Gain School Seat," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 6, 1977, 1:1,7.

⁴⁷ "McMurrin Says Integration Won't Halt," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 25, 1977, 1:5.

⁴⁸ Anthony Busalacchi interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, July 7, 2010; Doris Stacy, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 30, 2010; and Leon Todd, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 28, 2010.

may have gone beyond the scope of the desegregation. The Supreme Court then sent the case back to the Court of Appeals in Chicago for further study.⁴⁹ Barbee and his associates asked the appellate court to remand the case to Reynolds,⁵⁰ which it did in early September. The appellate court also eliminated the special master position,⁵¹ which cleared the way for McMurrin to implement whatever program he wanted, as long as he could get it approved by the school board and the judge.⁵² Reynolds was told to ask for legal briefs and to begin listening to new testimony.⁵³

The second year of integration proceeded while both sides prepared their legal cases. The use of yellow school buses for elementary school students expanded, and McMurrin wanted to minimize the number of busing-related problems. So he asked the school board to add more routes, shift school start times and extracurricular times, and hire a lot more personnel—instead of one transportation director and a secretary, there was a director, an assistant director, three secretaries, a rider supervisor, a route specialist, twenty staff who would ride the buses and monitor efficiency, and a \$300,000-per-year consulting firm to help monitor progress.⁵⁴ A plan this expansive would be expensive,

⁴⁹ *Brennan vs. Armstrong*, 433 U.S. 672 (1977), and Stolee, 247–248, 253.

⁵⁰ *Armstrong vs. Brennan*, 566 F.2d 1175 (7th Cir. 1977), and *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 23, 1977.

⁵¹ David I. Bednarek, “Board Delays Plan for Special Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 26, 1977, 2:1.

⁵² Murphy and Pawasarat, 40.

⁵³ Marilyn Kucer, “Schools Back Working on Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 9, 1977, 1:5,14, and “Schools Case Resolution Far Off,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 10, 1977, 1:5.

⁵⁴ Rick Janka, “Teacher Strike Will Halt All School Bus Service,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 6, 1977, 1:5.

and that would make busing vulnerable to criticism from fiscal conservatives.

The final plan for the fall of 1977 called for busing for more than fourteen thousand of the one hundred thousand students in MPS to 102 schools. Rather than allow each school to set its own start time, the administration determined the schedule. Half the elementary schools started at 8:35 a.m., while the other half started at 9:35. All high schools began at 7:45, and all middle schools and junior highs began at 8:30. The purpose of this staggered schedule was to allow school bus drivers to pick up students and drop them off at schools that began early, then double back and pick up students who attended schools that started later. The district was able to save money this way because buses were used twice, but mass confusion resulted. Some students lived only a few blocks from their school but were just on the other side of their school's district boundary. Hence, they were attending a school technically outside their neighborhood and were therefore eligible for transportation,⁵⁵ while at least a hundred other students who lived farther away received no transportation. Many of the marooned students were white and had volunteered for integration. "How can we integrate if we can't get to the school?" one parent wondered. Other white parents said they were going to put their children back into neighborhood schools.⁵⁶ A shortage of drivers meant that four-year-old kindergarteners could not be bused, even when their parents volunteered to be part of

⁵⁵ Rick Janka, "Bus Is a Vital Medium in School Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 2, 1977, 1:5,10.

⁵⁶ Rick Janka, "'Isolates' Have No Way to Get to Their Schools," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 14, 1977, 1:5.

integration.⁵⁷ Bus routes changed constantly to accommodate changes in enrollments or mistakes—an average of twenty changes per day in September. As a result, students were never quite sure of where or when their buses were going to pick them up.⁵⁸ These mishaps also disrupted the state’s school census, conducted every year by the third Friday in September, which meant MPS received less state aid than that to which it was entitled.⁵⁹

With two-thirds of schools having to be integrated, the costs of busing soared by 58 percent by the end of the 1976–77 school year. That was an increase of 184 percent since desegregation began in 1976. And while the average cost of busing was \$115 per pupil in Wisconsin, it was \$347 per pupil in Milwaukee. The total cost increased from \$894,000 in the 1975–76 school year, one year prior to integration, to \$3.6 million in 1976–77. It then increased to an estimated \$6.8 million in 1977–78, which was more than 5 percent of the MPS budget for that school year. If transportation costs not related to integration, such as busing for special education students or taxis for students who were marooned at school without a bus, were included, then transportation costs rose to \$12.1 million. Bus companies were paid \$62,050 per day for 668 buses traveling 1,437 routes. At least one school, MacDowell School, was serviced by as many as thirty-two buses. Flaws in the planning process, as described in the last paragraph, resulted in

⁵⁷ Rick Janka, “Driver Lack Cuts Buses for 4 Year Olds,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 16, 1977, 1:1,16.

⁵⁸ Jeff Aikin, “School Bus Routes Shift Daily,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 24, 1977, 1:5.

⁵⁹ Rick Janka, “Busing Woes Cited in Loss of School Aid,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 23, 1977, 1:1,12. The state of Wisconsin gives districts an amount of money each year on a per-pupil basis. This aid is based on the number of students enrolled in the district by the third Friday in September, referred to as the “third Friday count” in the vernacular.

contracts with bus companies that had to be negotiated at the last minute, which led to price gouging.⁶⁰

The need to sign bus contracts quickly did not give MPS a chance to do adequate research on the transportation companies, which also contributed to the high cost of busing. ARA Transportation, for example, put in a bid that was unrealistically low and sharply increased prices after the contract was signed. In fact, it was accused of deliberately underestimating costs to win a contract from the school board.⁶¹ Bribery may also have been involved, as school board director Anthony Busalacchi accused the MPS purchasing agents of accepting free lunches from some of the transportation companies.⁶² Parents also raised concerns about safety problems on buses.⁶³

With the growing minority population in the city, MPS sought to attract white students from the suburbs to the magnet schools through the Chapter 220 program (see chapter 6). Busing to and from the suburbs went much more smoothly than busing within the city. Buses were still late, but students were integrated in the schools, at least at the elementary level. The Milwaukee students and the suburban administrators reported that students were friendly to one another and that teachers treated the Milwaukee students as

⁶⁰ “Accelerating Bus Costs Need Brake,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 22, 1978, 1:8, and Louis Liebovich, “School Busing Costs Rise 58%,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 18, 1978, 1:5,8.

⁶¹ Louis Liebovich and Bill Hurley, “Bus Firm Operates at Desegregation Sites,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 1, 1978, 1:5,12, and “Pupils Lose Bus Service,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 23, 1978, 1:4.

⁶² “Fund Woes Pose Bus Strike Peril,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 24, 1978, 1:1.

⁶³ Louis Liebovich, “Bus Checks Found Violations,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 21, 1978, 1:1,7; Louis Liebovich, “Find 35% of Buses Unsafe,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 19, 1978, 1:1,14; Louis Liebovich, “School Bus Manager Cited Safety Peril,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1978, 1:1,4; “Seven Named to School Bus Study Group,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 9, 1978, 2:11; and August 22, 1978.

they would any other students.⁶⁴ Again, these were mostly unilateral (“one-way”) transfers. Nicolet High School, for example, took in fifty-three Milwaukee students in 1977–78 but sent only five students to Milwaukee schools.⁶⁵ However, those suburban students who did transfer to the city reported mostly positive experiences after an initial period of adjustment.⁶⁶

Gronouski also established a monitoring board to watch for problems in 1977. The board was composed of fifteen volunteers, many of whom were chosen by C/100, and targeted twenty-five schools during the first week of school, including three high schools, five junior highs, and seventeen elementary schools. They went to other schools after the first week and were required to make at least one school visit per month. When interviewed, monitors, most of whom were white, expressed concern about the treatment of African American students in white schools. As long-time education activist Bob Peterson explained, “Equal education and quality education aren’t limited to what’s going on in the school statistic books. It goes into curriculum and attitudes.”⁶⁷

Peterson was a member of People United for Integrated and Quality Education and a paraprofessional in MPS at the time. He would later become a teacher at Fratney Elementary School (now known as La Escuela Fratney) and a founding editor of

⁶⁴ *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 31 and September 7, 1977. Of course, one would expect such positive reports to run in a newspaper at the beginning of the school year.

⁶⁵ “Board Backs More Pupil Transfers,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 8, 1978, 1:6.

⁶⁶ David I. Bednarek, “Students Offer Insight,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 26, 1977, 1:1,22.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Rick Janka, “Watchful Army Alerted to School Trouble Spots,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 1, 1977, 1:5,14. The monitoring board’s organizational structure is explained in “Special Master’s Monitoring Board,” Gronouski Papers, part 4, box 9. Training materials and observation forms are in Gronouski Papers, part 4, box 9, and Hart Papers, box 2, folders 3–4. See also Harris, 14.

Rethinking Schools, a liberal magazine, particularly on issues of race.⁶⁸ He was elected president of the MTEA in 2011.⁶⁹ He said the monitors were trained to look for problems with late buses, African American students who were improperly assigned, African American students who were unfairly labeled for special education, language barriers with Spanish-speaking students, schools that made it difficult for bused students to participate in extracurricular activities, and curricula geared to “the white male majority viewpoint.” He offered Riverside High School, where the Superior Ability classes were nearly all white, while the rest of the school was of mixed ethnicity, as an example of racial inequality.⁷⁰

Peterson said the monitoring boards were a mixed success. Teachers viewed the monitors as suspicious outsiders, and “principals would lock themselves in their offices” rather than do human relations work.⁷¹ According to Ian Harris, the last thing the school board wanted was “citizens snooping around the schools.”⁷² Plans made by the

⁶⁸ Robert Peterson, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, August 16, 2010.

⁶⁹ “Activist Will Lead Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 22, 2011.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Rick Janka, “Watchful Army Alerted to School Trouble Spots,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 1, 1977, 1:5,14. A memo in the People United Papers dated April 6, 1976, from the Franklin Pierce School Advisory Committee to the Riverside cluster committee demanded a new multicultural curriculum, expansion of bilingual education, and an end to “tracking.” According to the memo, 60 percent of Riverside’s students were African American or Hispanic, but 90 percent of the students in the college-bound track were white. A duplicate copy is in Radtke Papers, box 2, folder 5. Evidence of internal segregation in magnet schools in other parts of the United States was reported in James E. Rosenbaum and Stefan Presser, “Voluntary Integration in a Magnet School,” *The School Review* 86, no. 2 (February 1978): 156–186. Many scholarly articles have been written on the disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education. Daniel J. Losen and Gary Orfield, eds., *Racial Inequity in Special Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2002) is one of the best collections of articles on the subject.

⁷¹ Robert Peterson interview.

⁷² Harris, 15.

monitoring board were not always implemented well. At Pulaski High School, for example, the student-run human relations committee was given some training, and it wrote a multicultural handbook for the school and made plans for a newsletter, a “rumor control center,” and interracial dances and clubs.⁷³ Few of these activities happened, and the racial composition of clubs remained overwhelmingly white, except the drill team, which was predominantly African American. Student hall monitors were all white, which contributed to racial tension. A group of African American students and a group of white students exchanged money for drugs at a bus stop on Twenty-Seventh and Oklahoma near the school. It almost turned violent when no drugs came forth, but the monitors intervened and got the money back without the principal’s knowing.⁷⁴

Planning also began for the 1978–79 school year. This would be the third year of integration, at which point the court demanded that all schools be integrated, which Reynolds’ defined as 15 to 75 percent black. This was a very difficult task, considering that only about half the schools were counted as integrated by September 1977.⁷⁵ Indeed, only 73 of the required 102 schools met the required racial balance.⁷⁶ Furthermore, several schools were still nearly 100 percent black, including Auer Avenue Elementary, Parkman and Fulton Junior Highs, and North Division and Rufus King High Schools. More white students had to be transferred into those schools for MPS to comply with the

⁷³ Gronouski Papers, part 4, box 9.

⁷⁴ Robert Peterson interview. “Human relations” was the term used to describe activities that fostered racial tolerance.

⁷⁵ Rick Janka, “Schools Work on ‘78 Plan,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 3, 1977, 1:5.

⁷⁶ Marilyn Kucher, “Schools Back Working on Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 9, 1977, 1:5,14.

court order,⁷⁷ so magnet programs were introduced to the remaining high schools.

Madison received a program called “Earth, Energy, and Environment,” North Division was assigned a “Medical, Dental, and Health” specialty to attract white students; a program on truck transportation went to Pulaski; and Vincent, being in a part of the city that still had farms, acquired a program on agribusiness and natural resources. The magnet program was so extensive that Harold Hohenfeldt, who was a supervisor of social studies teachers at the time, was appointed to the new position of “Magnet School Coordinator.” The complete magnet program, as it would be for several years, is listed below:⁷⁸

Options for Learning program (one of each of these in elementary schools in every area of the city):

- multi-unit, individually guided education (IGE)
- basic fundamental
- open education
- creative arts
- gifted and talented
- German language⁷⁹
- Montessori education
- bilingual-bicultural (Spanish) centers

Schools for the Transition program (junior high schools):

- middle schools
- multi-unit, IGE
- basic fundamental
- open education
- gifted and talented
- career orientation
- bilingual-bicultural (Spanish) centers

⁷⁷ Rick Janka, “Schools Work on ‘78 Plan,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 3, 1977, 1:5.

⁷⁸ *Proceedings*, November 2 and 16, 1977.

⁷⁹ McMurrin was especially proud of the German Immersion School, the support it had from the large German American community in Milwaukee, and the positive response from African American students enrolled at the school. See McMurrin, “Big City Rookie,” 6.

High Schools Unlimited program:

- Bay View—visual and performing arts
- Custer—applied technology
- Hamilton—marketing and business communication
- Juneau—small business management
- Rufus King—college preparatory academy (citywide)
- Lincoln—finance and commerce
- Madison—earth, energy, and environment
- Marshall—communication and media
- Milwaukee Trade and Technical High School (citywide)
- North Division—medical, dental, and health
- Pulaski—transportation
- Riverside—community human services and education
- South Division—tourism, food service, and recreation
- Washington—computer data processing
- West Division—law, law enforcement, and protective service
- Vincent—agribusiness and natural resources⁸⁰

King and Milwaukee Trade and Tech were the only high schools on the list above that were designated as citywide. In other words, any student in any part of the city could attend those schools, and all students were required to take classes in the specialty.⁸¹

King High School was (and still is) the flagship of the magnet schools. King had been a neighborhood school of nine hundred students, only one of whom was white, in 1977.

But MPS cleared the school out in 1978 so that only sixteen former students returned when King reopened as a citywide magnet school for college-bound students in

September. There were 345 students in the high school program, about 52 percent of

⁸⁰ *Proceedings*, November 2 and 16, 1977. Vincent did not open until 1979, according to Rick Janka, “High School Starts from Scratch in Properly Rural Surroundings,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 29, 1979, 1:5,16. I can find no references to the satellite centers after the 1977–78 school year, but the general feeling among people I interviewed is that they were no longer needed after Bay View and Lincoln high schools received programs in fall 1978. Custer had been floated as a north side technical school for years. In fact, the idea of establishing a second trade school in Milwaukee goes back to the 1930s. See William Lamers, *Our Roots Grow Deep*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, 1974), 41–43, and *Proceedings*, April 7, 1931, October 3, 1933, and January 10, 1939.

⁸¹ *Proceedings*, November 2, 1978.

whom were white, and 410 students in the middle school program, about 56 percent of whom were white. Principal William Larkin reported students were eager to learn, and students said they liked their new surroundings. It was (and still is) a fully integrated magnet school succeeding in the mission for which it was designed—to prepare all its students for college.⁸²

The other schools had neighborhood status instead of citywide status, which meant they were required to accept neighborhood students even if the students did not enroll in their specialities. Each school was also required to accept any student who enhanced racial diversity at the school, even if a student did not enroll in the specialty. Likewise, some elementary schools and junior high schools on the list above were citywide, while others were neighborhood specialty schools. This arrangement was set up to please parents who wanted their children to attend neighborhood schools but who did not have a neighborhood school other than the one with the magnet program (see chapter 6).

There were also the now-familiar problems when the buses rolled out in September 1978, including a shortage of bus drivers. One company, Handicabs, had only four of the thirty-two drivers it needed. Of the 1,177 scheduled bus routes, thirty-six did not run or had major problems that affected hundreds of students.⁸³ Special education students were particularly affected, as a number of route changes were made without

⁸² Bill Hurley, “Serious Study Is the Specialty at Rufus King,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 6, 1978, 1:5.

⁸³ “City School Buses Need 100 Drivers,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 17, 1978, 1:5, and Rick Janka, “83,000 Attend School Start,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 6, 1978, 1:1,12.

notifying parents.⁸⁴ Rufus King reported that some students were picked up late, while others were not picked up at all.⁸⁵

New measures were introduced to ensure that the buses would be on time, including new contracts with transportation companies that required a \$20 fine be paid each time a bus was more than thirty minutes late. Students who changed residences were required to attend a neighborhood school or a school on an existing bus route. The previous policy allowed students to move without changing schools, which meant MPS had to alter bus routes to match the new homes, a process that caused more than one thousand route changes in 1977–78 and slowed down drivers so they were late for some deliveries. The new policy was designed to eliminate these problems.⁸⁶

As the year got underway, so did the collection of new evidence for the remand trial. Though Barbee had not fully won his case yet, most of the integrationists' goals, such as ending intact busing, ending a racially biased transfer system, and giving parents the power to choose where their children went to school, had been achieved by the late 1970s, making the continued legal challenge seem less relevant to many people. Intact busing stopped in 1971, and most students were attending integrated schools by 1977, though not all the court-imposed goals had been met.⁸⁷ Finally, as schools were

⁸⁴ Rick Janka, "Parents Not Aware of New Bus Routes," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 2, 1978, 1:5.

⁸⁵ Bill Hurley, "Serious Study Is the Specialty at Rufus King," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 6, 1978, 1:5.

⁸⁶ Rick Janka, "Late Bus Penalties Planned," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 16, 1978, 1:5.

⁸⁷ David I. Bednarek, "McMurrin's Hope: End of Litigation," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 3, 1978, 2:2; Jeff Browne, "Desegregation Suit a History Lesson," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 12, 1978, 2:1,5; "Final Order Entered in Discrimination Case," *Milwaukee Courier*, January 6, 1979, 1,3; and "School Board Offers to Settle," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 3, 1978, 2:2.

converted to magnet status, they could be partially restaffed under a plan approved by the teachers' union.⁸⁸

Nonetheless, the trial reopened in Reynolds' courtroom in January 1978. The new trial focused on the intent of the school board in the 1960s. All of the old evidence from the first trial was reexamined. More attention was focused on the racially biased teacher transfer system from the 1960s.⁸⁹ The past practice of intact busing also came under close scrutiny. Almost a thousand new pieces of evidence were introduced.⁹⁰ Assistant Superintendent Robert Long testified that African American students who were bused intact were not allowed to mix with white students, although white students when he had taught in the 1950s and 1960s had mingled freely with the population of the host school.⁹¹ African American teachers and a white union representative testified about the administration's intent to segregate, and administrators testified about private conversations held with school board members in which the administration was told to keep the schools segregated.⁹²

⁸⁸ Rick Janka, "Teacher Desegregation Going Smoothly," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 1, 1978, 1:5.

⁸⁹ Rick Janka, "Black School Staff Fears Testifying, Judge Told," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 4, 1978, 1:1,4; Rick Janka, "Black Teachers Placement Policy Charged," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 6, 1978, 1:5; and Rick Janka, "Integration Still Part of Fall School Plans," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 3, 1978, 1:5.

⁹⁰ "Expert Says Board Acts Fostered Segregation," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 11, 1978, 1:5; "Racism Hidden Between Lines'," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 9, 1978, 1:5; and Stolee, 253.

⁹¹ Jeff Browne, "Desegregation Suit a History Lesson," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 12, 1978, 2:1,5; and *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 13, 1978.

⁹² Dougherty, 163, and miscellaneous witness statements in Lloyd A. Barbee Papers, 1933–1982, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 16 and Milwaukee Micro Collection 42, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 160, folders 19–20. The evidence from the remand trial fills fifty-five archives boxes, and the evidence from the original trial is in more than one hundred boxes.

Reynolds ruled against the school board again on June 1, 1978, and again ordered districtwide desegregation, finding the actions of the school board had been so pervasive that a districtwide remedy was the only possible option to correct violations of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution and the Civil Rights Act of 1871. It was his opinion that the burden of proof set by the Supreme Court in *Keyes vs. School District 1 of Denver, Colorado* had been met⁹³ (see chapter 4). Further hearings were held from July until October to determine what the final desegregation plan would look like,⁹⁴ and a new monitor, U.S. Magistrate John C. McBride, was named to replace Gronouski. McBride was not expected to advocate for the plaintiffs as Gronouski had. In fact, McBride publically said, “I don’t plan to be telling [MPS] what to do,” and told reporters that he would prefer to let the attorneys do the actual enforcement of the integration plan, which would be monitored by the plaintiff’s attorneys.⁹⁵ Thus, while Reynolds appointed a monitor who would be less controversial in the white community, the magnet plan would continue.

Reynolds received a major boost from the state legislature in February 1978, when it approved the restructuring of the Milwaukee school board, reducing it from a fifteen-member board elected on an at-large basis to a nine-member board with eight elected by local districts and one chosen at-large between 1979 and 1983. The intent was that this

⁹³ Jeff Browne and David I. Bednarek, “Court Finds Intentional School Bias,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 1, 1978, 1:1,14, and Stolee, 253.

⁹⁴ *Armstrong vs. O’Connell*, 451 F. Supp. 817 (E.D. Wis. 1978), and Stolee, 253–254.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Jeff Browne, “New Monitor to Keep Order,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 1, 1978, 2:1,5.

change would make the board more accountable to the voters.⁹⁶ The phase-in had a noticeable effect on the 1979 election—minority-dominated neighborhoods that had not been able to meet the threshold to elect a representative under the old system were able to concentrate their votes and win an election. Thus, the liberals gained a majority of seats and advocated more integration, even if it would have involuntarily placed white students onto buses to the north side.⁹⁷

Judge Reynolds issued his final ruling on February 8, 1979, setting up a framework for desegregation,⁹⁸ and the final details were hammered out in an out-of-court settlement between the plaintiffs and the school board by May—almost fourteen years after Lloyd Barbee filed the initial lawsuit.⁹⁹ Seventy-five percent of all students—kindergartners exempted—had to attend schools that were racially balanced, which was defined as 25 to 60 percent black at the elementary level and 20 to 60 percent black at the high school level. Students would be allowed to attend neighborhood schools and could not transfer unless it enhanced the racial balance at the receiving school. Because there were not enough schools on the north side of Milwaukee for the African American students at the elementary level, this meant they would be bused to white schools on the

⁹⁶ Luisa Ginnetti, “School Board Increases Pay for New Members,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 12, 1978, 1:1,12; “OK School Board Bill; Fate Cloudy,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 29, 1978, 1:1; “School Board Lawsuit Muller Over Revamp,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 22, 1978, 1:5; “Size of School Board to Dip; Appeal Denied,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 1, 1978, 1:5.

⁹⁷ Rick Janka and Marilyn Kucer, “Board’s Liberal Majority May Seek Full Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 5, 1979, 1:1,11.

⁹⁸ *Armstrong vs. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee*, 471 F. Supp. 800 (E.D. Wis. 1979) and David I. Bednarek, “Citywide Integration Ordered,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1979, 1:1,12.

⁹⁹ “Desegregation Settlement Approved,” *Milwaukee Community Journal*, May 9, 1979, 2.

south side, where there was more room. Schools in African American neighborhoods were to be closed to induce transfers, voluntary or not. Two-thirds of schools would have to have staffs that were 11 to 21 percent black, and the remaining third had to have staffs that were 6 to 26 percent black.¹⁰⁰ The settlement was set to expire on July 1, 1984, at which point MPS should have been completely desegregated, assuming a static demographic.¹⁰¹

According to historian Bill Dahlk, Barbee realized he had used up all his political and social capital, he was losing control of the black school reform movement to black power advocates, such as Howard Fuller (see chapter 6), and a settlement that achieved most of his integration goals was the best he was going to get.¹⁰² McMurrin and most school board members accepted the settlement because it would not require involuntary busing of white students and would allow for some desegregated white-majority schools.¹⁰³

This time, with a settlement in place, there would be no chance of appeal. The board's new liberal majority would not have appealed anyway, though the NAACP tried. The NAACP felt the settlement did not meet its organization's standards, and it wanted

¹⁰⁰ L.C. Hammond (of Quarles & Brady) to Lee McMurrin, Thomas Linton, and all members of the Milwaukee Board of School Directors, February 23, 1979, in Radtke papers, box 1, folder 1; "Integration Accord, Protest Coincide," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 5, 1979, 1:5; "Proposed Lincoln Closing Draws Fire," *Milwaukee Courier*, February 10, 1979, 1,3; and *Milwaukee Courier*, May 9, 1979; and Stolee, 254–255.

¹⁰¹ *Armstrong vs. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee*.

¹⁰² Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 329–331.

¹⁰³ Jeff Browne, "McMurrin Appeals for OK of Settlement," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 24, 1979, 1:1,7; Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 332; and Murphy and Pawasarat, 39.

white students to ride the buses too.¹⁰⁴ Legally, the NACCP could make this appeal because Barbee had been working for them,¹⁰⁵ but this time they did not have the locally famed lawyer's support.¹⁰⁶ The appeal was rejected by the Seventh Circuit's Court of Appeals on February 19, 1980,¹⁰⁷ and the approved desegregation plan was put into place.

The plan above remained mostly unchanged during the 1980s, with a few exceptions: Lincoln, which was a small-sized high school in downtown Milwaukee, was closed in 1979 due to declining enrollment,¹⁰⁸ and Juneau became a citywide school for the same reason.¹⁰⁹ Bay View and West Division switched specialties in 1984, with West Division becoming Milwaukee High School of the Arts, a citywide school, due to its law and law enforcement specialty not drawing enough white students.¹¹⁰ Riverside received an open education program¹¹¹ (which was discontinued in the 1990s) and a college-bound program in partnership with the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee;¹¹² Madison

¹⁰⁴ "School Ruling Effect Here Seen," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 3, 1979, 1:4.

¹⁰⁵ Stolee, 255.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Holt, "NAACP Appeals Desegregation Order," *Milwaukee Community Journal*, June 20, 1979, 1,14.

¹⁰⁷ Stolee, 255.

¹⁰⁸ Luisa Ginnetti, "School Board Increases Pay for New Members," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 12, 1978, 1:1,12; Joanne Huebner, "Community Rallies Against Lincoln Closing," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 25, 1978, 1:1,6; Joanne Huebner, "Parents Seek Delay of 3 School Closings," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 5, 1978, 1:5; "Panel Opposes School Closing," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 8, 1978, 1:5; *Proceedings*, August 1, 1978; "Proposed Lincoln Closing Draws Fire," *Milwaukee Courier*, February 10, 1979, 1,3.

¹⁰⁹ *Proceedings*, January 9, 1979.

¹¹⁰ Jim Bednarek, "Board OKs Making West Citywide High School for Arts," January 5, 1984, 1:1,13, and *Proceedings*, January 6, 1981, and January 26, 1984.

¹¹¹ *Proceedings*, January 6, 1981.

¹¹² *Proceedings*, January 8, 1984, and January 2, 1985.

switched from earth, energy, and the environment to an electronics specialty,¹¹³ and a few minor tweaks were made in other schools through at least the late 1980s.¹¹⁴

At the middle school level, Samuel Morse received a citywide “gifted and talented” program and became a feeder school for Rufus King High School.¹¹⁵ Robinson and Eighth Street middle schools also received special programs and became citywide magnets, as did Fourth Street, Elm, Garfield, MacDowell, and several other elementary schools. Some black schools, including Wells Junior High and Brown Street Elementary, were closed to force black students to choose white schools. McMurrin said he wanted all magnet schools to be at least 50 percent African American. New magnets in reading, environmental studies, Spanish, and French were added at the elementary level. All the new magnets were approved except the reading program, because it raised concerns about the stigma that might be attached to a school for students with reading problems. The plan was to be phased in during the 1979–80 school year and had to be complete by the 1983–84 school year,¹¹⁶ and several adjustments were also made in time for the 1985–86 school year, including an international studies specialty at Webster Middle School.¹¹⁷ Additional citywide magnet schools or magnet programs within neighborhood schools were added through at least the late 1980s.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ See the MPS school selection guide, 2002–03.

¹¹⁴ *Proceedings*, February 22, 1988.

¹¹⁵ *Proceedings*, January 4, 1983.

¹¹⁶ Rick Janka, “McMurrin Urges Pupils Stay Put,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 8, 1978, and Stolee, 255–256.

¹¹⁷ *Proceedings*, January 3, 1985. See also *Proceedings*, November 26, 1985.

¹¹⁸ *Proceedings*, January 4 and February 22, 1988.

There was talk for a while of reopening Lincoln as a “Center for the Arts.”¹¹⁹ Both Lincoln¹²⁰ and Roosevelt¹²¹ eventually became citywide fine arts middle schools. Elm and Tippecanoe elementary schools were also assigned arts specialties. So if a student attended one of those two elementary schools, he or she could have chosen to attend Milwaukee High School of the Arts. Thus, a kindergarten to twelfth grade fine arts education became possible in MPS.¹²²

Initial reports showed that magnet schools were achieving their goal of integrating African Americans and whites. A news article from 1981 reported that more than twenty-five thousand MPS students, or close to 30 percent, were enrolled in magnet schools, and fifty-three of the district’s 143 schools were magnet schools or offered magnet programs.¹²³ Washington had managed to slow white migration and held the African American population to only 52 percent by 1982.¹²⁴ Its computer specialty grew from seventy-five students in 1976 to six hundred in 1984.¹²⁵ The business specialty was very popular at Hamilton, where there was a waiting list to get into it.¹²⁶ Juneau High School’s

¹¹⁹ *Proceedings*, April 3 and November 17, 1979, and January 2 and 10, 1980.

¹²⁰ *Proceedings*, March 30, 1982.

¹²¹ *Proceedings*, January 4, 1983.

¹²² See the MPS school selection guide, 2010–11.

¹²³ David I. Bednarek, “City Showing the Way on Magnet Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1981, 2:1,9.

¹²⁴ Marilyn Kucer, “Milwaukee Area Girls Shine in Computer Classes,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 28, 1982, 1:9.

¹²⁵ Jerry Ressler, “Computers in Our Classrooms,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 4, 1984, 1:6.

¹²⁶ “Word Processing Courses Here Popular,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 21, 1982, special section, 4.

business program was also successful in teaching students how to write business plans and market products and services.¹²⁷ South Division, meanwhile, had simulated hotel and restaurant facilities. Hamilton, Juneau, and South all released students from school for part of their day so they could work in actual job settings for both pay and academic credit.¹²⁸

Rufus King, the flagship of the MPS magnet schools, was perhaps the biggest success story, with an attendance rate of 94.2 percent in March 1983, compared to 85.5 percent for all high schools in MPS. King garnered national praise for its college-bound program. The White House recognized it as one of the best 144 high schools in the United States, and its Academic Decathlon team won third place in a national competition in 1983, after a string of first-place championships at the state level.¹²⁹

French Immersion, located on the northwest side of the city, was also very popular. It exceeded its capacity to enroll students in 1985, partially because of participation from families in the northern suburbs. The school board chose to move the school to the old 88th Street School on the far south side, prompting cries from northside and north-suburban parents who did not want their children to ride a bus far from home.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ “Business Education Program at Juneau in Class by Itself,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 9, 1985, 2:8

¹²⁸ Bill Hubbard, “High School Program Prepares Graduates for Hospitality Industry,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 27, 1980, 9:4,5.

¹²⁹ Jim Bednarek, “College-Bound Programs Hailed by Students, Officials,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 25, 1983, 1:5,15, and Lee McMurrin, “Perspectives on Busing,” unpublished manuscript in author’s possession, 9–11.

¹³⁰ David I. Bednarek, “Popularity a Problem for School,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 10, 1985, 2:1,6, and Mary R. Ring and Ken Locke, “Move Immersed in Debate,” January 19, 1985, 1:8

These and some other schools proved to be so popular that there was a waiting list to get into it them by 1985. The district had to implement a lottery to admit students, which prompted criticism from parents whose children were not admitted,¹³¹ though MPS claimed that 93 percent of students got into one of their top three choices when applying for a school.¹³²

Students enrolled in the magnet programs reported positive experiences. Jeff Hauser, who lived in Hales Corners, was one of about eight hundred suburban students who attended Milwaukee schools to take advantage of the magnet programs in 1985. Hauser was drawn to the truck transportation program at Pulaski. He said he really wanted to be a veterinarian or zoologist but thought it was important to have a skill as a backup plan. Jeanne Laurenz of Oak Creek said she wanted to study theater and that Milwaukee High School of the Arts had a much better program than Oak Creek. Her friends were not supportive: “Many of the people I knew said: ‘You’re crazy. There are a lot of crime and drug problems [in Milwaukee]. Besides, you’re a white girl. You’ll get raped.’ I think they’ve been living in Oak Creek too long. There are no cliques here. There is very little drug use, because everyone wants to take care of themselves.” She admitted she did not like waking up between five thirty or six o’clock to catch a seven o’clock bus but that she was willing to make that sacrifice.¹³³

¹³¹ Alan Borsuck, “Gambling on a Special School,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 1, 1985, 2:1,5, and Sandra Lindquist and Thomas M. Ganser, “Student Placement Fails to Make Grade,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 13, 1985, 1:8.

¹³² David I. Bednarek, “Most Blacks, Whites Happy with Schools, Survey Says,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 6, 1985, 1:1,6.

¹³³ Quoted in Jeff Cole, “Pupils Get Up Early to Take Class in City,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 4, 1985, 1:5.

One of the more curious magnet programs was at Vincent High School. While one might question the practicality of establishing a magnet school for agribusiness and natural resource management in an urban context, Vincent's program thrived. The school opened in 1979 on eighty acres of land and had 210 students enrolled in its specialty after only one year. Classes involved genetic research, horticulture, and veterinary science. One student, Steve Fischer, wanted to be a state fish and game warden: "Not many people can become one—usually only six are hired a year. But this might give me a head start." Students planted trees on the property—eight hundred spruce and pine trees, one hundred-fifty oaks, one hundred tamaracks (ninety-nine of which were eaten by small animals in the school's vicinity), fifty poplars, and twelve hundred ornamental shrubs in the 1979–80 school year. Students also planted seventy garden plots, the proceeds from which were used to defray the costs of field trips.¹³⁴ As the program grew, students were allowed to take increasingly advanced classes and also studied business management. The U.S. Forest Service even started a program at Vincent in 1984, and it hired some students for summer jobs.¹³⁵ A handful of graduating seniors went on to study at the Milwaukee Area Technical College or the University of Wisconsin system, which the school administration saw as a victory, even though most of its students did not pursue postsecondary education.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Quoted in Maggie Menard, "Specialty Program's Students Are Cultivating Future Careers," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 21, 1980, 1:5.

¹³⁵ Jim Bednarek, "U.S. Plans Forestry Program for Minorities and City School," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 12, 1984, 1:6.

¹³⁶ Dorothy Austin, "Vincent's Specialty is Growing," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 30, 1983, special section, 3,22.

The federal government rewarded MPS in 1985 with a \$4 million grant to support magnet schools, which was more money than any other city received except New York. Superintendent McMurrin said, “The money will make Milwaukee schools more attractive, not only to our children, but to suburban parents.”¹³⁷

On the other hand, while the magnet programs may have been popular, many students were not prepared for their desired careers. One study found that many MPS graduates could not read, write, do mathematics, or follow directions, and only about 30 percent of Wisconsin students trained for a vocation found employment in that field after graduating from high school.¹³⁸ The Medical College of Wisconsin criticized North Division’s program for “set[ting] its sights too low” because it only trained students for careers as medical technicians and nurses’ aides instead of preparing them to be doctors or nurses.¹³⁹ The magnet schools also did little or nothing to reduce the dropout rate.¹⁴⁰

The scale of integration was another problem. For example, many students at the middle school and high school levels were in segregated classes in 1980, even though they were in schools that met the court’s standard for integration. Specifically, while fifteen of the nineteen middle schools met the desegregation criteria from the settlement, only 65 percent of their classes were integrated, and while thirteen of the fifteen high

¹³⁷ Quoted in David I. Bednarek, “Magnet Schools Get \$4 Million,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 7, 1985, 2:1..

¹³⁸ “Varied High School Program Not Without Its Problems,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 26, 1980, 1:1,11.

¹³⁹ “School Program Sets Sights Too Low, Physician Says,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 13, 1982, 1:6.

¹⁴⁰ David I. Bednarek, “City, Suburbs Move Closer to Integration Agreement,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 2, 1984, 2,1,6, and Michelle Derus, “Specialty Schools’ Benefits Evaluated,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 3, 1982, 1:5.

schools were desegregated, only 61 percent of their classes were.¹⁴¹ African Americans were more likely to be placed into special education classes, and students who rode buses could not participate in after-school activities because they had no way to get home if they did not board the bus immediately after school.¹⁴² Only 7 percent of students in Hamilton's Program for the Academically Talented were African American. Students chose racially homogeneous groups in cafeterias and physical education classes. African American students were also frequently late to school because of long bus rides and could be suspended for repeated tardiness. When interviewed by a reporter, a couple of African American high school students downplayed the importance of race but acknowledged that African Americans could not participate in some after-school activities and parties because they did not have private transportation. A few other students reported racial slurs or being ignored by white students when they tried to participate in extracurricular activities.¹⁴³

Despite these criticisms, a majority of Milwaukee voters evidently supported the

¹⁴¹ David I. Bednarek, "Classrooms Are Not Fully Desegregated," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 9, 1980, 1:1,10, and Alan J. Borsuk, "Race is Forgotten in Lively Chaos of a Grade-School Day," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 11, 1984, 2:1,10. The percentages of desegregated elementary schools and classes, on the other hand, were 76.1 percent and 76.7 percent, respectively. The reason for the discrepancies in the middle and high schools is unknown. One possible explanation is that high school students and some middle school students are allowed to choose their own classes. Academically talented students, who happened to be white, may have chosen more rigorous classes, apart from the general population. Because most students pick the same classes that their friends choose and because most adolescents do not have friends outside their racial group, that would lead to self-segregation in classes. See Beverly Daniel Tatum, *"Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2003) for a stunning explanation of why many racially balanced schools may be voluntarily segregated internally.

¹⁴² Alan J. Borsuk, "Race is Forgotten in Lively Chaos of a Grade School Day," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 11, 1984, 1:1,10. Running a second round of buses to take children home from school activities would have cost extra money.

¹⁴³ Gregory D. Stanford, "Surface Harmony May Be Deceiving," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 13, 1984, 1:1,6.

magnet schools, because they returned pro-integration school board members, including board president Doris Stacy, to office in the 1983 elections. Voters took this action even though a difficult economic situation in 1983 made busing an extremely expensive program.¹⁴⁴ As a result of the elections, the school board voted to continue its integration plan the following January,¹⁴⁵ despite the fact that the desegregation settlement was scheduled to expire on July 1.

Metropolitan segregation involved another problem of scale. MPS covered only the city of Milwaukee, and while the city was multicultural, the surrounding suburbs were not. According to the United States Supreme Court case *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), a court cannot mandate interdistrict busing unless the school district lines were established to promote segregation. As a compromise, the state of Wisconsin designed the Chapter 220 program to promote metropolitan integration by providing financial incentives to what would eventually be twenty-three suburban school districts that volunteered to enroll minority students from the city. Also, white suburban students were allowed to attend MPS schools. The program began in 1976 and was hailed by suburban superintendents as a way to bring about voluntary integration and supplement school funds,¹⁴⁶ but it was never very popular with suburban parents, some of whom worried that

¹⁴⁴ David I. Bednarek, "Candidates Reaction to Critic Are Revealing," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 1, 1983: 2:1; Jim Bednarek, "All 6 Candidates Served on Board," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 11, 1983, 2:12; Jim Bednarek, "Eight Seek Four School Board Seats," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 2, 1983, 1:5; Jim Bednarek, "Stacey is Re-Elected to School Board Seat," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 6, 1983, 1:5; and Thomas and Carol Hoff, "Critical Vote on Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 7, 1983, 1:10.

¹⁴⁵ Jim Bednarek, "School Board Taking Charge of Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 9, 1984, 1:6.

¹⁴⁶ *Milwaukee Journal*, November 30, 1980, and Milwaukee Public Schools, "Chapter 220 Enrollment," Milwaukee Public Schools (http://www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/supt/Chapter220_Enrollment.html) (accessed March 17, 2010). See Jim Bednarek, "Suburban Enrollment of City Students

MPS students lagged behind and might slow the academic achievement of their own children. Other suburbanites were concerned about long bus rides or had financial concerns and stated that they did not believe the state money would cover all costs.¹⁴⁷

Enrollment statistics for Chapter 220 showed mixed degrees of success. The West Allis-West Milwaukee school district, for example, debated the merits of the program for years,¹⁴⁸ and when it finally approved the program, it accepted only fifteen Milwaukee students. Likewise, only eleven West Allis-West Milwaukee students volunteered to attend Milwaukee magnet schools in the fall of 1983.¹⁴⁹ Whitnall school district, which encompasses the village of Hales Corners and parts of Greenfield and Franklin, had some success—it exchanged seventeen of its students for thirty-five Milwaukee students in the 1983–84 school year.¹⁵⁰ That is about a two-to-one ratio, which is more even than that of other districts who accepted Milwaukee students and the related state funds but had proportionally fewer students attending Milwaukee magnet

Triples,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 29, 1982, 1:10, and “Wisconsin Legislature Assembly,” in John O. Norquist Papers, 1970–1988, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 200, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 21, folder 15 for exact enrollment figures. See Barbara M. Wise, *Chapter 220: The Compromise to Integrate* (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2009) for the best history of Chapter 220. See Amy Stuart Wells and Robert L. Crain, “Where School Desegregation and School Choice Collide,” in *School Choice and Diversity: What the Evidence Says*, ed. Janelle T. Scott (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 59–76 for similar programs in other states.

¹⁴⁷ Jim Bednarek, “Suburban Enrollment of City Students Triples,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 29, 1982, 1:10; Nancy Torner, “Greenfield Residents Divided on Plan to Join Integration,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 6, 1983, 2:3; and Michael O. Zahn, “Panel Backs Equal Access for All Students,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 13, 1980, Accent on the News:1.

¹⁴⁸ “Board Rejects Integration Plan,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 3, 1979, 1:7, and “Integration Plan Urged,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 7, 1978, 1:7.

¹⁴⁹ David I. Bednarek, “School Board Acts to Boost Integration,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 27, 1983, 1:1,14.

¹⁵⁰ Janet Urquhart, “Whitnall Will Expand Integration Program,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 26, 1983, 1:12.

schools. Greendale, for example, admitted seventy-eight students for only sixteen students it sent to Milwaukee. Brown Deer took 101 students from Milwaukee but sent only twenty into the city. The disparity was worse in the Maple Dale-Indian Hill district, where fifty-four Milwaukee students attended school compared to the four it sent to MPS, and Nicolet, the most affluent district in southeastern Wisconsin and possibly the entire state, accepted 123 Milwaukee students but traded only five of its students to the city.¹⁵¹ When incoming suburban freshmen were asked why they chose Nicolet over Milwaukee high schools, students responded that the Milwaukee specialties looked good but that they wanted to attend school with their friends.¹⁵²

Suburbs in Waukesha county, to the west of Milwaukee, were eligible for Chapter 220 but sent few or no students to Milwaukee. Parents and district officials cited underachieving Milwaukee students, school violence, and long bus rides as concerns.¹⁵³ In the words of one Brookfield parent: “No way on God’s green Earth am I going to send my children to Milwaukee.” Or, as another parent said, “You’re living in a fantasy land if you think we’ll send our children to Milwaukee.” One parent predicted that “If we go with the plan it will be the beginning of the end as we know it today.” Another parent believed Chapter 220 was nothing but a way to siphon off Brookfield tax money for Milwaukee’s purposes: “The City of Milwaukee would like nothing better than to dip into

¹⁵¹ David I. Bednarek, “School Board Acts to Boost Integration,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 27, 1983, 1:1,14.

¹⁵² Larry Sandler, “Nicolet Students Get View of City Courses,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 10, 1985, 1:6.

¹⁵³ David I. Bednarek, “School Board Acts to Boost Integration,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 27, 1983, 1:1,14.

our checkbooks. I pay my property taxes to my school district. Let's keep them [the taxes] here." And as an MPS teacher who lived in Brookfield said, "I deal every day with children who can't read. Fight this [the plan] right down the line. We don't have to have it forced upon us."¹⁵⁴

Thus, despite early interest in magnet schools from suburban superintendents, countywide integration did not occur. For example, only seven north-suburban students had volunteered to attend Milwaukee magnet schools full-time, and only thirteen students volunteered to participate in the Milwaukee satellite centers by August 26.¹⁵⁵ The numbers were not much better by the end of the school year: 345 students were bused from Milwaukee to the suburbs under Chapter 220, while only thirty-five suburban students chose to attend schools in the city by March 1977.¹⁵⁶ Seven years later, another study showed that only 82.5 percent of the Chapter 220 participants were African American.¹⁵⁷

Thus, a purely voluntary program was not enough to bring about integration in the metropolitan Milwaukee area. The Milwaukee school board considered a lawsuit in early

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in David I. Bednarek, "Many Teachers Tell of Attacks," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 28, 1983, 2:1,4. Teachers who were employed in MPS prior to the implementation of the residency requirement in 1977 were allowed to live outside the city. See Mark C. Schug and M. Scott Niederjohn, "The Milwaukee Teacher Residency Requirement: Why It's Bad for Schools, and Why It Won't Go Away," *Wisconsin Policy Research Institute* 19, no. 5 (June 2006), 6–7.

¹⁵⁵ Louise Allen, "Turnout Stirs Hopes at Two Schools," 2:1,6, and Small Fry Plug School Options," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 26, 1976, 1:1,8.

¹⁵⁶ Neil H. Shivley, "McMurrin Gets Caucus Quiz," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 10, 1977, 1:10.

¹⁵⁷ David I. Bednarek, "Schools Take Long Strides in 8 Years," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 10, 1984, 1:1,6.

1980 that would have forced interdistrict desegregation.¹⁵⁸ Several community groups, including the Milwaukee Integration Research Center (MIRC), the American Civil Liberties Union, the League of Women Voters, and the NAACP, suggested a merger of the Milwaukee, Shorewood, and Whitefish Bay school districts. As in 1975, when state representative Dennis Conta first proposed such a plan (see chapter 4), the idea of a merger was met with strong opposition from Shorewood and Whitefish Bay.¹⁵⁹ It did not gain much traction in 1982 either, and the Milwaukee School Board voted to join the lawsuit led by MIRC in 1983 that would have reorganized Milwaukee and twenty-nine suburban districts into several districts, each of which would include a portion of the city and some suburban territory.¹⁶⁰

According to a *Milwaukee Journal* survey, 68 percent of black Milwaukeeans and 54 percent of all Milwaukeeans supported creation of a metropolitan school district, but only 40 percent of all suburbanites agreed with the idea.¹⁶¹ Most African Americans who objected to the lawsuit said they would prefer that the school board concentrate on

¹⁵⁸ Mary T. Wagner, "Prospect of Suit Irks Some Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 5, 1980, Accent on the City:1.

¹⁵⁹ Mary Dooley, "Merger Plan Surprises Officials," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 3, 1982, Accent on the City:1.

¹⁶⁰ David I. Bednarek, "School Board Acts to Improve Education," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 27, 1983, 1:1,14; David I. Bednarek, "Integration Poses Hard Choices," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 28, 1983, 2:1,5; Jim Bednarek, "School Board Backs Plan for More Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 27, 1983, 1:1,7; Ernst-Ulrich Franzen, "Board Panel Backs Lawsuit Against Suburban Districts," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 17, 1982, 1:5; and *Proceedings*, October 26, 1983. MIRC continued to advocate for redistricting through 1985. See the *Sherman Park News*, especially vol. 14, no. 12 (December 1984), 17–18, in Sherman Park Community Association, Sherman Park Community Association Records, UWM Manuscript Collection 72, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 8, folder 2 and vol. 15, no. 3 (March 1986), 5 in box 8, folder 3. Duplicate copies are in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 5.

¹⁶¹ David I. Bednarek, "80% in Poll Back Voluntary Steps for Integration," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 22, 1984, 2:1,10.

improving education in the inner city. Increasingly in the 1980s, black leadership turned away from the assumption that integration was the key to solving school problems, rejecting the *Brown* premise and embracing one of black self-determination. Milwaukee alderwoman Marlene Johnson said integration should not be forced on anyone. Bernard Benn, of the Milwaukee Urban League, said there should not be a lawsuit until the results of Chapter 220 had been studied. Christine Belnavis of the Milwaukee chapter of the NAACP believed there should be more negotiation between the city and suburbs. State representative Polly Williams, an outspoken critic of busing, said she would fight any lawsuit and that the proposed city-suburban merger had nothing to do with improving the quality of education. Most poignantly, she added that she did not accept “the notion that a black student must be sitting next to a white student in order to learn.”¹⁶²

Opposition continued to come in from the suburbs. Waukesha parents, for example, said they opposed long bus rides and a tax increase that would probably be necessary to fund the buses. They also resented what they perceived as Milwaukee’s interference in their schools. McMurrin told Waukesha residents that he wanted to place magnet schools in their county but said he could not guarantee it would happen.¹⁶³

Wauwatosa’s superintendent said that if magnet schools were all Milwaukee had to offer, he would prefer to create his own, rather than lose self-governance.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Quoted in “Some Blacks Criticize Integration Suit,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 9, 1984, 1:6. See also David I. Bednarek, “Desegregation Debate Pulls Ironic About-Face,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 25, 1984, 2:1,8, and Jeff Cole and Amy Rinard, “Integration Suit Accord Proposed,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 8, 1986, 1:1,4.

¹⁶³ “Board Jousts over Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 27, 1984, 1:6, and Ruth Wilson, “School Official Upset over Integration Story,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 5, 1984, 2:1,15.

¹⁶⁴ Marie Rohde, “Tosa Specialty School Proposed by Board,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 16, 1984, 2:3.

Even Dennis Conta, who had urged a merger between Shorewood, Whitefish Bay, and the east side of Milwaukee just a few years earlier, could not accept a plan as radical as the proposed merger, saying in a *Milwaukee Journal* op-ed piece, “It is insulting, demeaning, and patronizing to tell blacks that the best way for them to at least receive a basic education is for them to attend school with whites.” He also said that expecting schools to fix racism, a societal ill, was folly, and that the magnet schools were improving education only for children who “attend specialty schools such as Golda Meir, Rufus King, and a small number of others.” He further said, “These select schools are an *aberration* [sic] and do not represent the common experience. The effort of these parents smacks of being from an elitist, ‘knee-jerk liberal’ dictate.”¹⁶⁵

Some people speculated at the time that the school board knew it would lose but was hoping that it could provoke the suburban districts into negotiating a voluntary plan that would increase participation in Chapter 220.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, Brown Deer superintendent Kenneth Moe tried to broker a compromise and introduced his own proposal that would have created teams of advisers to visit Milwaukee schools and suburban schools, assess the strengths of each, and recommend integration plans.¹⁶⁷ Twenty-four superintendents endorsed the plan unanimously at a conference in January 1984.¹⁶⁸ The Milwaukee

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Dannial [sic] J. Conta, “Forced Integration Won’t Solve Past Injustice,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 30, 1984, 1:13.

¹⁶⁶ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 395; “Integration Proposals Run into More Opposition,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 19, 1984, 2:3; “School Remap Plan Must Be Sold,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 21, 1984, 1:14; and “Try Voluntary Integration,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 21, 1984, 1:14.

¹⁶⁷ David I. Bednarek, “Integration Backed,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 7, 1984, 2:1,5 and *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 31 and February 8, 1984.

¹⁶⁸ Rick Romell, “Reaction to Suburban Integration Mixed,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 5, 1984, 1:6.

school board voted to postpone the lawsuit one month in an attempt to cooperate with the suburbs. It also gave a nonbinding endorsement of Moe's plan.¹⁶⁹

But the hope for voluntary metropolitan integration lasted less than three months. Lois Riley, a hardcore integration activist, was unanimously elected president of the Milwaukee school board in April.¹⁷⁰ She immediately proposed a new plan that would have merged the city with twenty-four suburban districts into six districts. It was never approved by the state but won the support of the Milwaukee school board on a six-to-three vote. The majority consisted of Riley, Kristine Leopold, Edward Michalski, Alex Weinberger, and former board presidents Donald O'Connell and Doris Stacy. David Cullen, Kathleen Hart, and Joyce Mallory voted against the plan. Mallory, who was involved in the local chapter of the NAACP, was the only African American on the school board in 1984 and was already advocating African American empowerment rather than integration (see chapter 6). Riley's goal was to have an approximate mix of 45 percent white, 45 percent African American, and 10 percent "other" in Milwaukee schools by fall 1985.¹⁷¹ McMurrin labeled the plan voluntary, but Moe and other suburban superintendents said that any plan with anything resembling quotas could not be

¹⁶⁹ David I. Bednarek, "School Board Puts Off Plan to Sue Suburbs," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 9, 1984, 2:1,6.

¹⁷⁰ *Proceedings*, April 26, 1984, and "School Board Has New Leader," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 28, 1984, Green Sheet, 4.

¹⁷¹ David I. Bednarek, "School District Shakeup Sought," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 11, 1984, 1:1,8; Jim Bednarek, "Board Sets Deadline on Integration Plan," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 11, 1984, 1:1,11; and *Proceedings*, May 10, 1984; and Rick Romell, "Officials Disagree on Board's Intent," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 12, 1984, 1:5.

voluntary. They also refused to give up their local self-governance.¹⁷² Greenfield, West Allis-West Milwaukee, and most other districts rejected the plan outright. The Nicolet school board offered to compromise, rejecting quotas but embracing most other aspects of the plan.¹⁷³

For her part, Riley said Milwaukee's specialty schools had a lot to offer to the suburbs and said the city needed suburban money: "The Milwaukee schools have to broaden their financial base. That's part of what this is all about. You can't just have your inner city schools with kids who come from poor families." She said if the suburbs did not agree, "the only alternative is to go to court."¹⁷⁴ And that is exactly what happened. The board voted six to three to pursue a lawsuit, independent of MIRC, against twenty-four suburban districts on June 27.¹⁷⁵

The school board stood on tenuous legal ground. A federal judge in Kansas City

¹⁷² Jim Bednarek, "Suburbs Ask School Board to Keep Talks Going," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 21, 1984, 1:5; Ralph D. Olive, "Suburbs Dislike Reorganization," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 11, 1984, 1:1,8; Rick Romell, "Integration Plan is Final Offer, School Officials Say," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 16, 1984, 1:10; and Rick Romell, "Officials Disagree on Board's Intent," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 12, 1984, 1:5. The negative stigma surrounding quotas traces its way back to the U.S. Supreme Court case *Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke* (1978) in which the court ruled that race may be a factor in college admissions but may not be the sole criterion. This case is referred to as the classic reverse discrimination case in which a white applicant was denied admission to medical school because all the available seats in the school were reserved for African Americans.

¹⁷³ "5 Suburban Boards Oppose Mandatory School Integration," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 11, 1984, 2:3; David I. Bednarek, "Suit Won't Halt Talks, School Board Hopes," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 28, 1984, 2:1,16; "Integration Proposals Run into More Opposition," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 19, 1984, 2:3; and Rick Romell, "Two School Boards Reject City School Integration Plan," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 19, 1984, 1:5; and "Try Voluntary Integration," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 21, 1984, 1:14.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in "Riley Sees Need in City Lawsuit," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 2, 1984, 1:6-7. See also David I. Bednarek, "School Board Will Again Weigh Integration Suit," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 25, 1984, 2:1,3.

¹⁷⁵ David I. Bednarek, "Suit Assails Dual System of Education," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 28, 1984, 1:1,11; *Proceedings*, June 25, 1984; and Larry Sandler, "School Board to Sue Suburbs," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 28, 1984, 1:1,15.

had recently dismissed a case in which the Kansas City school board had sued the surrounding suburban districts, but on the other hand, judges had mandated interdistrict integration in Wilmington, DE, and Indianapolis.¹⁷⁶ Lawyers for the State of Wisconsin and the twenty-four districts filed a motion to dismiss the case on the grounds that the Milwaukee School Board lacked standing because it was suing on behalf of a third party—the school children. The lawyers also argued that education was primarily a local responsibility and that neither the state nor the surrounding schools districts had intended to do anything harmful to Milwaukee children.¹⁷⁷ Intent was a key issue. Courts had not been able to mandate interdistrict integration since the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Milliken vs. Bradley* (1974) unless the state or school districts had intended to discriminate.

Another problem was that the lawsuit had only mixed support in the city. Lloyd Barbee, who had led the movement toward integration, had assumed that educational opportunities would improve for African American children if they went to the same schools as white children, but standardized test scores, graduation rates, and suspension rates indicated this was not true by 1984 (see chapter 7). Thus, Mallory, Fuller, and other black community leaders, such as Milwaukee assemblywoman Polly Williams, turned their attention to community control (see chapter 6). Williams, in particular, was critical of metropolitan desegregation, believing that the city's white power structure was aiming

¹⁷⁶ Rick Romell, "Integration Suit Similar to One in Kansas City," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 2, 1984, 1:5. See *Evans vs. Buchanan* (1974) for the Delaware case and *Board of School Commissioners of City of Indianapolis, Indiana* (1976) for the Indianapolis case.

¹⁷⁷ Michele Derus, "State, Suburbs Seek Dismissal of Integration Suit," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 1, 1984, 1:4.

to disperse African American children so whites would not have to deal with them.¹⁷⁸ A staunch advocate of community control, Williams claimed, “We must make our own rules. Only Black folk know what’s best for Black folk.”¹⁷⁹

Milwaukee’s white leadership could give only a moderate level of support. The *Milwaukee Journal* advocated voluntary integration.¹⁸⁰ Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier supported metropolitan school integration if it was coupled with metropolitan residential integration, which would help disperse the city’s concentration of poor minorities.¹⁸¹

Voters also had mixed feelings, as evidenced by the divided election of 1985, in which some supporters of the lawsuit were elected to the school board but other were not. Chief among the losers was long-time civil rights activist Kathleen Hart, who was defeated by former board member Lawrence O’Neil in the seventh district, which was located in the Hamilton High School area on the very white south side.¹⁸² O’Neil was aided by an

¹⁷⁸ Annette Polly Williams, “Williams Explains Basis for Views on Desegregation,” *Milwaukee Courier*, September 29, 1984, 1,9.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Thomas E. Mitchell Jr., “3 of 4 Black Lawmakers Approve of Redistricting,” *Milwaukee Community Journal*, March 19, 1986, 1,9.

¹⁸⁰ “Lessons in the Racial Mix,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 18, 1984, 1:10; “School Remap Plan Must Be Sold,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 21, 1984, 1:14; and “Try Voluntary Integration,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 21, 1984, 1:14.

¹⁸¹ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 399. McMurrin referred to the mayor as “helpful” in the early stages of integration when the mayor promised to keep the peace. He also said the mayor was interested in MPS’s obtaining additional funding from the state. Maier was well known as a passionate advocate for the city who lobbied for state and federal funds in his two decades as mayor of Milwaukee. See Martin Gruberg, *A Case Study in U.S. Urban Leadership: The Incumbency of Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier* (Aldershot, Hants, England, and Brookfield, VT: Avebury, 1996); Gurda 352–354; McMurrin, “Perspectives on Busing,” 6–7.

¹⁸² David I. Bednarek, “Integration Suit Loses Key Backer in Election,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 3, 1985, 2:1,4. See also David I. Bednarek, “Primary to Trim Candidate Field in School Board Race,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 14, 1985, 2:3; “Choices for School Board,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 27, 1985, 1:12; and Larry Sandler, “3 in School Board Race Differ on School Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 12, 1985, 1:5 for election coverage.

endorsement from the MTEA.¹⁸³

The drive toward the lawsuit cooled after the election. But nonetheless, the lawsuit encouraged suburban districts to come to the bargaining table rather than take the risk of having a desegregation plan imposed on them. A marathon of talks was held in spring of 1985,¹⁸⁴ and a plan eventually emerged that would have encouraged more voluntary integration. The sticking point came, however, when the Milwaukee school board agreed only to postpone the lawsuit by five years, rather than drop it altogether. As a result, most suburban districts rejected the plan.¹⁸⁵ Larry Harwell, at the time an aide to Polly Williams, continued to criticize the lawsuit because busing African American students outside of Milwaukee would weaken the black community's control over its children's education. It also might have weakened the black community's political strength because African Americans would not have constituted a significant voting bloc

¹⁸³ David I. Bednarek, "Teachers Reaffirm Support for O'Neil," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 29, 1985, 2:1,5.

¹⁸⁴ David I. Bednarek, "Integration Talks Reach Critical Stage," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 21, 1985, 1:1,12; David I. Bednarek, "Marathon Talks on Integration Called Encouraging," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 28, 1985, 2:1,4. According to David I. Bednarek, "Suburbs Lose Bias Suit Ruling," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 30, 1985, 1:1,9, the specific districts were Brown Deer, Cudahy, Elmbrook, Fox Point-Bayside, Franklin, Germantown, Glendale-Riverhills, Greendale, Greenfield, Hamilton, Maple Dale-Indian Hill, Menomonee Falls, Mequon-Thiensville, Muskego, New Berlin, Nicolet, Oak-Creek Franklin, Saint Francis, Shorewood, South Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, West Allis-West Milwaukee, Whitefish Bay, and Whitnall.

¹⁸⁵ David I. Bednarek, "Board Would Welcome Proposal from Suburbs," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 18, 1985, 2:1; David I. Bednarek, "City, Suburban Schools Deep in Talks on Hiring, Lawsuit," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 18, 1985, 2:3; David I. Bednarek, "City, Suburbs Promote 2 School Plans," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 15, 1985, 2:1-2; David I. Bednarek, "Crushing Blow Delivered in Integration Case," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 7, 1985, 2:1-2; David I. Bednarek, "School Boards in Suburbs Chanting 'No Deal'," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 9, 1985, 2:1,8; David I. Bednarek, "Study's Effect on Integration Suit Unclear," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 21, 1985, 2:1,3; David I. Bednarek and M.I. Blackwell, "Suburbs Refuse to Accept Latest School-Suit Proposal," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 7, 1985, 1:1,9; "Legislators Give Opinions on Integration at Hearing," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 29, 1985, 2:3; Ralph D. Olive, "Board Candidates All Oppose Forced Busing," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 18, 1985, 2:3; Amy Rabideau, "Shorewood Board Assails School Suit," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 12, 1985, 2:3; and Larry Sandler, "City Schools Must Choose Between Suit, Cooperation," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 17, 1985, 1:5.

in any of the new districts.¹⁸⁶

A variety of other plans surfaced in the face of the suburban district's opposition: MTEA suggested college tuition subsidies for suburban students who volunteered to attend city schools; suburban teachers asked that additional specialty schools be established in the city to attract suburban students,¹⁸⁷ and the NAACP, which had joined the lawsuit in February 1985,¹⁸⁸ vowed to continue the legal challenge.¹⁸⁹ Superintendent McMurrin proposed that the city's ten traditional high schools (the ones that were not citywide) and their surrounding elementary schools and middle schools be evenly split into five districts and then combined with one of the big five specialty high schools and nearby suburban schools. These districts would not be self-governing but would aid in planning for metropolitan integration.¹⁹⁰ None of these plans amounted to anything, and eventually, the city and suburbs agreed to set integration goals that were to be filled over a period of years, and the legislature agreed to increase aid to MPS to reduce class size.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ David I. Bednarek, "Desegregation Raises Power Issue," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 12, 1985, 1:1,6.

¹⁸⁷ Larry Sandler, "School Desegregation Plans Proliferating," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 27, 1985, 1:5.

¹⁸⁸ "NAACP Asks to Join School Suit," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 21, 1985, 1:5.

¹⁸⁹ David I. Bednarek, "NAACP Calls School Plan a 'Sellout'," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 8, 1985, 2:1, and David I. Bednarek, "School Board May Seek Judge's Help," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 29, 1985, 2:2,4.

¹⁹⁰ *Proceedings*, September 25, 1985, and Amy Rinard, "Board Won't Seek US Judge's Help in Integration Lawsuit," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 26, 1985, 1:1. See also *Milwaukee Journal*, "School Proposal Draws Mixture of Comments," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 26, 1984, 2:1,6

¹⁹¹ David I. Bednarek, "City, Suburban Schools Deep in Talks on Hiring, Lawsuit," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 18, 1985, 2:3; David I. Bednarek, "Integration Basics Intact," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 24, 1985, 2:1,3; David I. Bednarek, "Is a Deal at Hand on Integration?" *Milwaukee Journal*, June 25, 1985, 2:1; David I. Bednarek, "Only Loose Ends Remain on New Integration Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 21, 1985, 2:1; David I. Bednarek, "School Board Seeks Deal with Some Suburbs," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 19, 1985, 1:1,10; and Amy Rabideau, "Shorewood Board Assails School Suit," *Milwaukee Journal*, June

The final settlement was reached in 1986–87. The districts of Shorewood, Whitefish Bay, Brown Deer, Menomonee Falls, Mequon-Theinsville, Greenfield, Greendale, and St. Francis agreed to open 2,700 hundred spots for Milwaukee minority students, and Milwaukee would take in about nine thousand suburban students. This agreement represented a small increase in the number of students participating in Chapter 220.¹⁹² Joyce Mallory voted against the settlement because she believed it did not go far enough to integrate students and lost sight of the lawsuit’s goal of improving educational opportunities for African American students.¹⁹³

Thus, implementing desegregation had mixed results in Milwaukee. The programs appeared to be academically sound on the surface, but they may have lacked substance. Busing was extremely complicated and expensive, and students were often not integrated within schools. Metropolitan integration was proposed. But suburban school districts resisted it, and Chapter 220 emerged as a compromise. The most vigorous challenge to desegregation, however, would not be curricular issues, busing problems, or opposition from the suburbs. Parent opposition, from both the black and white communities, would be the main obstacle to reform. Some parents objected to busing, while others wanted community control, and none of the parents supported choice in schools if they had to make a “forced choice,” as will be shown in the next chapter.

12, 1985, 2:3.

¹⁹² Jeff Cole, “School Board OKs Agreement to Settle Desegregation Suit,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 26, 1986, 1:1,14, and *Proceedings*, July 23, 1987.

¹⁹³ Jeff Cole, “Mallory’s Stand on School Bias Suit Defended,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 8, 1986, 1:5, and Ken Wysocky, “Motion in Desegregation Suit is Argued,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 16, 1986, 1:5.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ERA OF FORCED CHOICE:

THE REACTION TO MILWAUKEE'S MAGNET PLAN, 1976–1986

As could be expected, reaction to Judge Reynolds's decision varied widely, even among the plaintiffs. Craig Amos, who had been thirteen years old in 1965 when the case was filed on behalf of him and forty other children, was twenty-three years old and attending the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) when Reynolds made his decision. For him, so much time had passed that the court decision did not seem relevant anymore. In an interview the day after Reynolds's ruling, Amos explained that he was supposed to attend Lincoln Junior-Senior High School, but his parents sent him to Morse Junior High, a white school, so he could receive a "quality" education. He said, "It wasn't worth it. I got nothing out of it. Nothing but fights and name calling." He remembered some white students yelling, "Nigger, go home. Go back to Africa."¹ Threats of physical violence were common, and eventually he was worn down, transferred to Lincoln, as he originally wanted, and graduated from its senior high program in 1970. His mother did not want to discuss the suit with reporters at the time of the verdict.²

Amos's response encapsulates the varied reactions to integration. Many whites made it clear to African Americans that they were not wanted. Some, as Amos indicated, were racists, while others were open-minded about integration and liked magnet schools

¹ Quoted in Marilyn Kucer, "Plantiffs Recall Their Reasons for Filing School Suit in '65," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:8.

² Marilyn Kucer, "Plantiffs Recall Their Reasons for Filing School Suit in '65," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:8.

but did not want low-achieving students bused into their neighborhoods. Virtually no white parents were enthusiastic about their children being bused into what they perceived as unsafe, low-achieving schools. Therefore, most of the busing was shouldered by African Americans in order to minimize disruption the white community, and the choice some African Americans really wanted—to attend their neighborhood schools—was denied to them. As a result, some African Americans and liberal whites lobbied for two-way busing, while the black power movement continued to gain strength under Howard Fuller and the Coalition to Save North Division.

As explained in the last chapter, the school board was split were eight to seven on the issue of racial integration in the 1960s and 1970s. Lorraine Radtke led the conservative majority in its legal appeal of Judge Reynolds' decision. Anthony Busalacchi, who was in the majority faction, wanted to put a restraining order on John Gronouski, the court-appointed special master, until the appeal was completed. "In reality, this plan will only segregate the city of Milwaukee," Busalacchi said. "I envision a white migration to private and parochial schools and, where financially possible, a flight completely out of the county."³ Busalacchi was roundly criticized for his position against busing, but he pointed out that his children attended integrated schools, whereas some other board members sent their children to private schools. To this day, Busalacchi holds firm to his conviction that it is wrong to break up neighborhood schools and require students to ride buses and that doing so causes white flight.⁴

³ Quoted in Rick Janka, "Board Lines Up on Appeal Issue," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:8. See appendix A, table 1 for the factions.

⁴ Anthony Busalacchi, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, July 7, 2010.

Though Busalacchi may have been correct about a white flight to the suburbs and parochial schools, white parents looking to evade integration received no help from the Milwaukee Archdiocese, which declared that Catholic schools would not be havens for racists. Father John Hanely, superintendent of the archdiocese's schools said, "Mixing black and white children in both public and parochial schools can only bring advantages, both educationally and as a Christian witness (supporting desegregation), to the community." The archdiocese hired a consultant to work on integration, in-services, and curriculum. It also proposed that the archdiocese accept African American students at public expense, articulating an idea that would become part of the "school choice" voucher plan of the 1990s (see chapter 8). In return, white students at parochial schools would be allowed to participate in public school specialty programs. Relations between the archdiocese and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) soured in spring 1976, however, when a thousand eighth-graders graduated from Catholic elementary schools and enrolled in MPS high schools. MPS considered them new students, since they had previously been in Catholic schools, and assigned about two hundred of them to schools that were far from their homes or were once predominantly black. These assignments were made because MPS's desegregation policies required the district to give MPS eighth-graders top priority for seats in neighborhood high schools. Because the Catholic eighth-graders were technically new to MPS, they were given low priority in preference for school assignment.⁵ The MPS-archdiocesan exchange plan never materialized.

State Representative Dennis Conta supported desegregation and busing, but few

⁵ Quoted in Rick Janka, "Catholics Work on Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 4, 1977, 1:1,22. See also Rick Janka and Marilyn Kucer, "Parents Choose School in 2nd Year Plan," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 12, 1977, 1:1,8.

other local politicians did. Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier said he would obey the judge's decision but resented it.⁶ State Senator Monroe Swan, an African American who was a professed black nationalist, was cool to it. He was more interested in quality education than integrated education and said he hoped some black schools would be left intact in black neighborhoods.⁷ Republican State Senator James F. Sensenbrenner lamented the likely end of Milwaukee's neighborhood school system. Another state senator, Wayne Whittow, said he was "disappointed in the opinion," and U.S. Representative Clement J. Zablocki said he was so upset by Reynolds' ruling that "it makes my blood boil every time his name is mentioned." He defended the neighborhood school system, said it was a waste of time for children to spend three or four hours a day on a bus, and questioned Reynolds' objectivity, saying, "Federal judges are supposed to be removed from politics, but I have yet to see one who doesn't have politics on his sleeve."⁸ Circuit Court Judge Christ Seraphim sharply criticized his colleague Reynolds. Although he claimed he did not support segregation, speaking at the racially exclusive Eagles Club, Seraphim chastised Reynolds for taking far too long to reach a decision and for exceeding his Constitutional authority. Decisions of that type "would tear down the fabric of our society."⁹ Governor Pat Lucey was more moderate and simply said he

⁶ "Maier Encourages Cooperation with Integration Order," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 22, 1976, 2:1,10.

⁷ Walter Jones, "Rights Fighters Laud Decision," *Milwaukee Courier*, January 24, 1976, 1,18.

⁸ Quoted in "Makes My Blood Boil—Zablocki," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:5,7. Zablocki later urged cautious compliance with the judge's decision. See "Statement by Hon. Clement J. Zablocki on the Integration of the Milwaukee Public School System Submitted to the Office of the Special Master," April 1976, in a Collection of Papers Relating to the Desegregation/Integration of the Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Public Library, 1976.

⁹ Quoted in "Seraphim Criticizes Decision," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 23, 1976, 2:8.

would comply with the ruling and hoped there would be a peaceful transition, free from the violence that had accompanied desegregation in Boston.¹⁰

White parents expressed fear that their children would be removed from their neighborhood schools and sent to areas of the city they perceived as unsafe. As one white woman said, “I guess I’m the type of person who doesn’t care who gets bused in, but I don’t want my kids bused out.” An African American woman agreed that personal freedom should not be sacrificed in the name of desegregation: “If my son wanted to go to Fox Point, no one should tell him he can’t. But if he doesn’t want to go, he shouldn’t have to.” Several parents also said busing was unfair to people who had purchased homes in the middle-class parts of the city. As one parent said, “You’re paying taxes to live in a better area. If your children have to be sent to a school outside their district . . . it’s Communist.” Other parents, both black and white, said the money used for busing would be better spent on improving the schools.¹¹

The *Milwaukee Sentinel* polled nearly four hundred Milwaukee households, 115 of which had school-aged children, in 1976, at the time of Judge Reynolds’s initial decision. Of the 115, 72 percent said they would prefer their children attend integrated schools, but 61 percent opposed busing. A racial divide was evident—65 percent of African American respondents supported busing. Some of the other 35 percent cited fear for their children’s safety at white schools in the city. In a preview of the white migration

¹⁰ Kenneth Lamke, “Lucey Favors Aid for Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 22, 1976, 1:1,20.

¹¹ Quoted in “Citizens OK Integration, Strongly Oppose Busing,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:8. Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) for the transformation of tradition, populist conservatism to “a new conservatism predicated on language of rights, freedoms, and individualism” (6).

that was to come, half the white parents who were against busing said they would put their children in private or parochial schools to avoid involuntary busing. Another 10 percent said they would leave the city for the suburbs, and 34 percent said they would take other steps, including protests and keeping their children at home. Most concerned parents cited safety issues in northside schools, and some referenced the violence in Boston (see chapter 2). But 17 percent of white parents admitted they would prefer to have their children attend all-white schools.¹² Some busing critics cited a tax increase that would be necessary to pay for the buses.¹³ Other survey data showed Latinos generally supported desegregation,¹⁴ but Native Americans worried they might lose their racial identity if busing was forced on them.¹⁵ Residents of the Sherman Park community, a racially diverse part of Milwaukee, were divided—31 percent thought integration would have a positive effect on the quality of education, 26 percent thought it would have no effect, 27 percent thought it would have a bad effect, and 16 percent did not know.¹⁶ According to another *Milwaukee Sentinel* poll, conducted in 1976, 56

¹² Keith Spore, “72 Percent in Survey Oppose Busing,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 31, 1976, 1:1,6. The raw data are available in John H. Blexrud and Paul Tsao, eds., *Data Reference Book for Political, Desegregation, and Crime Studies in Milwaukee and Wisconsin, 1975–1976* (Milwaukee Journal/Milwaukee Sentinel and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1977), 143–147. See pages 149–171 for data from a similar *Milwaukee Journal* poll, including polling data on students. The *Journal* poll yielded results similar to those of the *Sentinel*.

¹³ Dorothy Peterson, “Busing is Insanity,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 6, 1976, 1:18.

¹⁴ Rick Janka, “Latinos Hope School Plan Won’t Ignore Their Needs,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 2, 1976, 1:11.

¹⁵ Rick Janka, “Indians Reject Integration Role,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 23, 1976, 1:1; and Gary C. Rummeler, “Indians Resist Role in Integration Suit,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 23, 1976, 2:1.

¹⁶ “Sherman Park Poll Corrected,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 21, 1976, 1:8.

percent of city residents believed the suburbs should be part of integration,¹⁷ and 64 percent of suburbanites said they supported busing African American students to their schools.¹⁸

John Rakus, president of the National Justice Foundation, a group opposed to court-ordered integration plans, came to Milwaukee in spring 1976. He claimed his organization represented people in thirty-two states and likened “forced integration” to British rule over the American colonies in the eighteenth century.¹⁹ Many Milwaukeeans agreed with Rakus’s position, if not his rhetoric. They revealed in interviews that they liked the voluntary nature of McMurrin’s magnet plan but also doubted it would actually achieve racial integration. They expected involuntary busing would follow soon.²⁰ And despite the poll data that said white parents would welcome African American students in their schools, one white man, whose wife was a substitute teacher at Lincoln High School, speaking on the condition of anonymity, called Lincoln a black prison and said, “Now what’s going to happen when they bus a whole lot of black students over the viaduct to the South Side? The people aren’t going to accept that. You know what I mean by that.”²¹

¹⁷ Keith Spore, “56% Back Suburb Integration Role,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 2, 1976, 1:1,9.

¹⁸ “Suburbanite View of City Changing,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 1, 1977, 1:16.

¹⁹ “School Foes Plan Vow Fight,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 18, 1976, 1:9.

²⁰ Dorothy Austin, “Reactions Vary Widely to Reynolds’ Ruling,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:6; “Citizens OK Integration, Strongly Oppose Busing,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:8; and “PTA Group Opposed to Busing,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 29, 1976, 1:5.

²¹ Quoted in Donald Pfarrer, “Reynolds’ Order Stirs Hopes, Fears, Doubts,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 29, 1976, 1:1,12. The comment about the viaduct was a reference to Fr. Groppi’s open housing marches in the 1960s. See chapter 3.

That last sentence is key to understanding the white mindset. It was spoken in a kind of code—no one wanted to admit it, but while many white Milwaukeeans publicly said they favored integration as long as their children were not bused, they privately did not want any integration at all. White Milwaukeeans simply could not accept their children going to school with African American children, whether for racial reasons or out of a fear of a decline in educational standards, as Christine Rossell’s research has argued was true in other cities (see chapter 5).

Reaction in Milwaukee’s black leadership was mixed. Organization of Organization (Triple O) director Lawrence Harwell feared for the safety of black children in white schools. He also questioned the benefits of integration and said it “somehow covers up the key issue, which is how to make every school in this city a quality school.”²² He held a series of community meetings in 1976–1977, and according to the *Milwaukee Courier*, a black newspaper, many African Americans agreed with him.²³ Milwaukee Urban League President Wesley Scott, on the other hand, took the more traditional black viewpoint and believed integration was necessary to achieve equality. He also supported busing and countywide integration. Frederick Carr, chair of the Black Administrators and Supervisors Council in the Milwaukee Public Schools, was pleased

²² Quoted in Eileen Hammer, “Quality Education Seen as Key,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:8. Although integration may be a way of improving education, several studies indicate that fostering a strong reading ability is the most effective way to improve student achievement. See Steven Beyer, *Factors in the School Environment Associated with Student Achievement in Science* (PhD diss.: Columbia University Teachers College, 1990).

²³ “Strong Integration Support in Area,” *Milwaukee Courier*, April 3, 1976, 1,18; Gregory Stanford, “School Board Hit for Dragging Feet,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 3, 1976, 2:3; and “Triple O Plans Survival Effort for Black Children, Parents,” *Milwaukee Courier*, February 19, 1977, 2. The *Courier* articles should not be construed as to represent a majority of the black community, which was still sharply divided on the method to be used to achieve integration and whether integration was the goal.

with Reynolds's decision. He also said he liked McMurrin's magnet plan but felt it would not go far enough and involuntary busing would be necessary. O.C. White, a popular Milwaukee radio personality and head of an inner-city youth group, encouraged parents to get involved in formulating the desegregation plan. Like Carr, he believed countywide integration was necessary, otherwise white flight would result in the city's becoming entirely African American.²⁴

Student reaction to integration varied. According to newspaper accounts, African Americans were the targets of harassment at Hamilton, the first southside magnet school since Milwaukee Trade and Tech received citywide status in 1961 (see chapter 4).

Hamilton's enrollment went from ninety-two African American students (3.6 percent of all students) in 1975 to 538 (20 percent of all students) in 1976. A carload of white students hurled objects at a county transit system bus carrying African American students home after school on September 21, which resulted in at least one minor injury.²⁵

Rumors about African American students carrying guns spread. There were violent clashes between African Americans and "greasers." Several African American pupils said they felt unwanted. As Lisa Mann lamented, "Why can't you respect us the way we respect you?" Principal Robert Temple, several assistant principals, and security guards patrolled the hall and grounds looking for trouble.²⁶

²⁴ Dan Carpenter, "Battle Won, But War Goes On," *Milwaukee Courier*, January 24, 1976, 1,18; Eileen Hammer, "Quality Education Seen as Key," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1976, 1:8; and Walter Jones, "Rights Fighters Laud Decision," *Milwaukee Courier*, January 24, 1976, 1,18.

²⁵ "Bus is Target at Hamilton," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 23, 1976, 1:1,10, and "Hamilton High Reconvenes after Brief Racial Incident," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 23, 1976, 2:1,9.

²⁶ Quoted in Ralph D. Olive, "School Tries to Keep Lid On," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 24, 1976, 2:1,5. "Greasers" were working class white males who "greased" back their hair with wax, gel, creams, tonics, or pomade. They typically wore white or black T-shirts, denim jeans, and denim or leather

White students at Hamilton complained about the lack of self-discipline among African Americans. For example, a story circulated about that African American students urinated on the wildcat mascot mosaic on the floor of the main entrance. Some white students claimed that some African Americans behaved badly at school dances.²⁷ Whites also said African Americans were not punished for their actions, and about fifty white students staged a walkout in protest at the beginning of the 1983–84 school year. They claimed that black gang fights broke out without consequences and that white students were afraid to go to school. Some of the students actually called the *Milwaukee Journal* to explain their reasons. They accused the school administration of covering up racial problems. “They say we are prejudiced, but we are plain scared,” said one junior girl. A freshman boy added, “If people can’t walk by black people without putting their heads down, that is not a school, that is a hangout.” A third student said the purpose of the walkout was to alert the public to what was “really going on [at Hamilton],” claiming that white students “don’t want to be pushed around anymore.”²⁸

But former Hamilton teachers report that stories in the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Milwaukee Sentinel* were overblown. Arlo Coplin, who was the Physical Education Department chairperson in the 1970s and would be a guidance counselor in the late 1980s and early 1990s, recalled very few problems among students. He said the white students

jackets. Some rode motorcycles, as in the film *Easy Rider* (1955). “Fonzie,” a character from the Milwaukee-based television series *Happy Days* is perhaps the most famous example of a greaser. The greaser subculture prized rebelling against authority.

²⁷ John Semancik, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 6, 2011.

²⁸ Quoted in “White Students Stage Protest at Hamilton,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 30, 1983, 2:1,4.

were apprehensive at first because they had had little or no contact with African Americans prior to integration. He acknowledged that there were some fights between black groups and white groups. But he also said there had been fights among whites prior to integration, so nothing had really changed other than skin color.²⁹

A guidance counselor who requested anonymity agreed with Coplin and said very little changed in the tenor of the school. One problem she did recall, however, was that African American students were added to Hamilton in the middle of summer, and that overloaded some classes. She said the whole school had to be reprogrammed three weeks into the school year and that some white students were removed from classes in which they were earning A's, which angered several students, but the counselor said the anger was over the loss of a good grade and was not race based.³⁰ Scott Hirsch, who attended Hamilton from 1975 until 1978 and who worked as a safety aide at Hamilton in the 1990s, remembered a lot of anger and confusion over the reprogramming.³¹ Some classes remained overcrowded despite the reprogramming and some students wanted to transfer to less crowded suburban or parochial schools.³²

James Jones was an art teacher who came to Hamilton in 1976. Jones, an African American, grew up in Rockford, Illinois, and attended Buena Vista University in Iowa. He said he always had a lot of white friends and was used to multicultural groups. His first job in Milwaukee was at Robert Fulton Junior High in 1969. He said he actually

²⁹ Arlo Coplin, interview with author, Greendale, WI, August 17, 2010.

³⁰ Anonymous guidance counselor, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, August 19, 2010.

³¹ Scott Hirsch, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, May 13, 2011.

³² Semancik interview.

went to see the principal after the first day of school and asked where all the white children were, because he did not know that Milwaukee was a segregated city. Jones said Fulton was at least 90 percent African American. He said he liked his time there but realized he had to leave after seven years when his car was vandalized. He ended up at Hamilton in the first year of integration and was surprised to find out that, while African American students were bused to Hamilton, few, if any, neighborhood students were bused out. He said he liked all the students and teachers—both black and white. Robert Temple, Hamilton’s principal in much of the 1970s, recognized Jones’s unique people skills and asked him take over the school’s newly created human relations position. Jones accepted it and worked to improve relations between students and faculty through multicultural activities and a student-faculty advisory committee. He returned to the classroom after a few years and became Art Department chair and head basketball coach. He said he always loved the people with whom he worked.³³

Former Hamilton students agreed with their teachers. Jeff Kartz said most white students accepted African American classmates.³⁴ Dena Platow agreed and said there were no concerns about racial violence, although she acknowledged a noticeable change in student behavior once integration happened. “We never had to worry about vandalism in the bathrooms until then.”³⁵ Hirsch, who served on the human relations committee, remembered the school being overcrowded. He said there were some fights and territorial conflicts—for example, one of the doors to the school was the “greaser door”—but those

³³ James Jones, interview with author, Greenfield, WI, August 23, 2010.

³⁴ Jeff Kartz, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, October 10, 2010.

³⁵ Dena Platow, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, January 24, 2011.

territorial conflicts had always been there, and race was not an issue: “It was just that nobody really knew anybody.” He also said the white students and teachers were unprepared for poor African American students. The teachers were used to higher-achieving students and did not have much training on working with students who were below grade level and had learning styles that were different from those of middle-class students. He said he thinks teachers might have had an easier time adjusting their pedagogy for the new students if the students had been phased into the school, perhaps starting at the elementary level.³⁶

Eventually, some white parents took their children out of Hamilton and put them in parochial schools or suburban schools, but they said it had nothing to do with race. John Semancik, for example, sent his two sons to Martin Luther High School, which was both parochial and suburban, to take classes with fewer numbers of students who were less likely to be disruptive. One of his daughters also left Hamilton for the same reason, but he said she got a fine education and went on to become a successful artist.³⁷

Kenneth Knoll, who was also on the Hamilton cluster committee, agreed. Knoll had been a teacher and a principal in Greenfield and in the rural Milwaukee County school district that had preceded the modern suburban districts. He lamented the lack of discipline in modern schools. In his day, it was perfectly acceptable to physically discipline students. He said he remembered some fights and assaults at Bell Junior High School and Hamilton but said they were not race-based. In his view, lax discipline and

³⁶ Hirsch interview. See also McMurrin, 2010.

³⁷ Semancik interview.

tolerance of fighting was simply a sign of the times. Knoll never tolerated fighting, profanity, or other behaviors in his own school, and he eventually took his children out of MPS when he saw increases in these problem areas.³⁸

As MPS went into its second year of desegregation in 1977, white students would have to volunteer for integration to clear out space in southside schools for African Americans. Many white parents did not want to remove their children from neighborhood schools and became angry when their children were bused to northside schools. There were more than a thousand such cases. Keith Malkowski is one example. Keith and his parents lived a few blocks from Lake Michigan and, along with fifty-five thousand other families, received information packets on desegregation in May 1977. These families were informed that they would face possible mandatory reassignment if they did not fill out transfer forms. The form allowed parents to list their top three choices, and the Malkowskis wrote “Fernwood” for all three and added the following message: “The above choice is our *one and only, positively without a doubt.*” The Malkowskis had sent Keith to Fernwood, which was only four blocks from their home, since he was in first grade, with the exception of one year at a Catholic school, during which he received sacramental preparation for Holy Eucharist. Keith was in sixth grade in 1976–77, and his parents were intent on his completing seventh and eighth grades at Fernwood. By listing Fernwood three times on the application, Keith risked being involuntarily assigned to a school if he was not admitted to Fernwood, but Christine Malkowski did not care. “If I have to carry a folding chair and take my child into the

³⁸ Kenneth Knoll, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 11, 2011.

seventh grade class at Fernwood next year and sit him down in it, I'll do that," she said. She also admitted that she and her neighbors did not believe the desegregation order applied to them: "We kept hearing how voluntary it would be and we thought that meant we'd never really have to become involved." She also liked that Keith could walk to and from school and could come home for lunch.³⁹

Parochial students had even less choice. As previously stated, students in Catholic schools who entered the public school system were given the lowest priority when it came to school assignment. Diane Duncan was one of those students. Diane graduated from eighth grade at St. Florian's school in spring 1977. Faced with the choice of paying high tuition at a Catholic high school or attending an MPS school, Diane and her parents chose the latter and filled out an application to enroll at Walker Junior High, the junior high school closest to their home, after which she would attend a senior high school for grades ten to twelve. Audubon Junior High School and Bell Junior High School, also close to their home, were their second and third choices. But Diane was not allowed to attend any of those schools. MPS assigned her and at least three other St. Florian graduates to Edison Junior High School on the north side of the city in order to integrate it. Thus, Diane went from an all-white school to one that was half black and half white. When interviewed, Diane's father said he did not mind his daughter's attending school with African Americans but objected to the half-hour bus ride his daughter would face: "I think it's fine to integrate the school system if they could do it without busing the kids. I've been paying property taxes here for 21 years, even though

³⁹ Quoted in "Their Three Choices: Fernwood," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 26, 1977, 1:5. Emphasis in the original.

my daughter was attending parochial school. Now when I want her to go to public school down the block, they say she has to take a bus all the way across town, just because she's white."⁴⁰ Duncan's opinion is consistent with Rossell's findings that indicate many white parents objected to busing for reasons in addition to race.

About a hundred white parents went to the school board shortly before the 1977–78 school year began to try to have the mandatory assignments rescinded. Some parents demanded that McMurrin be fired: "The things that were once important in our schools—reading, writing, and arithmetic—are now forgotten. That's what this school system was set up for, not integration," said Frank Augustine. He received loud applause when he said "the biggest mistake ever made was in hiring McMurrin." Another parent claimed that his twelve-year-old son still could not read and that desegregation was doing nothing to help him. Other parents described mandatory school assignments as "a communist plot," "a Soviet scheme," and "akin to a three-ring circus." In response, the board's Committee on Community and Group Advisory ordered the superintendent and the board's desegregation attorney, Lawrence Hammond Jr., to prepare options to erase the mandatory assignments.⁴¹

But not all whites objected to mandatory busing. Special Master Gronouski and some members of the Committee of 100 (C/100) made public statements against "one-way busing," in which African Americans were bused in disproportionately larger

⁴⁰ Quoted in Mike Plemmons, "Half Hour Trip by Bus is Cost of Integration," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 6, 1977, 1:5.

⁴¹ Quoted in Rick Janka, "End to Forced Transfers Urged," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 25, 1977, 1:5. See also McMurrin, interview with author, 2011.

numbers than were whites.⁴² People United for Integrated and Quality Education (People United for short) organized around the issue. People United was a multicultural organization dedicated to the transformation of learning in MPS. A total of 12,700 African Americans were scheduled for busing—either voluntary or involuntary—in the 1977–78 school year, compared to a mere 1,800 whites. That was one out of every three black students, compared to one in every thirty-eight white students.⁴³ People United wanted pairing and clustering of schools. For example, a black elementary school and white elementary school might be paired so that all students would attend grades one to three at the white school and grades four to six at the black school. Their ambitious platform also called for more multicultural education, more bilingual education, an end to “tracking,” changes in how discipline referrals and suspensions were handled, counseling for students with substance abuse problems, a reversal of the *Bakke* case, and a boycott of corporations that did business in apartheid South Africa.⁴⁴

People United criticized what it saw as overuse of suspensions as a means of disciplining students. It cited a study by the Social Development Commission that found African American students who were in white-majority schools in Milwaukee were

⁴² David I. Bednarek, “McMurrin’s Proposal Would Bus 7,500,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 14, 1976, 1:1,5, and “McMurrin Very Confident,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 15, 1976, 1:1–2.

⁴³ Rick Janka, “Schools Work on ‘78 Plan,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 3, 1977, 1:5; Rick Janka, “Several Factors May Lessen Black Pupil Walkout Impact,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 20, 1977, 1:5; “School Buses Set to Roll; Firms Expect No Trouble,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 3, 1977, 1:5,9; “WCLU Says Busing is Not Discriminatory,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 27, 1977, 1:7. See “Fair Integration Means Equal Bussing,” in Kathleen Mary Hart, Milwaukee Public Schools Desegregation Collection, 1975–1987, UWM Manuscript Collection 90, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as Hart Papers), box 2, folder 2, for a list of complaints about unequal busing.

⁴⁴ “What is People United?” in People United for Integrated and Quality Education Papers in possession of Robert Peterson, Milwaukee, WI (hereafter cited as People United).

suspended five to ten more times often than white students, compared to a rate triple that of whites nationwide.⁴⁵ One of the fliers from People United addressed the issue of suspensions this way:

Do you care about suspensions? . . . For every one white suspension there are three black suspensions. Part of the reason there are so many suspensions is because they're not teaching in a more modern way than just old-fashioned teaching methods. The MPS does not have uniform rules defining what students can be suspended for. Suspensions are not used as a last resort but as the typical method of discipline—students can be suspended for breathing out of turn! Racist administrators and administrators who tolerate racism make it even more difficult for minority students.⁴⁶

People United attempted to organize the black, white, and Latino communities through meetings, picketing, and “speak-outs,” which were gatherings where individuals could approach a microphone and “speak out” their concerns about a specific topic.⁴⁷ It also emphasized student involvement and issued a high school students’ bill of rights, which called for, among other things, a discipline appeal board with equal numbers of teachers, administrators, and students; a truancy council run by students; freedom of speech and press; expanded tutoring and counseling opportunities; an increase in minority and social history; the right to grade teachers; the right to leave campus during the day; and the right to smoke cigarettes.⁴⁸

When Bob Peterson, cofounder of People United, was asked thirty years later

⁴⁵ Jeff Browne, “Black Pupils Suspended at a Higher Rate,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 10, 1978, 1:1,13; “School Suspensions Attacked at Hearing,” *Milwaukee Courier*, May 27, 1978, 1,5; and “School System’s Black Suspension Rate, One of the Nation’s Highest, Prompts Hearing,” *Milwaukee Courier*, May 13, 1978, 3.

⁴⁶ “Do You Care About Suspensions?” in People United Papers.

⁴⁷ See various documents in the People United Papers.

⁴⁸ People United Papers.

about why the organization was largely unsuccessful, he said MPS refused to adopt two-way busing and reforms due to the “white power structure” in the community and “spineless” white leadership. He was particularly not fond of Superintendent McMurrin, whom he referred to as “Mr. Smiling Face.” From Peterson’s viewpoint, McMurrin was a nice person but was unwilling to take the necessary steps to bring about bilateral busing and curricular reform because such steps would disrupt the white community. C/100 had incorporated many of People United’s points into its integration plan, but McMurrin refused to accept those points. He accused the school board of “dragging its feet” by accepting integration on the surface but delaying implementation while it appealed Reynolds’s decision and noted that specialty schools received extra funding to improve education but other schools did not. According to Peterson, adequate funding and a lot of human relations work would have been necessary to improve education at schools that were already integrated and to encourage whites to stay in them. Peterson also was disappointed in the lack of leadership at the city, county, and state levels and said that he considered John Gronouski to be “obnoxious” because he did not allow public hearings as he formulated his integration plan.⁴⁹

African Americans also organized outside of People United. They were not unified in their opinion of the implementation of integration. As explained in previous chapters, there were three distinct groups of African Americans in Milwaukee.⁵⁰ Black

⁴⁹ Robert Peterson, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, August 16, 2010.

⁵⁰ Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) is the best explanation of the divisions within Milwaukee’s African American community. Thomas Sugrue touches on similar themes at the national level by exploring the motivations of various civil rights advocates in *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

business interests tended to oppose integration out of fear that it would upset the white business community. Others wanted voluntary integration without mandatory assignments, and the third group favored black community control over black schools and was adamantly opposed to magnet schools. The Black Administrators and Supervisors Council, Larry Harwell, and the *Milwaukee Courier*, a black community newspaper, opposed one-way busing.⁵¹ Joyce Mallory of the local NAACP chapter had several complaints about one-way busing, including long bus rides, the inability of whites to teach African American students, new discipline policies in white schools that were aimed at African Americans, and lack of opportunities to provide African American parents with input into how the white schools were run.⁵² Former Urban League director Wesley Scott put it this way: “Blacks didn’t have much input into the schools in the first place. This plan made it even worse.”⁵³ Comments like those of Mallory and Scott indicate a shift in the black school reform movement to community control of schools by the 1980s.

No one involved wanted to admit it publically at the time, but the basic premise of busing was to bus only African American students and to leave white students where they were. School administrators thought that would integrate the schools as the court order required but would keep white flight to a minimum. Deputy Superintendent David

⁵¹ “Barbee Tells It Like It Is,” *Milwaukee Courier*, March 13, 1976, 1,4; David I. Bednarek, Gronouski Turns to PTAs for Help on Integration,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 27, 1976, 1:1,24; and James Parks, “Black Role Pushed in Desegregation,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 21, 1976, 2:1,3.

⁵² David I. Bednarek, “Plan Foes Cheer Integration Appeal,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 9, 1979, 1:1,26.

⁵³ Quoted in Bruce Murphy and John Pawasarat, “Why it Failed: Desegregation 10 Years Later,” *Milwaukee Magazine*, September 1986, 39.

Bennett was the chief architect of Milwaukee’s busing plan, and Bennett admitted this strategy in 1999 when he mentioned it twice at a forum on race issues. Anthony Busalacchi, school board president from 1978 until 1979, agreed, saying, “It was an issue of how do we least disrupt the white community.”⁵⁴

An organization named Blacks for Two-Way Integration formed in the spring of 1977 under the leadership of Larry Harwell to try to decrease the amount of involuntary busing to the south side and increase white enrollment in black schools. They encouraged rallies, communities meetings, and boycotts of the buses.⁵⁵ According to their figures, 7,328 African American pupils were bused in 1976–1977, the first year of integration, while only 985 whites were bused. African American students were removed from forty black schools to attend ninety-five white schools. It also said that 1,939 African Americans were “forced to volunteer.” in 1977–78.⁵⁶

Blacks for Two-Way Integration found those statistics appalling. It made nine recommendations to the school board:

1. That black schools remain majority black—55 percent black and 45 percent non-black
2. That busing be two-way (bilateral, instead of unilateral black-only busing)
3. That black schools should not be closed or torn down until funds were

⁵⁴ Quoted in Joe Williams, “‘White Benefit’ Was Driving Force of Busing,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 19, 1999.

⁵⁵ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 347–357.

⁵⁶ Lorraine Radtke Papers, 1947–1981, UWM Manuscript Collection 64, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee) box 1, folder 4 (hereafter cited as Radtke Papers). This was a pattern that would continue into at least the early 1980s. See Howard L. Fuller, “The Impact of the Milwaukee Public School System’s Desegregation Plan on Black Students and the Black Community (1976–1982)” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1985), 151–153.

allocated to replace the school, that black schools in need of renovation or remodeling should be given priority, and that black schools should not be closed to force integration

4. That specialty schools should be equally distributed throughout the community, not concentrated in the black community; that specialty schools should not be used to “trick white folks” to attending black schools and to force black students to volunteer; and that five of the seven city-wide and zone specialty schools located in the black community should be placed in schools that have been closed in the white community
5. That all high school specialties should be placed in one or two main schools and that the remaining high schools should retain their regular curriculum, along with needed improvements
6. That all teachers should incorporate various teaching methods into their classrooms
7. That there should be less emphasis on discipline and more concentration on instruction in each school, that black students should be expected to learn, and that personnel used for police work and detention programs should be used as instructors
8. That new teachers and experienced teachers should be distributed throughout the school system
9. That annual progress reports concerning black students should be released to the public, including reading, math scores, suspension and truancy rates, special students, and disciplinary transfers⁵⁷

The school board’s Committee on Community and Advisory Group Relations responded to each recommendation. The committee stated that there could not be any black-majority schools under the terms of the court order. In fact, there could not be any schools with an African American population of more than 30 percent. As for the recommendation for two-way busing, the committee stated that some white students did ride buses to the north side, though the committee did not acknowledge that there were

⁵⁷ Milwaukee Board of School Directors, *Proceedings of the Board of School Directors* (Milwaukee: The Board of School Directors), August 2, 1977 (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*). A partial version of this list is located in Radtke Papers, box 1, folder 4.

only a few whites bused compared to African Americans. The committee further said that it would be impossible to mandate equal amounts of black and white busing without a completely mandatory system of school assignments. It saw no reason to change the procedures already in place, as the court and the special master had both approved the board's plan for voluntary integration. When it came to the issue of school closure, the committee reported that funds had been allocated to replace one black elementary school and that the board was looking for money to replace three others. It sidestepped the recommendation that black schools not be closed to force integration and responded much the same way to the request for equal distribution of magnet specialty schools—the committee listed several specialty schools in white neighborhoods, while ignoring the fact that most specialty schools had been placed in black neighborhoods. It also ignored the fact that black students were often denied admission to these schools even though the schools were in black neighborhoods. As for the recommendation that all magnet programs be placed in one or two schools, the committee said that was logistically impossible—no school was large enough to house all those programs without eliminating all basic classes that were required for graduation.⁵⁸

One of Blacks for Two-Way Integration's slogans was "two-way or no way." People United disagreed, maintaining that some integration was better than none.⁵⁹ The Committee on Community and Advisory Group Relations did not give a precise response

⁵⁸ Report from the Committee on Community and Advisory Group Relations to the Board of School Directors, August 2, 1977, in *Proceedings*, August 2, 1977, and Radtke papers, box 1, folder 4. See also *Milwaukee Journal*, August 5, 1977. As a side note, African American teachers also bore a disproportionate share of teacher transfers. See David I. Bednarek, "Integration of Teachers Slows Down," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 9, 1978, 2:1,11.

⁵⁹ Robert Peterson interview.

on that issue. However, based on available documentation, it appears that MPS planned as if black enrollment had to be limited in north-side schools in order to make seats available for whites. If more magnet schools were on the south side and if more whites chose them, that would leave more seats for African Americans at northside schools, which was inconsistent with the goal of school integration.⁶⁰

The last four recommendations from Blacks for Two-Way Integration were centered on curriculum or teaching reform, and all were essentially rejected by the committee. The committee stated that most teachers were already incorporating various teaching methods into their classrooms and that in-service activities and classes were being scheduled for teachers who desired additional training. It also said that it would like to devote more personnel to teaching but that having enough staff for discipline and security also were priorities. In fact, the committee replied that discipline was a top priority among parents in Milwaukee schools and elsewhere in the United States. As for teacher distribution, the committee pointed out that teacher assignments were based on voluntary transfers, with placement governed by seniority according to the contract with the teachers' union and that only a few new teachers were going to be hired in time for the 1977–78 school year. Finally, the committee promised that the administration would continue to collect data and regularly disseminate the progress of all of its students in the schools.⁶¹

In other words, Blacks for Two-Way Integration did not get much beyond lip

⁶⁰ The Committee of 100 saw one-way busing as a problem as early as 1977. See Ian M. Harris, "The Committee of 100: Citizen Participation in Desegregation," (unpublished report, Milwaukee Public Library, 1977), 13–14.

⁶¹ *Proceedings*, August 2, 1977.

service from the school board, which could not implement policies that were inconsistent with the court order. Nonetheless, Blacks for Two-Way Integration made ballots and took a vote in the black community. African Americans were given three options in the vote: follow the board's planned busing assignments, send their children to neighborhood schools, or boycott MPS altogether. Ballots also asked voters to decide whether they favored unilateral integration, as the school board did, or bilateral integration. A public forum was held prior to the vote, at which speaker after speaker talked about the "victims" of busing amid cries of "two-way or no way." "If we don't say 'two way or no way,' then we're saying Caucasians care more about their children than we do," said Marzuq Madyun, a Black Muslim. Marvin Echols, a former teacher, added, "This day hopefully marks the end of an era, an era when white folks tell us what happens to our kids." Future state legislator Annette "Polly" Williams said that black communities were built around schools. In her view, losing control of the school meant losing control of the neighborhood.⁶²

More than four thousand African Americans voted. When the results were tallied, it was revealed that more than 60 percent of voters wanted to send their children to neighborhood schools, more than 30 percent supported a boycott, and fewer than 10 percent supported the school board's integration plan. More than 90 percent of all voters also said they favored bilateral busing over unilateral busing.⁶³

On a related note, those who favored community control were enraged by the

⁶² Quoted in *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 27, 1977.

⁶³ Eileen Hammer, "Equal Busing Backed in Poll," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 1, 1977, 1:10.

closure of some formerly all-black schools. Lincoln High School, for example, which had had declining enrollment for years, still had strong alumni support that did not look favorably on the school board's decision to close the school and bus the students elsewhere. Joyce Mallory of the local NAACP and Dwaine Washington of the Coalition of Peaceful Schools both spoke out against closing Lincoln,⁶⁴ while Marian McEvilly, now representing the minority viewpoint, lamented the poor facilities at Lincoln and longed for the closure of the school. The closure of Wells Street Junior High School, which had a gifted and talented program, was also controversial. But the board deemed it necessary, because it wanted to send gifted students to Rufus King, which had the college-bound program for students in grades six to twelve.⁶⁵

MPS also received some positive press on its magnet schools. The *Milwaukee Journal*, for example, said integration was proceeding much more smoothly than in other cities, such as Boston or Louisville,⁶⁶ and parents hailed the Montessori schools for their innovative programs.⁶⁷ Washington High School, once the site of race riots (see chapter

⁶⁴ David I. Bednarek, "Panel's Vote Indicates Desegregation Support," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 20, 1979, 2:1,3, and David M. Novick, "Lincoln High School 'Saved,'" *Milwaukee Courier*, August 5, 1978, 1,4.

⁶⁵ Marilyn Kucer, "School Closing Vote 'Well Orchestrated,'" *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 3, 1978, 1:1,7, and Dean A. Showers, "Interest High in Schools to Be Closed," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 3, 1978, 1:5. See also "Haste Inadvisable in School Closings," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 1, 1978, 1:10. The program for grades six to eight was discontinued in fall 1978. See *Proceedings*, March 14, 1978.

⁶⁶ David I. Bednarek, "Integration Here Unusually Successful," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 22, 1977, 1:1,5, and "Integration Planning Begins Amid Complaints by Many," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 16, 1976, 1:1,15.

⁶⁷ Grace M. Iacolucci, interview by Michael A. Gordon, June 22, 1989, Introduction and Abstract, 9, in Milwaukee Public Schools Oral History Project, UW–Milwaukee Milwaukee Public Schools Oral History Project records, 1989–1990, UWM Archival Collection 82, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and Jeff Browne, "Narrower Integration Plan Favored by School Board," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 21, 1976, 1:1,7.

3), was singled out as a model for integration by the Sherman Park Community Association, which recognized the school at a fine arts celebration attended by more than four hundred people.⁶⁸ A 1979 *Milwaukee Sentinel* survey found that about 60 percent of all parents agreed with the statement “Children of different races get along at my school.” Only about a third of the parents disagreed. Teachers had more positive opinions. More than 70 percent agreed with the statement, compared to about 20 percent who disagreed. Students, on the other hand, had lower opinions—slightly less than 40 percent of students agreed with the statement, and slightly more than 50 percent disagreed with the statement. The gap between black students and white students was alarming—close to half of African American students in the survey agreed with the statement, compared to a third of white students, while the black-white gap for the students who disagreed with the statement was more than 25 percent. Clearly, African American students were more supportive of integration than white students.⁶⁹

The students had mixed reactions to integration at Marshall High School. While there may have been little violence, African Americans reported feelings of isolation in what was still a mostly white school. Student Jill Gilmer, a member of Marshall’s human relations council, observed that students were still segregated within the school and that whites were still in control of the school’s culture. She cited problems in electing black class officers or having black music played at events in the white-majority school. She said social aspects of school, such as those, were “as important as a good academic

⁶⁸ “Heartening Success at Washington High,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 9, 1978, 1:12, and Sandy Wilson, “Integration Proud to Take Bow,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 8, 1978, 2:15.

⁶⁹ Robert H. Edelman, “Pupils More Negative on Race,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 17, 1979, 1:1,12.

environment,” and that “Blacks might not feel that they are really wanted or belong [at Marshall].” She added, “We’ve got a mixture of kids from all sorts of schools. Some are coming from mainly black [schools,] and this is an entirely different setting. Many people feel uprooted.” She said her human relations council tried to promote integrated events, but they sometimes turn into all-white or all-black occasions.⁷⁰ Larry Totsky, a white student, said change was coming slowly and that he could see that his younger brothers had a much more open attitude toward African Americans when compared to the attitudes of his friends, who were used to the old segregated system. Cathy Pattillo echoed similar sentiments about slow change:

The black students who have been here for three years are just getting used to it and relationships are better but for the 200 new black students, most are still acting like they did in their former schools. Many of them are still wearing T-shirts with the names of their old school, they don’t identify with Marshall. It isn’t so much a matter of black or white, it depends on the normal behavior of their group and what is expected of them. The teachers don’t have time to change a whole lifestyle. We have to give the new black students a while—we can’t expect them to catch up all at once.⁷¹

Reactions at King were a bit more positive. As indicated earlier, the neighborhood population was removed completely from King so it could become the flagship magnet school with a college-bound program. In other words, all the students who attended King were there voluntarily, and it could be expected that they would react positively to integration. Vanessa James, an African American student who had attended

⁷⁰ Quoted in Ira Jean Hadnot, “Majority or Minority: Pupils Want Equality,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 25, 1978, 1:5,16. See also Jeff Browne, “School Lesson: Integration Takes Work,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 21, 1979, 2:1,8.

⁷¹ Quoted in MPS Human Relations Update in Kathleen Mary Hart, Milwaukee Public Schools Desegregation Collection, 1975–1987, UWM Manuscript Collection 90, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (hereafter cited as Hart Papers), box 1, folder 4.

King both before and after integration, said slow progress had been made, and Tarome Alford, another African American student, gave reviews: “Now that I’m here I’m proud of the school and my classmates. I have white friends too, and we all want the best education possible. I did find that the courses were harder . . . but we have more on the honor roll at King this year—it’s become more than just a display of names and we want to keep it that way.”⁷²

Marshall had been in transition from white to black for several years, and King was voluntarily integrated, which means students at both schools were fairly well prepared for integration. The situation at Bay View High School was much different. The Bay View neighborhood has a long tradition of independence, and in fact, it was an independent village from 1879 until 1887. It is technically the portion of the city that is bounded by Beecher Street to the north, Morgan Avenue to the south, Sixth Street to the west, and Lake Michigan to the east. It is characterized by very close-knit citizens and locally owned businesses—even in the twenty-first century, they are few chain stores in Bay View.⁷³ Opinions of integration varied from mixed to hostile at Bay View High School. Elizabeth Dziennik, a white student, said the human relations program worked well when students were working on a school activity that was of interest to all, such as sports or music, but when students were not interested in an activity, perhaps something forced on them by school administrators, students were not likely to participate. La Donna Goskowicz was less optimistic, saying “The ideas behind the human relations

⁷² Quoted in MPS Human Relations Update in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 4.

⁷³ “About Bay View Today,” The Bay View Historical Society
<http://www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org/Bay%20View%20Today.html> (accessed December 30, 2009).

activities were good and attempts were made, but time limitations, insufficient preparation and the [teachers'] strike limited the success of any meaningful activities.” She also went on to complain that more students and parents had to get involved in human relations activities if they were going to be successful, and that the same group of people was doing all the work.⁷⁴

The examples above, while not entirely flattering, were not entirely negative either. They were, however, from an MPS-produced document, so they may not accurately reflect the opinions of the general student population. Some documentary film makers solicited other opinions at Bay View High School in 1980 and concluded that African American students were not really given a choice in where they would attend school. The filmmakers referred to it as a “forced choice,” a term coined by an African American student who said he wanted to attend his neighborhood high school but was forced to make a different choice that would help integrate the schools. This student was not alone. An African American student at Bay View angrily said this about desegregation: “Hell, I got to go all the way out on South Kinnickinnic Avenue to get an education. I mean that was offered to me. I was told I couldn’t go to Lincoln Junior-Senior High School [a black school]. I had to go somewhere else, and the only three choices I had was South, Pulaski, and Bay View,” all of which were white schools.⁷⁵ In other words, this student’s viewpoint was very much the same as that of Keith

⁷⁴ MPS “Human Relations Update” in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 4.

⁷⁵ Quoted in *Forced Choice: The Milwaukee Plan: A Model for Northern School Desegregation*, VHS, produced and directed by Jones Cullinan (Milwaukee, WI: Medusa Veritape, 1980). See Bruce Murphy, “Forced Choices,” *Milwaukee Magazine*, January 1982, 56–58, for a review of *Forced Choice*. According to the review, McMurrin would not allow the documentary to be shown in schools.

Malkowski's mother, whose only desire was to send her son to Fernwood Elementary School.

Some of the other African American students at Bay View were more open-minded, but the white students were universally opposed to desegregation. Several of the students casually used the word "nigger" in the interviews. Some girls who were passing by the camera crew yelled it out and laughed about it. Many said the African American students did not care about academic success: "They send the niggers here. Nine-tenths of them don't want to learn. All they want to do is just sit around in class and fuck around and stuff and screw up." Another student suggested taking all the "niggers" out in the ocean and drowning them or sending them back to Africa. Several students of both races recommended a return to segregated neighborhood schools. One white student said he would rather drop out than attend a school on the north side.⁷⁶

Many African Americans felt the same way. Space had to be made available for white students at northside schools. Therefore, minority enrollment was restricted. For example, only one hundred neighborhood students were allowed to attend Garfield Elementary, which was a school of three hundred students with an "open education" specialty. The school had asked for the open education program two years prior to the court order, but the school board refused to grant the school's request. Vice Principal Lee Davis expressed her disappointment at the time: "We wanted [open education] for our neighborhood. We were not given it. But then when we got it, many of our neighborhood people had left, because they had to leave because of integration. It was

⁷⁶ Quoted in *Forced Choice*.

hard to do anything positive without hurting someone, and it is unfortunate—it appears—that most of the uprooted population has been blacks.”⁷⁷

UWM professor Michael Barndt, a special consultant to the federal court during the desegregation proceedings, explained it this way:

The specialty schools set up in white areas in most—all—cases were such that there was room in those schools for black students to come in without displacing those students. [In] specialty schools in black areas, the reverse was the case: There was no room in the school—it was usually overcrowded to begin with. Black students had to move to reduce overcrowding. Black students had to move to accommodate whites.⁷⁸

Some African American parents complained about waiting lists to get into what had been their neighborhood schools. To enroll their children in the city schools of their choice, families would have had to move to the suburbs. Now that their schools had more desirable programs, they could no longer attend them.⁷⁹

Most northside schools, however, failed to attract substantial numbers of white students from the south side or the suburbs. Logically, as African American families began enrolling in southside schools, northside schools began to lose enrollment, which increased the per-pupil cost of operating them. Therefore, the superintendent and school board decided to close some northside schools and move students into other schools that were closer to capacity.⁸⁰ Sixteen black schools were closed between 1976 and 1980, the

⁷⁷ Quoted in *Forced Choice*.

⁷⁸ Quoted in *Forced Choice*.

⁷⁹ David I. Bednarek, “City Showing the Way on Magnet Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1981, 2:1,9; David I. Bednarek, “Pupil Swaps Don’t Please All,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 13, 1981; and *Forced Choice*.

⁸⁰ Jim Bednarek, “Panel’s View Questioned by McMurrin,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 25, 1983, 1:5,10, and “Public School Closings Regrettable, Necessary,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 8, 1983, 1:8.

first four years of desegregation, displacing about forty-six thousand African American students and sixteen thousand white students. Officially, these schools were too old for effective learning to take place, even though there were many white schools in use that were at least as old as those sixteen black schools.⁸¹ Meanwhile, white high school students were supposed to voluntarily choose to go to magnet schools in the inner city, even if they did not want to leave their neighborhoods.⁸² These closures also had the effect of forcing African American students to “choose” southside schools.

This “choice” caused an explosive controversy at North Division High School. The events at North Division represent a shift in black leadership in Milwaukee. No longer were Lloyd Barbee and the middle class in control of the civil rights movement. Rather, a grassroots movement, led by Howard Fuller and sustained by the lower class, grew to advocate for community control, not integration, of schools.⁸³

North Division had several problems. The original building opened in 1906⁸⁴ and was in a sad state of disrepair by 1973, described by one teacher as “an archaic, depressing, dungeon-like building coming apart at the seams.”⁸⁵ But school board president Donald J. O’Connell opposed construction of a new school on the grounds that it would contribute to segregation. Instead, O’Connell encouraged the school board to

⁸¹ Bruce Murphy and John Pawasarat, “Why it Failed: Desegregation 10 Years Later,” *Milwaukee Magazine*, September 1986, 39–40.

⁸² See chapter 5 for a list of specialties. Note that core schools such as Rufus King, North Division, and Washington were given some of the more rigorous college preparatory programs.

⁸³ See Dougherty, chapter 7.

⁸⁴ William M. Lamers, *Our Roots Grow Deep*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Board of School Directors, 1974), 10–13, 153–159, 164–165.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Jane B. Mace, “House of Horrors,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 29, 1973, 1:12.

bus students out of the community and integrate them with white students at other schools. The community surrounding North Division was dead set against O'Connell. North Division was an important part of Milwaukee's black community, and residents said they would rather see a new building opened with an improved educational plan.⁸⁶ Eventually, the board voted to construct a new building, but debate went on for months over the location—the county refused to sell parkland to the school board for the favored site of the new school, and the community opposed another proposal that would have moved the school several blocks from its original site.⁸⁷ Once a site was selected, the funds had to be appropriated for the new North Division, as well as the recently approved new South Division and Vincent High Schools. This was no small task, with a price tag of more than \$15 million each. Thus, construction of the schools was delayed as the school administration figured out a financing plan.⁸⁸ Then a fire burned a portion of North Division, closing it for a few days.⁸⁹ With repairs estimated to cost \$200,000, it was beginning to appear that it might be easier to permanently close the school and bus the students to white schools, as O'Connell had proposed. This would essentially take care of two problems—the school board would be able to integrate students and could

⁸⁶ Marilyn Kucer, "New North Division School Poses Racial Questions," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 14, 1973, 1:5,14.

⁸⁷ Barbara A. Koppe, "Walnut Site Picked for North Division," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 29, 1973, 1:1:4, and "Where Should North Division Go?" *Milwaukee Journal*, June 20, 1973, 1:24.

⁸⁸ Rick Janka, "North Division Bids Under Estimate," November 12, 1975, 1:5, and "North Division Plans Denounced by Busalacchi," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 25, 1974, 1:17.

⁸⁹ *Milwaukee Journal*, March 5 and 9, 1976, and "5 Alarm Blaze Hits N. Division," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 5, 1976, 1:1.

divert money to the construction of the new South Division and Vincent.⁹⁰

Nonetheless, the community surrounding North Division vowed to fight for a new school, even if it was not integrated. Quality of education and community control over the school were more important than integration to this segment of the black community.⁹¹ Some even said they would rather keep the old school open and under neighborhood control if that was the only way to keep North from becoming a citywide specialty school with white students being bused in and African American students being bused out.⁹²

Superintendent McMurrin proposed a medical specialty for both the old and new buildings. The plan was approved by the school board even though the old building was in no condition to host such a program.⁹³ But when the new \$20 million building⁹⁴ opened on September 5, 1978, at Eleventh and Center Streets, it was a sight to behold. It had state-of-the-art medical and dental laboratories and a field house that contained an Olympic-sized pool, four basketball courts, and an indoor track. Each academic subject

⁹⁰ David I. Bednarek, "North Fire May Cost \$200,000," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 10, 1976, 1:1,14.

⁹¹ "6,000 Attend Sessions to Help Plan Desegregation," *Milwaukee Courier*, March 20, 1976, 1,8; David I. Bednarek, "Integrate New North: McMurrin," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 25, 1976, 1:1,10; David I. Bednarek, "North Urged as Magnet," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 26, 1976, 2:1,4; Dan Carpenter, "Decision on North Div. Expected by Mid-Month," *Milwaukee Courier*, April 10, 1976, 1,8; "Integration Meetings Show Positive Spirit," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 31, 1976, 1:1,8; "Parents Say Build New North, But Buses Must Roll Both Ways," March 27, 1976, 1,18; and James Parks, "Black Role Pushed in Desegregation," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 22, 1976, 2:1,3.

⁹² "Efforts to Save North Win Stay," *Milwaukee Courier*, April 3, 1976, 1,18.

⁹³ David I. Bednarek, "School Plan Likely to Be Modified," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 29, 1976, 1:1, 6; Rick Janka, "McMurrin Cites Efforts for North Area Renewal," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 31, 1976, 1:5; "McMurrin Suggests Busing North Pupils," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 20, 1976, 1:1,24.

⁹⁴ "Student March Triggers Meeting," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 5, 1979, 1:5.

had its own resource center with reference books and special materials,⁹⁵ and a computer that “looks like a television set” was installed with twenty student terminals.⁹⁶

But the new magnet school only attracted about one hundred white students,⁹⁷ out of a student body of seventeen hundred.⁹⁸ This racial disparity was probably the result of North Division’s proximity to Rufus King, which was more attractive to white students.⁹⁹ King was a citywide school, whereas most of North Division’s students came from the surrounding neighborhood. Thus, southside parents concluded that King had a superior program and student body and that if they were going to send their children to a northside high school, it would be the one with the best program and students. As one student who chose not to attend North Division said, “I didn’t go because there were only going to be about 100 white students and 1,500 black students. I didn’t feel like busing all the way out there, and I don’t think I really missed anything.”¹⁰⁰

According to interviews at the time, the white students were treated with a mixed level of respect. Some got along well with the African American students, whereas others were the subject of physical and verbal harassment, including racial slurs. As for

⁹⁵ Ira Jean Hadnot, “Pupils, Staff Explore North Division,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 6, 1978, 1:5.

⁹⁶ “Computers May Turn Students On,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 7, 1978, 2:1.

⁹⁷ Rick Janka, “Chapter Closed on Gronouski’s Special Master Role,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 2, 1978, 1:5.

⁹⁸ Ira Jean Hadnot, “Pupils, Staff Explore North Division,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 6, 1978, 1:5.

⁹⁹ David I. Bednarek, “School Plans Mired in Confusion,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 24, 1978, 2:1,4.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in David I. Bednarek, “Whites Welcome Black School’s Task,” *Milwaukee Journal*, December 26, 1978, 2:1,6.

the quality of learning, one student referred to his teachers as “dynamite,” while others said the quality of learning suffered from the high truancy rate among African Americans.¹⁰¹

MPS was not able to recruit any additional white students to North Division, so Superintendent McMurrin floated the idea of increasing the African American enrollment by seven hundred in the spring of 1979. But this proposal was not popular with the liberal majority on the school board,¹⁰² and it was quickly abandoned. McMurrin instead decided to convert North Division to a citywide specialty, similar to Rufus King High School and Milwaukee Trade and Technical High School. Under the plan, the then-current eleventh- and twelfth-grade students would be allowed to continue at North Division for one more school year and graduate in June 1979 and 1980, while the current ninth- and tenth-grade students would be transferred out of the school. Thus, in the fall of 1980, a new student body would replace the old one. As could be expected, McMurrin’s plan set off a firestorm in the North Division neighborhood,¹⁰³ despite the support of two African American school board members, Leon Todd and Marion McEvelly.¹⁰⁴ Five hundred students marched four miles from North Division to a school board meeting to

¹⁰¹ David I. Bednarek, “Whites Welcome Black School’s Task,” *Milwaukee Journal*, December 26, 1978, 2:1,6.

¹⁰² Bill Hurley, “North Division Plan Opposed,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 23, 1979, 1:5, and Bill Hurley, “North Division Cote Delayed,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 19, 1979, 1:5.

¹⁰³ David I. Bednarek, “Board Delays Plan for North Division,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 19, 1979, 2:2; David I. Bednarek, “New Board President Tells of Maier Snub,” April 25, 1979, 2:1,8; *Proceedings*, May 1, 1979; and “Student March Triggers Meeting,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 5, 1979, 1:5.

¹⁰⁴ “North Division Plan Readied,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 21, 1979, 2:2. Marian McEvelly was the school board’s chief sponsor of the new North Division. See David I. Bednarek, “Board Delays Plan for North Division,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 19, 1979, 2:2.

protest. The students remained peaceful, but they also made it clear that integration should not have to come at the price of losing community control over schools.¹⁰⁵ One junior said, in reference to white students, “We were here first.”¹⁰⁶

This reaction should not have been a surprise to the superintendent, who had proposed in 1976 that the old North Division become a citywide school. Several students said at the time that they liked North Division and did not want to be bused to a white school.¹⁰⁷ Community activist Larry Harwell had urged a walkout.¹⁰⁸

The reaction was much the same in 1979. Steven Baruch, who worked in the human relations office in MPS, spent one semester at North Division and recalled that North Division was a good neighborhood school for those who attended. He said it had wonderful students who appreciated the educational opportunity North Division afforded. The classroom environments were friendly and cooperative, not dangerous. The trouble was outside the building or in the halls. He said a core group of teachers knew the neighborhood very well and were extremely devoted to the school and that people from the black community did not always think they had to have desegregation to have achievement.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ “500 Students Protest Board Action,” *Milwaukee Community Journal*, May 9, 1979, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in “Student March Triggers Meeting,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 5, 1979, 1:5.

¹⁰⁷ Gregory D. Stanford, “Black Pupils Balk at Idea of Busing,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 29, 1976, 2:1.

¹⁰⁸ “McMurrin Doubts Black Walkout,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 28, 1977, 1:5. Although Howard Fuller is often credited as the leader behind the movement to save North Division, Larry Harwell actually did a lot of the early work in the mid-1970s, prior to Fuller’s rise to fame. See chapter 9 of Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, for more information.

¹⁰⁹ Steven Baruch, interview with author, Glendale, WI, July 9, 2010.

Howard Fuller, an African American community activist and North alumnus who would eventually become the superintendent of MPS, chastised the school board for approving McMurrin's plan: "We exist. We have rights. We want North Division to be a special school, not a specialty school. You took Lincoln [which had closed] and Rufus King and now you want North. We say no!" Other speakers at the school board meeting pointed out that the board was willing to keep North Division a neighborhood school when it was in the old building. They felt cheated, as if white students were taking over their school. As one person said, "When the school was full of rats and rodents, nothing was said." Of course, if the school was converted to citywide status, neighborhood students would have to be bused to other schools, which prompted one North alumnus to say, "When I look at integration so far, I see a bunch of black students depressed because they don't have anywhere to go except where the School Board sends them. They are being forced to accept the blunt end of integration."¹¹⁰

Other African Americans suggested the school board bring in white students to fill seven hundred vacant seats without displacing neighborhood students.¹¹¹ Some of North Division's teachers—both African American and white—agreed and helped students stage a protest outside of the building at the end of the school year. As one teacher said, "Why can't the kids stay here? There's an undercurrent of racism here. The School Board really feels they can't bring any white kids here until they move the black ones

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Rick Janka, "'Fed Up' After Plan for North," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 10, 1979, 1:1,8.

¹¹¹ Rick Janka, "'Fed Up' After Plan for North," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 10, 1979, 1:1,8.

out.”¹¹²

McMurrin held firm: “Can North be racially balanced and still allow the present North Division students to remain in the school and be graduated? We believe the answer is no.”¹¹³ The following exchange between a North Division student and McMurrin is instructive:

Student: I don’t never hear you talk about going to the south side and making them integrate. See but you make us go out, but you don’t make them come in.

McMurrin: Because we tried. We are trying to do this, if we can, on the basis of choice.

Student: But it’s almost a *forced choice*. Everybody knows . . . back in ‘75–‘76, they pushed us. We didn’t have no choice. You told us we couldn’t come to North. Can I ask you a question again? Custer is perfect[ly integrated] ain’t it?

McMurrin: Do you know how we did it?

Student: Oh, how did you do it? By forcing ‘75–‘76 North out. It wasn’t no “open the door.” You all opened it, but you pushed us through it too. We didn’t have a choice now. What I feel it was, was in ‘75–‘76, you all just cut up the black junior high schools and sent them all where you wanted to.

McMurrin: I think they [the white students] will come in.

Student: No you won’t.

McMurrin: You don’t think white will come in? To integrate, you gotta have both black and white.

Student: That’s right. That’s what I’m saying . . . If you send all

¹¹² Quoted in Milford Prewitt, “Teachers Join Students in North Protest,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 5, 1979, Accent on the City:1,4.

¹¹³ Quoted in David I. Bednarek, “North High an Example of Pitfalls,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 30, 1979, 2:1,5.

them white kids that's gonna go to Vincent next year to these black schools down here, you could even integrate Lincoln all the way. Integration, as a whole, we ain't integrating. It's a one-way thing.

McMurrin: It's gotta be two ways.

Student: It's not two ways.

McMurrin: If it's not two ways it won't work.

Student: But see they're not going to do this voluntarily. You gotta make them like you did us in '75-'76. Everybody knows this.¹¹⁴

Fuller organized the Coalition to Save North Division. He was the perfect person for the job—tall, athletic, educated, a North Division alumnus, and well connected in the black community, having been mentored by former Urban League director Wesley Scott and having friendships with several black clergymen, community activists, and politicians, including Polly Williams. According to historian Bill Dahlk, Fuller's unique background enabled him to win support with some white school board members and the editorial boards of the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Milwaukee Sentinel*.¹¹⁵

Fuller also was a passionate advocate for black nationalism and a natural leader. He had been a star athlete and expert speaker at North Division High School. He went on to Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin, after graduating from North Division in 1958. He was one of the first African American students to attend Carroll, where he was

¹¹⁴ Quoted in *Forced Choice*. Not surprisingly, McMurrin refused to discuss the documentary with reporters, referring all questions to his assistant, Robert Tesch, who promised to include *Forced Choice* in the school system's human relations library. This never came to pass. WTMJ and WITI were interested in airing it, but it did not meet their technical requirements. The documentary did, however, receive private screenings in Milwaukee, Atlanta, Minneapolis, St. Louis, and Washington, DC. See Bruce Murphy, "Forced Choices." The use of "forced choice" is also heavily criticized in Howard Fuller's dissertation.

¹¹⁵ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 371–372.

elected president of the student senate. He went from there to Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, where he obtained a master's degree in social administration and became involved in Cleveland's school integration movement in 1964. He traveled to North Carolina in 1965 and founded and directed the Malcolm X Liberation University until 1973, when it closed due to financial problems. Afterward, he went to Mozambique with the African liberation forces, who fought to overthrow Portuguese colonial rule. He eventually returned to Milwaukee to earn a doctorate in education from Marquette University and then held the position of associate director of Marquette's Educational Opportunity Program.¹¹⁶ He began to organize the black community in 1979 under the principle that self-determination was more important than integration.¹¹⁷ He was deeply concerned about the message that was sent to young African Americans when MPS converted black neighborhood schools to citywide specialty schools: "You're saying it makes it easier to get whites to come if you get rid of all those incorrigibles. Then you can say [to whites], 'You can come to school with blacks more like yourselves.'"¹¹⁸

Fuller was right. That was exactly what the school board was saying. The board felt it had to do something to make North Division a more attractive choice for whites. Leon Todd believed citywide specialty status was the best thing for all students, both

¹¹⁶ Tom Bamberger, "The Education of Howard Fuller," *Milwaukee Magazine*, July, 1988, 56–59, and Dougherty, 173–176.

¹¹⁷ Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 371–372.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Rick Janka and Karen Rothe, "North Division Plan is Last Straw: Blacks," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 31, 1979, 1:5,8. See also Milford Prewitt, "Plan for North High Termed Part of White Conspiracy," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 12, 1979, Accent on the News:1,4.

black and white. In his own words: “North Division is an academic cesspool. It is a cancer that manifests itself in severe below average test scores . . . Five hundred per day are truant . . . The students are trapped there in concentration camps of underachievement.¹¹⁹” He also said, “If it takes making North Division a citywide specialty to get it integrated, let’s get on with the job.”¹²⁰ Lois Riley, who was white and had a daughter at North Division, stated that such a busing plan was also in the best interest of underachieving African Americans: “The fact is North Division has the highest failure rate of any school in this system. Maybe it’s true that they [underachievers] have to sit next to a higher achiever to succeed. Maybe they have to sit next to a white. I don’t know. Just maybe, just maybe, if they see that kid taking books home and learning, they’ll do the same.”¹²¹

Fuller disagreed, believing it was possible to teach underachievers, even if they were all in one school. Fuller blamed the failures of the students on the school itself. He said the secretarial and engineering staffs were too small and that many of the teachers were inexperienced and white.¹²² Fuller and Barndt both argued that the Milwaukee

¹¹⁹ Quoted in William Murder, “N. Division Issue Settled from Board’s View,” *Milwaukee Courier*, September 1, 1979, 1,11.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Gary Rummmler, “Shift in Southside Integration View Found,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 22, 1979, 2:1,4. See David I. Bednarek, “North High to Be for Science,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 2, 1979, 2:1,4, and Nathan Conyers, “Some Pleased by Board Action,” *Milwaukee Community Journal*, June 6, 1979, 2, 25, for more on Todd’s advocacy for conversion of North Division to a citywide specialty.

¹²¹ Quoted in Rick Janka and Karen Rothe, “North Division Plan is Last Straw: Blacks,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 31, 1979, 1:5,8.

¹²² “Pupils Neglected, North Backer Says,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 15, 1979, 1:12. See also Fuller’s dissertation; David I. Bednarek, “Foes in North High Disagreement Talk it Out,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 27, 1979, 2:5; and David I. Bednarek, “School Plan Called an Insult to Blacks,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 18, 1979, 2:3.

integration plan was psychologically damaging to African American students. It was as though the school board and superintendent were saying that black schools were bad and white schools were good, and that if any student attended a black school, he or she was a bad student.¹²³ Wesley Scott, president of the Urban League, predicted increased truancy if North Division's students were forced into long bus rides to southside schools.¹²⁴

North students said they felt as though they were mere pawns in desegregation. As Lisa Smith said: "We are tired of being shuffled about with virtually no say in what goes on in our lives while the whites are still being given a vast number of alternatives."¹²⁵

The school board ignored the pleas of the community to keep North Division a neighborhood school and went ahead with the citywide medical specialty.¹²⁶ Fuller filed a complaint with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, claiming the school board had violated civil rights laws, and when school opened in the fall of 1979 without ninth-grade students to make room for the white students who would arrive the following year, Fuller urged the students who would have been freshmen at North Division to skip school on the first

¹²³ *Forced Choice*. Further evidence of this attitude can be found in David I. Bednarek, "School Officials May Forgo Plan, Quiz Board on Issues," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 7, 1978, 2:1,4; Jeff Browne, "McDowell Segregated, Parents Say," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 8, 1976, 2:1,6; "MPS in Wonderland," *Milwaukee Courier*, May 27, 1978, 4; Delois Vann, "Blacks Shortchanged in Montessori Program," *Milwaukee Courier*, October 30, 1976, 1,12; and Kevin J. Walker, "MacDowell Parents Fight Sept. Plans," *Milwaukee Courier*, March 11, 1978, 1. See also Howard Fuller's dissertation.

¹²⁴ Rick Janka and Karen Rothe, "North Division Plan is Last Straw: Blacks," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 31, 1979, 1:5,8.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Lisa Smith, "North Students Vow Struggle," *Milwaukee Courier*, June 2, 1979, 4. See James Scott, "Never Will Accept this Unfair Burden," *Milwaukee Courier*, February 23, 1980, 4, for a similar opinion from another student.

¹²⁶ "Carley to Lead North Division Panel," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 2, 1979, 1:5; "North Becomes a Speciality High School," *Milwaukee Community Journal*, May 5, 1979, 1,2; "North Speciality Approval Prompts Walkout Protest," *Milwaukee Courier*, June 2, 1979, 1; and "Group Seeks to Block North Division Changes," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 4, 1979, 1:11.

day of classes to attend a rally instead.¹²⁷ About 250 students did so. Several parents also showed up, forced their way into the building, and tried to register their children.¹²⁸ Some students threatened to drop out of school if they could not attend North. A national group called the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizations lent support,¹²⁹ as did the NAACP.¹³⁰ The school board created an advisory committee on North Division, which asked the school board to slow down its conversion of North to citywide status,¹³¹ as did the federally appointed monitoring board.¹³² Fuller was encouraged by the monitoring board, but the school board vowed to forge ahead with the conversion anyway.¹³³

Fuller responded by using confrontational tactics. According to Dahlk, because magnet schools had been sold to the white community as a peaceful alternative to what happened in Boston, Fuller had to show that magnet schools actually provoked anger if he wanted the white community to reconsider the school board's approach to desegregation. To that end, Fuller encouraged a boycott, and hundreds of African American students responded by walking out of North Division in the middle of the day. They walked to a

¹²⁷ David I. Bednarek, "North High Plan to Be Reviewed," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 4, 1979, 1:11, and Karen Rothe, "North Rally Urged on Opening Day," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 31, 1979, 1:5.

¹²⁸ "Busing Goes Smoothly as School Starts," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 4, 1979, 1:1,3.

¹²⁹ Rick Janka, "Group Joins North Battle," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 8, 1979, 1:5.

¹³⁰ "Misstep on School Desegregation," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 13, 1979, 1:20.

¹³¹ Rick Janka, "Panel Opposes Transfer of Pupils to North," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 8, 1979, 1:1,10.

¹³² "Slow North Transfers, Panel Says," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 17, 1979, 1:7.

¹³³ "Monitoring Authority Exceeded Authority, School Board Says," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 2, 1979, 2:3; "Monitoring Board Hit on North Report," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 1, 1979, 1:11; and "School Conversion Proposals Dropped," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 22, 1979, 2:10.

nearby church, where they listened to a minister who criticized MPS for “a lackadaisical approach” to educating African American students.¹³⁴ U.S. Magistrate Ruth Lafave sided with Fuller and moved to open a hearing on the school board’s plan for North Division.¹³⁵ The Milwaukee Teacher Education Association,¹³⁶ the *Milwaukee Journal*¹³⁷ and *Milwaukee Sentinel*¹³⁸, and Milwaukee’s two chief African American newspapers, the *Courier*¹³⁹ and *Community Journal*¹⁴⁰ also came out against the plan.

Several national experts weighed in on the plan. Alan Freeman, the well-known law professor from the University of Minnesota, argued that desegregation had come at the expense of the black community and that it was time for a reversal of policy to one that made integration voluntary and provided African American students with choices. In his own words:

There’s a time for new strategy. I call it the victim perspective on racial discrimination. The law is constantly trying to look at [school desegregation] from the perpetrator perspective. Something is very, very wrong. Somehow things have been twisted when kids other than those [at

¹³⁴ Quoted in Karen Rothe, “Pupils Walk Out at North Division to Rally for School,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 11, 1980, 1:5,11.

¹³⁵ David I. Bednarek, “North Division Students Revel in the Glory,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 24, 1980, 2:1,5, and “North High Plan Faces Questions in Hearing,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 5, 1980, 1:9.

¹³⁶ “Teachers Group Opposes Shift,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 13, 1980, 1:18.

¹³⁷ “The Pangs of North Division High,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 8, 1979, 1:18.

¹³⁸ “Compromise at North,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 12, 1979, 1:12.

¹³⁹ Scott Anderson, “North Division ‘Field Trips’ Enrage Coalition,” *Milwaukee Courier*, March 8, 1980, 1,11; “Do We Have the Courage,” *Milwaukee Courier*, March 8, 1980, 4; and “Wanted: Black Candidates,” *Milwaukee Courier*, January 10, 1981, 4.

¹⁴⁰ “Here We Go Again,” *Milwaukee Community Journal*, May 9, 1979, 5.

North Division] have more of a claim to the benefits of desegregation.¹⁴¹

Derrick Bell, the famous law professor from Harvard University, agreed and said that busing African American students away from their neighborhoods did nothing to address the inherent racism in the educational system. He further said that he preferred all-black schools to busing, but more importantly, African American parents should have choice in where they send their children to school. Lloyd Barbee, still the spokesperson for Milwaukee's older black leadership, disagreed with Freeman and Bell and said racial integration was the only solution to racism.¹⁴²

Barbee kept quiet on the issue of forced choice. He did, however, give a couple interviews in which he indicated support for integration at all costs. In 1978, he told the *Milwaukee Courier*, "We should enjoy the same things as the white community. I don't care how we accomplish that. If students must crowd into a Volkswagen or take a helicopter . . . [these are] extremes that we must live through as long as we receive the same type of education the whites receive."¹⁴³ Later, in an interview with Jack Dougherty, he mused:

The process of desegregation is undoing what has been done by the segregators. Sometimes that is hard on the people who have been segregated, like the Little Rock Nine or James Meredith. The burden many times is uneven. But when you get integration, that burden

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Kevin Merida, "Legal Minds Gather to Fight North Division Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 23, 1980, 2:7.

¹⁴² Dahlk, *Against the Wind*, 43, and Kevin Merida, "Legal Minds Gather to Fight North Division Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 23, 1980, 2:7.

¹⁴³ Quoted in Dougherty, 164. See also Dan Carpenter, "Barbee: Beware Phoney Desegregation Plans," *Milwaukee Courier*, March 13, 1976, 1,4,7.

disappears.¹⁴⁴

But Barbee was no longer the voice of the black community, and with all the school board under pressure from Fuller and his allies, and with only forty whites signed up to attend North Division in fall,¹⁴⁵ the board finally gave up in April 1980 and voted ten to two to pursue an out-of-court settlement with the Coalition to Save North Division High School and implement a new education program. The North Division community rejoiced, but some school board members questioned the effectiveness of the district's magnet plan if individual school communities could take legal action to withdraw from the plan.¹⁴⁶ The final plan for North Division allowed it to remain almost all black with a medical specialty designed to draw in a small number of white students.¹⁴⁷

But the fallout from the North Division fiasco continued for months. Leon Todd criticized the MPS administration's attempts to recruit whites to North Division as "pathetic."¹⁴⁸ He and the other two African American board members, Marian McEvelly and Peggy Kenner, continued to advocate for integration.¹⁴⁹ The administration briefly considered capping white enrollment in other schools to force whites into "choosing"

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Dougherty, 186. James Meredith was the first African American to enroll at the University of Mississippi in 1962.

¹⁴⁵ David I. Bednarek, "Death of North Plan is Turning Point," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 20, 1980, 1:1,9. See also David I. Bednarek, "800 Pupils Lose Bids for Nearby Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 28, 1980, 2:1,5.

¹⁴⁶ Lennox Samuels, "Board Drops North Specialty Plan," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 25, 1980, 1:1,12, and *Proceedings*, May 1, 1980, and February 24, 1981.

¹⁴⁷ David I. Bednarek, "More Integration Rejected," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 2, 1980, 2:1,6, and David I. Bednarek, "School Board Kills North High Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 25, 1980, 1:1,16.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in David I. Bednarek, "Death of North Plan Is Turning Point," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 20, 1980, 1:1,9.

¹⁴⁹ David I. Bednarek, "More Integration Rejected," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 2, 1980, 2:1,6.

North Division, but heavy criticism from white parents put a quick end to the proposal.¹⁵⁰

Fuller continued to raise concerns about inequities in busing. He claimed the percentage of whites bused to black schools remained low (only 3 percent in 1983) compared to African American students bused to white schools (34 percent at the elementary level and 48 percent at the middle school level) and broke up black neighborhoods by sending students to as many as a hundred different schools.¹⁵¹ Once in those schools, African Americans were much more likely to be suspended for what Fuller and his supporters considered white teachers' inability to understand black social customs.¹⁵²

Fuller, Williams, and some other African Americans in the state Assembly asked the state legislature in 1984 to give African Americans access to schools in their neighborhoods. They said that as things stood, white students could choose magnet schools or stay in their neighborhoods. African Americans students were frequently denied that choice and were forced onto buses. McMurrin dismissed their criticisms as "ridiculous" and said that African Americans had more choices than anyone in MPS,¹⁵³ ignoring the point that neighborhood schools were the one choice that some African

¹⁵⁰ David I. Bednarek, "Death of North Plan is Turning Point," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 20, 1980, 1:1,9, and David I. Bednarek, "School Board to Reconsider Busing Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 14, 1980, 1:1,12.

¹⁵¹ Howard Fuller, "School Closings Discriminate Against Blacks," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 30, 1983, 1:17.

¹⁵² See Dahlk, 389–390, for a summary of arguments.

¹⁵³ David I. Bednarek, "Desegregation Raises Power Issue," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 12, 1985, 1:1,6; Larry Sandler, "Schools Have Chance for Black Leadership Gain," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 25, 1985, 1:6; Gregory D. Stanford, "Forum Becomes Desegregation Debate," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 4, 1985, 2:3; and Gregory D. Stanford, "School Chief Blasts Williams' Proposal," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 1, 1985, 1:8.

Americans wanted more than anything else but were denied.

Howard Fuller also criticized what he perceived to be elitism in the specialty schools. He said it created a dual system in which a small group of the best and brightest middle-class students and teachers go to a small group of schools, while other students, who are poor, got what was left over. He especially did not like Rufus King High School.

In his own words:

I can't believe they are getting away with claiming they have turned a "ghetto school" around. Sure, it's an excellent school, but what they don't say is that they took a school, stripped it of its attendance-area enrollment and put in a different, an elite population. If the central administration had the same kind of commitment to educational excellence at North that they have in their little powerhouse [King], I'm sure North could be turned around and become a Top 10 school. Then, they would have something to brag about.¹⁵⁴

Fuller continued to actively criticize involuntary busing into 1986. He and about forty other people testified at a public hearing in May. One parent said his students were "shuffl[ed] . . . around like dominoes," and a minister exclaimed, "No longer will we tolerate you dictating to us."¹⁵⁵ Such criticisms did not seem to faze McMurrin, who insists to this day that many parents liked the fact that their children got to ride a "warm bus" that left them free from worry about Milwaukee's cold unsafe winter roads.¹⁵⁶

McMurrin also came under fire for simply assuming busing would improve education, while quality of education actually declined, according to some people, during his time as

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Jim Bednarek, "College-Bound Programs Hailed by Students, Officials," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 25, 1983, 1:5.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Robert Anthony, "Dozens Call for End to Involuntary Busing," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 13, 1986, 1:1,8. See also David I. Bednarek, "Parents' Answer to Busing: A Resounding 'No'," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 13, 1986, 2:1-2.

¹⁵⁶ McMurrin, "Perspectives on Busing," unpublished manuscript in author's possession, 7-8.

superintendent.¹⁵⁷ Once again, a proposal was floated to bus white students, but it was met with strong opposition from southside parents.¹⁵⁸ Karen Murphy, an African American mother of three, helped organize the southside parents because she believed children should have access to neighborhood schools.¹⁵⁹ Joyce Mallory urged resources devoted to busing be redirected to training teachers in new instructional techniques that would enable them to do a better job of teaching African American students.¹⁶⁰

Fuller reflected popular opinion, according to a series of *Milwaukee Journal* polls. One survey of 607 residents of Milwaukee, Washington, Ozaukee, and Waukesha counties found that 80 percent of the respondents supported voluntary integration, while only 25 percent supported buses. Furthermore, 84 percent of the respondents opposed involuntary transfers. More generally, when asked whether they supported any kind of integration at all, only 51 percent of suburban residents responded favorably,¹⁶¹ and only 69 percent of black Milwaukeeans thought racial integration of any sort was a good

¹⁵⁷ David I. Bednarek, "City School Woes Traced to Busing," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 6, 1986, 2:6.

¹⁵⁸ David I. Bednarek, "Alternatives to South Side Busing Will Be Saught," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 21, 1986, 1:1,10; David I. Bednarek, "Busing Plan Opens Some Eyes," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 22, 1986, 1:1,6; and David I. Bednarek, "Riley Bus Plan Changed," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 23, 1986, 1:1,8.

¹⁵⁹ James M. Abraham, "Woman Fights Busing," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 25, 1986, 2:1.

¹⁶⁰ David I. Bednarek, "School Idea Popular, Problematic," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 10, 1986, 2:1-2; Alan J. Borsuk, "Black Educators Call for Shift of Power," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 9, 1986, 1:1,12.

¹⁶¹ David I. Bednarek, "80% in Poll Back Voluntary Steps for Integration," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 22, 1984, 2:1,10. The disparity between the 80 percent and 25 percent may indicate that these particular survey respondents favored integration only if their children did not have to ride buses. It may also indicate support for integration but opposition to tax-supported transportation. Either theory is consistent with opinions expressed in this chapter and previous chapters.

idea.¹⁶² When the question was narrowed further, and respondents were asked whether students should be bused into their neighborhoods, only 36 percent approved, while 58 percent disapproved.¹⁶³ Thus, it is clear that most people support integration as long as it is applied to someone else. Their attitude shifted once integration was applied to them.

Milwaukeeans' shift in attitudes was reflected in a pattern of white migration. While it is true that the number of whites in Milwaukee was already in decline in the 1970s,¹⁶⁴ it would be hard to believe that the desegregation of MPS did not play some role in the change in demographics. The district's white population declined by eight thousand students between the first and second years of desegregation, while white enrollment in southside parochial schools increased.¹⁶⁵ The number of African American students finally exceeded the number of white students by the end of the decade,¹⁶⁶ and by 1985, one-third of the white students had left the city. Of the ones who stayed behind, half attended private schools.¹⁶⁷ Since not all families could afford tuition, some families

¹⁶² Gary G. Rummeler, "School Integration Has Fewer Supporters," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 27, 1984, 1:1,5.

¹⁶³ Gary G. Rummeler, "Opposition to Busing Easing, Poll Indicates," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 29, 1984, 1:1,10.

¹⁶⁴ "Figures Mean Hard Answers," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 1, 1978, 1:14.

¹⁶⁵ David I. Bednarek, "Drop in Enrollment is Biggest in History," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 21, 1977, 1:1,6; David I. Bednarek, "Enrollment Loss May Set Record," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 5, 1977, 2:1,4; David I. Bednarek, "Whites Become a Minority in City's Public Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 4, 1978, 2:1,3; "Enrollments Decline in Catholic Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 12, 1977; J. S. Fuerst and Daniel Pupo, "Desegregated Schooling: The Milwaukee Experience," *Urban Education* 18, no. 2 (July 1983): 231–233; and Murphy and Pawasart, 36, 43.

¹⁶⁶ Ira Jean Hadnot, "Majority or Minority: Pupils Want Quality," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 25, 1978, 1:5,16, and Mark Levine and John Zipp, "A City at Risk" in *Seeds of Crisis*, ed. John L. Rury and Frank A. Cassell, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 54–55.

¹⁶⁷ Murphy and Pawasart, 36, 43.

(both African American and white) petitioned Superintendent McMurrin for vouchers to attend private schools, which he denied.¹⁶⁸

This demographic change was part of a national trend. Opinions vary, but most demographers agree that white migration was caused by a decline in the white birthrate, changes in immigration patterns, discrimination in housing, and busing.¹⁶⁹ Ronald Edari, a professor of sociology at UWM, published a paper in 1977 that analyzed the sociological reasons for white migration. It drew together secondary literature that went as far back as 1947. According to Edari, who borrowed from sociologists Paul Glick and Robert Winch, people moved through five stages in their life cycles—marriage, establishment of a household, birth and rearing of children, marriage of children, and death of spouses.¹⁷⁰ Edari correlated these five stages with varying degrees of racial preference. For example, people almost always marry within their race, and according to Edari, when white couples looked for homes, they almost always wanted them to be in white neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods convey a sense of values and shared heritage and were believed to hold the promise of a good return on the purchase and sale of a

¹⁶⁸ Gregory D. Stanford, “Public Money for Private Pupils Asked,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 31, 1985, 2:3. See also Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 71. The state government would authorize vouchers for Milwaukee students in the 1990s (see chapter 8).

¹⁶⁹ Gary Orfield, “Segregated Housing and Resegregation” in *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown vs. the Board of Education*, ed. Gary Orfield, Susan E. Eaton, and the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, 315–317. See Massey and Denton, 88–95, for survey data on African Americans’ fear of living in white communities and 95–105, for shocking statistics on the frequency of hate crimes against African Americans. Sociologists Gregory Squires and William Velez of UWM found a huge disparity in the loans made to home buyers in Milwaukee’s all-white neighborhoods compared to those in black neighborhoods during the period 1983–1984. See Gregory D. Squires and William Velez, “Neighborhood Racial Composition and Mortgage Lending: City and Suburban Differences,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 9 (1987): 217–232

¹⁷⁰ Ronald S. Edari, *The Life Cycle, Segregation and White Attitudes Toward Busing* (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Urban Research Center, 1977), 1.

house. As property values improved, Africans Americans were denied access to the credit they needed to enter the white housing market, thus increasing racial segregation.¹⁷¹ According to Edari, whites associated life in their neighborhoods with free choice, local autonomy, social status, social mobility, and aspirations for their children, all of which were the result of hard work. Edari said white suburbanites saw African American communities as the opposite of those values. Hence, any attempt to integrate schools challenged ideas of free choice and local autonomy and was viewed as rewarding people who failed to maintain their own homes, schools, and neighborhoods.¹⁷² Hence, racism is inextricably tied to white opposition to busing.¹⁷³

A 1986 study by *Milwaukee Magazine* provided more evidence of white migration. It found that between 1975 and 1985, the city had lost 115,070 of its nonblack residents and had an increase of about two thousand African American residents. About one-third of all non-African American children who were four years old or younger had left the city by 1985. Furthermore, the number of white elementary school students attending private schools had doubled between 1975 and 1985. By 1985, only 51 percent of white elementary-age children in the city attended MPS schools, compared to 94 percent of minority children.¹⁷⁴

But as Christine Rossell has pointed out numerous times, white flight and opposition to busing are caused by a combination of the quality of education in schools,

¹⁷¹ Edari, 2–5.

¹⁷² Edari, 7–8.

¹⁷³ Edari, 21–22.

¹⁷⁴ Murphy and Pawasarat, 43.

the distance students must ride on a bus, and the number of white students in schools. J. S. Fuerst of Loyola University and Daniel Pupo of Chicago's Dunbar Vocational High School conducted a study of the Milwaukee experience in 1983. According to their report, the number of white students enrolled in MPS declined by 40 percent between 1976, the year of Reynolds' judgment, and 1979. It declined another 20 percent in 1980 to approximately twenty-nine thousand.¹⁷⁵ Fuerst and Pupo concluded the main cause of this white migration was Reynolds' order that 18,000 of the 24,000 African American students in predominantly black schools had to be bused (involuntarily, if necessary) to white schools. However, like Rossell, they also concluded that the white exodus was not totally due to racial concerns. Rather, according to their findings, the African American students who were bused to white schools were not academically successful, and test scores declined. Fearing a decline in educational quality, white parents removed their children from MPS, according to Fuerst and Pupo.¹⁷⁶

When studying elementary and middle schools, Fuerst and Pupo broke the city into five regions—southwest, southeast, northwest, mid-north, and Hartford Avenue. Five schools in the southwest region lost almost 60 percent of their white students from 1976 to 1979. It was the opinion of southwest principals that this migration was caused by the hasty introduction of too many African American students into their schools without giving white families a chance to adjust. However, Fuerst and Pupo also said it was not totally due to racism. Rather, they pointed out that most middle-class African

¹⁷⁵ Fuerst and Pupo, 231, 239.

¹⁷⁶ Fuerst and Pupo, 232.

American parents kept their children in their neighborhood schools, so the southwest schools got whoever was left over—mostly children of single parents who did not indicate a school preference on registration forms and thus were randomly assigned. According to these principals, the new students did not do well in school because their parents rarely involved themselves in their children's education. These principals said the low-achieving African American students caused overall school performance to decline and that middle-class white families bailed out and fled to the suburbs to seek better schools—not to get away from African Americans.¹⁷⁷

Fuerst and Pupo gathered more information from other schools that supported this conclusion. The decline in white enrollment in southeast schools, for instance, was only 35 percent. Fuerst and Pupo speculated this was because fewer poor African American students were bused there. Thus, reading scores did not change greatly after busing began. The northwest schools also experienced a 35 percent decline in white enrollment, though little white migration occurred in schools with middle-class African American children—again because test scores at those schools remained unchanged, according to Fuerst and Pupo. Indeed, some schools with stable racial levels in the mid-north actually showed improvement in some test scores, because many of the lower-class African American students were bused to the southwest side. The Sherman Park neighborhood is a good example of this trend. Test scores improved as the neighborhood became racially diverse, the middle class stayed in the neighborhood, and housing values remained

¹⁷⁷ Fuerst and Pupo, 233–234.

steady.¹⁷⁸ Sherman Park remains a strong, vibrant, racially diverse neighborhood in the early twenty-first century.

Finally, at Hartford Avenue Elementary School, white enrollment declined from 75 percent in 1976 to 50 percent in 1979, and test scores dropped by 25 percent. In Fuerst and Pupo's view, it seemed unlikely that parents of Hartford students would pull their children out of school for racial reasons, because Hartford is located on the UWM campus, which is in a well-educated and politically liberal neighborhood. The decline in test scores was the more likely cause of white migration, according to Fuerst and Pupo, because these parents wanted their children to have the kind of education that would prepare them for college.¹⁷⁹

Thus, after all the studies by Rossell, Fuerst and Pupo, and others are synthesized, it becomes clear that decline in educational quality, as well as racism, was a factor in white migration. There is much anecdotal evidence that supports this conclusion. African American parents viewed Catholic schools, for example, as a superior alternative to MPS. They had tighter standards for discipline and academics. As one African American parent with children in a Catholic school said: "To most teachers in the public schools, [teaching is] a job. I wish my kids had come to [St. Agnes] sooner. There's more order, more homework."¹⁸⁰ Another African American parent said she was putting her children into St. Leo's Catholic School because it was the only way to avoid busing

¹⁷⁸ Fuerst and Pupo, 234–236.

¹⁷⁹ Fuerst and Pupo, 236–237.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted in Edward H. Blackwell, "In the Inner City," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 23, 1977, Accent on the News:1,5.

and keep them in the neighborhood.¹⁸¹

St. Leo's 1977–78 school year was successful. It was racially integrated with strong parent involvement—attendance at parent meetings was said to be 95 percent. The waiting list grew to nearly double the enrollment, and two additional classrooms were added in September 1978, even though 87 percent of the students in the school were not Catholic.¹⁸²

If academically talented students did not attend a parochial school, they might use Chapter 220 to leave the city. Both city and suburban school officials acknowledged that academically talented students were more likely to apply for Chapter 220 and were more likely to be accepted into the program than other students. According to Nicolet High School's Dean of Students, all sixty transferees in 1986 were in the seventieth percentile or above on standardized tests, while only 6 percent of MPS's African American tenth graders were in the seventy-fifth percentile or above.¹⁸³ In other words, the magnet schools may have been successful with the students they had, but the rest of the school system could not demonstrate increases in achievement as talented students left the district.

¹⁸¹ Gregory D. Stanford and Edward H. Blackwell, "Still Victims, Blacks Insist," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 15, 1977, 1:1,8. St. Leo's had been part of the Independent Community Schools (ICS) movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The ICS movement was a coalition of central-city Catholic and nonreligious schools that operated with private funding. The Catholic schools were motivated by an exodus of Catholic families from the central city and the need to find replacement students. They sought but were denied tuition vouchers from the state of Wisconsin. See Chapter 8 of Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans and the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963–2002* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010); Jules Modlinski and Esther Zaret, *The Federation of Independent Community Schools: An Alternative Urban School System* (Milwaukee, 1970); and Doreen H. Wilkinson, *Community Schools: Education for Change* (Boston: National Association of Independent Schools, 1973).

¹⁸² Jeff Brown, *Milwaukee Journal*, October 11, 1978, 2:12, and Edward H. Blackwell, "St. Leo's First Year a Success," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 4, 1978, Accent on the City:1,3.

¹⁸³ Murphy and Pawasarat, 43.

The middle-class exodus from the city meant fewer white students were available for specialty schools by the mid 1980s. Thus, only one in eight white students pursued the magnet option in 1986. In any given year, 50 to 75 percent of all African American students were bused out of their neighborhoods, while only 4 percent of white students were bused into black neighborhoods. A crazy quilt-like pattern of busing resulted. The average elementary school attendance area had its students bused to twenty-six different schools, and in one extreme example, students from Auer elementary's school attendance area were bused to 95 of the 108 elementary schools in the city. *Milwaukee Magazine* credited this busing as reducing neighborhood solidarity and safety—the “shotgun” approach to busing, as opposed to a “pairing” approach, which may have been more stable but also would have to offer fewer choice to African Americans. Deputy Superintendent Bennett himself admitted at the time that he had created a “transportation monster,”¹⁸⁴ and state senator and future Milwaukee mayor John Norquist agreed and urged the school board to reopen some closed neighborhood schools so students would have the opportunity to attend them. He also said that the number of students bused in and out of the district under Chapter 220 should be equal. According to him, MPS would, therefore, have to work harder to attract white students.¹⁸⁵

This anecdotal evidence was bolstered by a study released by the state of Wisconsin's Legislative Audit Bureau in 1984. According to the report, the number of black students bused within the city was more than twice that of whites in the 1983–84

¹⁸⁴ Quoted in Murphy and Pawasart, 40.

¹⁸⁵ Larry Sandler, “Changes Sought in Integration Plan,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 2, 1985, 1:5.

school year,¹⁸⁶ and almost five times as many African American students were bused through the Chapter 220 program compared to whites.¹⁸⁷ The study also showed that only 43 percent of applications for citywide magnet schools were from African Americans, which it considered a small percentage,¹⁸⁸ and that 62 percent of all white students preferred to stay in their neighborhood schools.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, the study predicted that MPS would re-segregate itself by 1990. This trend would be caused by a 33 percent decline in white enrollment due to a reduction in the white birth rate.¹⁹⁰ Armed with all these facts, McMurrin's critics moved against him in the mid-1980s and orchestrated his departure from MPS. They also introduced more forms of choice for Milwaukee's students than ever before.

¹⁸⁶ Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, "The Chapter 220 Integration Aids Program," November 20, 1984, 16–17.

¹⁸⁷ Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, "The Chapter 220 Integration Aids Program," November 20, 1984, 3–4.

¹⁸⁸ Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, "The Chapter 220 Integration Aids Program," November 20, 1984, 12–13.

¹⁸⁹ Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, "The Chapter 220 Integration Aids Program," November 20, 1984, 15–16.

¹⁹⁰ Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, "The Chapter 220 Integration Aids Program," November 20, 1984, 4, 27–28.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ERA OF FORCED CHOICE:

RETHINKING MAGNET SCHOOLS AND INTEGRATION, 1987–1995

The federal government set aside money for local districts to implement magnet schools, despite their mixed success. Close to \$30 million was spent through the Emergency School Aid Act between 1975 and 1981. The federal government appropriated additional funds through the Magnet Schools Assistance Program after *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983 and alleged that American students were years behind their counterparts in the rest of the industrialized world. This time the goal was to improve test scores, not integrate students, and \$739 million in federal money was spent on magnet schools between 1985 and 1994.¹ The average magnet school received 10 percent more public funding than a non-magnet school in the same district in the 1990s. Often, this money was used to hire additional staff, reduce the student/teacher ratio,² or give teachers supplemental training. Because most staff members consider a magnet school a plum assignment, staff morale and commitment were usually high in magnet schools.³

The number of magnet schools grew enormously in the United States during the 1980s, nearly doubling between 1982 and 1991. By the 1991–92 school year, more than

¹ Lauri Steel, Roger Levine, and the American Institute for Research, *Educational Innovation in Multiracial Contexts: The Growth of Magnet Schools in American Education* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Education, 1994), 7–8. See chapter 7 of William Hayes, *The Progressive Education Movement: Is it Still a Factor in Today's Schools?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006) for an overview of *A Nation at Risk*.

² Steel and Levine, 56–57.

³ Charles B. McMillan, *Magnet Schools: An Approach to Voluntary Desegregation* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1980), 28–31.

230 school districts had magnet schools and were enrolling more than 1.2 million students in them. Urban districts accounted for 85 percent of all magnet schools at that time. Most of these districts were “majority minority” and majority low income. According to a study by the United States Department of Education in 1991–92, 57 percent of all magnet schools were at the elementary level, 15 percent were middle schools, and 22 percent were high schools.⁴ Most magnet schools specialize in particular areas, such as math and science, computers, trade and technology, or fine arts. Some magnet schools also use nontraditional teaching approaches, such as open classrooms, individualized instruction, or Montessori methods. According to a 1994 report, about 12 percent of all magnet schools were designated “gifted and talented.”⁵ According to a 1999 report by the Department of Education, 76 percent of all districts with magnet schools had a greater demand than available seats. Some districts use a lottery or a “first-come-first-served” system to determine which students are admitted, while others use admissions tests, auditions, or other academic criteria.⁶

Ian Harris conducted the first major study of the effectiveness of Milwaukee’s magnet plan in 1983. Harris concluded that Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) had provided a peaceful, mostly voluntary means for integration with a wide array of curricular options. But Harris also identified four shortcomings:

⁴ Steel and Levine, 16–20.

⁵ Steel and Levine, 33–36.

⁶ Ellen B. Goldring, “Perspectives on Magnet Schools,” in *Handbook of Research on School Choice*, ed. Mark Berends et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 361–378; Claire Smrekar and Ellen Goldring, *School Choice in Urban America: Magnet Schools and the Pursuit of Equity* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 7; and Steel and Levine, 15–30, 53.

- 1) MPS did not desegregate all schools, and those that remained overwhelmingly African American had the lowest achievement levels in the district.
- 2) African American students bore a much larger share of busing than whites did.
- 3) African American students were bused out of their neighborhoods to attend white schools, which denied them admission to some inner city magnet schools.
- 4) The integration plan did not provide adequate community involvement, as evidenced by white resistance and the Coalition to Save North Division.⁷

Therefore, according to Harris's study, the Milwaukee magnet plan did not achieve either of its goals of intergration or improved academic achievement. In fact, given the degree of white migration to the suburbs described previously (see chapter 4), the Milwaukee area schools may have been even more segregated than ever before.

Four years later, in 1987, Superintendent Lee McMurrin faced an increasingly vocal coalition of critics that included Howard Fuller, elected officials, and white businessmen. Fuller continued to advocate for community control of education; elected officials were concerned about young people's lack of preparedness for the job market; and white businessmen searched for a way to cut taxes through non-union labor. This coalition of interests accused McMurrin of failing to improve the quality of education in MPS and eventually drove him from office. McMurrin's critics seemed to ignore the

⁷ Ian M. Harris, "Criteria for Evaluating School Desegregation in Milwaukee," *Journal of Negro Education* 52, no. 4 (Autumn, 1983): 434.

relationship between poverty and the decline in student achievement, and McMurrin's successors, including Fuller, proved equally incapable of improving student achievement.

Howard Fuller was one of McMurrin's sharpest critics. Fuller began putting together a coalition of African American community activists, white business leaders, and leaders of nonsectarian private schools in 1984, with the aim of setting up a voucher system in which parents would receive money from the state to use toward tuition at private schools. Such a system would appease African Americans who wanted community control over schools, business leaders who were looking for cheaper and higher quality schools, and private schools in poor neighborhoods that needed money to continue operating.⁸ Fuller also believed that white teachers were not effective in teaching African American students.⁹ He continued to oppose unilateral busing (see chapter 6), and he also criticized McMurrin's magnet school plan for working to improve only magnet schools, leaving all other students with low-quality education. He even

⁸ Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans and the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963–2002* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), 422–423, 429–430, and Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 191. Jack Dougherty and other contemporary observers have suggested that business leaders liked the voucher scheme because it was a way to break up the public school system to bring in cheaper non-union labor, which would lower taxes and create a better business climate. Thus, they worked with Fuller toward a common goal with completely different purposes in mind. See Dougherty, 191–192; Doris Stacy, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 30, 2010; and Leon Todd, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, June 28, 2010.

⁹ David I. Bednarek, "State Will Look at All Area Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 7, 1984, 1:1,14. See also Robert Anthony, "Dozens Call for End to Involuntary Busing," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 13, 1986, 1:1,8; David I. Bednarek, "Are Dropouts Tied to Desegregation?," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 13, 1985, 2:1, "Blacks Scores Up in Reading, Math, McMurrin Says," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 15, 1984, 1:1,13, "Desegregation Raises Issues of Power," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 12, 1985, 1:1,6, and "Parents Answer to Busing: A Resounding 'No'," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 13, 1986, 2:1,2; Jeff Cole, "Plans Stress Local Control, Reaching Students Early," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 13, 1988, 1:14; and Larry Sandler, "Changes Sought in Integration Plan," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 2, 1985, 1:5, and "'Pro-Choice' Emerges as Busing Buzzword," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 1:5.

called on McMurrin to resign early in 1987.¹⁰ Some whites agreed with Fuller because they resented the high cost of busing.¹¹ State representative Polly Williams, an African American, resented unilateral busing because it broke up neighborhood schools and the communities those schools anchored, so she proposed that all busing be voluntary.¹² She also supported the Fuller-endorsed voucher movement as a means to finally achieving community control of schools.¹³

The voucher idea was not new. Legendary economist Milton Friedman introduced the concept of market-based reform in 1955. His theory was that education would improve if schools were privatized and had to compete against one another for students and funding.¹⁴ Social scientist Christopher Jenks modified Friedman's proposal in the 1960s and advocated vouchers for low-income students, so they could attend schools of their choice, and government regulation of those schools.¹⁵ Proponents of vouchers would point to the decline in standardized test scores in the 1980s as documented in James Coleman's famous report *Equality of Educational Opportunity* and would advocate for an alternative to public schools, an alternative that would use non-

¹⁰ "Coverage of Blacks Criticized," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 22, 1987, B:4.

¹¹ Jeff Cole, "Overseer Eyed for School Talks," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 13, 1987, 1:1,13.

¹² Polly Williams, "Voluntary Integration Still Desirable" *Milwaukee Journal*, July 24, 1987, A:9.

¹³ Dahlk, 428.

¹⁴ Hayes, 121–122; Jeffrey R. Henig, *Rethinking School Choice: Limits of the Market Metaphor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 6–7; Gayle Schmitz-Zien, "The Genesis of and Motivations for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, 1985–1995" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2003), 41–45; and John F. Witte, *The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America's First Voucher Program* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11.

¹⁵ Henig, 64–65.

union labor that could be easily terminated for failure to adequately teach children.¹⁶

Locally, the Milwaukee school choice movement began in the 1970s with the Independent Community Schools (ICS), most of which had been Catholic schools that the Milwaukee Archdiocese closed (see chapter 6). Although the movement toward vouchers subsided in the late 1970s and most ICS schools closed, as Milwaukeeans became more aware of the lack of academic achievement in MPS in the late 1980s, they began to look for an alternative, an alternative that would also give African Americans their long-sought community control of schools.¹⁷ The movement toward “school choice” was stronger in Milwaukee than anywhere else in the United States, perhaps because MPS did more than virtually any other district to put students in magnet schools and disband neighborhood schools, thereby taking control of schools away from the black community.¹⁸

Fuller was joined by several public officials in 1987, including County Executive William O’Donnell, who said that few MPS students could participate in a Milwaukee County summer jobs training program because they could not read at a grade-appropriate level. He said that most youths were three or more grades below grade level and that the

¹⁶ Henig, 71–77 and 125–127. See also John Chubb and Terry Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America’s Schools* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1989). Bruce Fuller, “School Choice: Who Gains, Who Loses?” *Issues in Science and Technology* (Spring 1996): 61–67 provides a concise history of school choice nationally and in Milwaukee since 1989. Linda A. Renzulli and Lorraine Evans, “School Choice, Charter Schools, and White Flight,” *Social Problems* 52, no. 3 (August 2005): 398–418 explains the possible segregative effects of charter and choice schools.

¹⁷ Only three ICS schools survived into the 1980s—Urban Day, Harambee, and Bruce-Guadalupe. See *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 26, 1995, and several other news articles and almost any scholarly work on ICS. The three schools were academically successful, according to Mitchell, 73–74. See Russ Kava, “Milwaukee Parental Choice Program Information Paper,” *Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau* (2009). Harambee closed in 2011 due to financial and academic problems. See Alan J. Borsuk, “A School They Deserve,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 20, 2010, and Erin Richards, “Harambee Community School Remains Shuttered,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 13, 2011.

¹⁸ See Governor Tommy Thompson’s memoir, *Power to the People: An American State at Work* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 87–92, for Thompson’s opinions on school choice.

gap between reading level and grade completed widened as the students approached twelfth grade.¹⁹ Milwaukee Development Commissioner William Drew said MPS was “crippling class after class of graduates”²⁰ and joined the chorus of individuals asking for McMurrin’s resignation.²¹ McMurrin retaliated by calling Drew’s comment racist.²² He also pointed to “competency tests” in reading, writing, and mathematics, which the school board had recently added to the graduation requirements, as evidence of high standards.²³

McMurrin also faced opposition from former assistant superintendent Gloria Mason who, upon retiring, decided to run for the at-large seat on school board, which was held by board president Doris Stacy, an ardent supporter of McMurrin, desegregation, and magnet schools.²⁴ Mason said she believed less attention should be paid to busing and more attention should be given to academic achievement.²⁵ She pointed to declining graduation rates and standardized test scores as evidence of failure, though she stopped short of asking McMurrin to resign.²⁶ Mason recommended three methods by which

¹⁹ Dave Hendrickson, “Youths’ Reading Skills Deplored,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 5, 1987, B:1-2.

²⁰ Quoted in Jeff Cole, “Schools Linked to Revitalization,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 17, 1987, 1:1,11.

²¹ “Rhetoric Conceals Real School Issues,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 11, 1987, 1:12.

²² “Debate on Schools Evades Major Issues,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 10, 1987, A:6, and “Caught in the Middle,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 18, 1987, 1:16.

²³ Jeff Cole, “Schools Linked to Revitalization,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 17, 1987, 1:1,11.

²⁴ David I. Bednarek, “Stacy to Face Mason for School Seat,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 18, 1987, B:5.

²⁵ David I. Bednarek, “School Leadership Is a Hot Issue in Race,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 8, 1987.

²⁶ David I. Bednarek, “Different Styles, Same Ideas,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 24, 1987, B:2.

MPS could improve: by reviewing and toughening the competency tests required for graduation; by developing a program in the schools that would enable graduates to return for further training if they lacked employment skills; and by decentralizing schools so teachers had more independence and responsibility, parents had more choices in schools, and local schools more freedom from the MPS central office.²⁷ On a particularly discouraging note, the competency tests showed that only 74 percent of the class of 1987 was ready to graduate. North Division was the lowest performing high school, with only 50 percent passing, while Rufus King, the most well-known magnet school, had a 96 percent pass rate, which was the best in the district. Critics pointed to these data as evidence of the inequities of the magnet school plan.²⁸ George Mitchell, a conservative scholar and sharp critic of magnet schools, threw his support to Mason.²⁹ Mason lost the election by only 5 percent of the vote. She won votes from all races and neighborhoods of the city, demonstrating that Milwaukee was primed for change.³⁰

Criticism of McMurrin continued to mount after the election. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* accused his critics of having a vendetta.³¹ Mitchell proposed a voucher system that would have provided funds to low-income parents so they could send their children

²⁷ "Candidate Focuses on Quality of Education," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 15, 1987, A:23.

²⁸ David I. Bednarek, "School Test Results Divide Senior Class," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 29, 1987, B:1,4. See appendix B, tables 3 and 4 for data on the decline of test scores.

²⁹ "Candidate Rips Schools on Test Data," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 25, 1987, B:4.

³⁰ David I. Bednarek, "City Voters Give Stacy, Schools Benefit of the Doubt," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 8, 1987, B:1,3; "Mason's Good Showing Bodes Well for Blacks," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 9, 1987; and "Moderation Prevails in School Board Vote," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 9, 1987, 1:16.

³¹ "Caught in the Middle," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 18, 1987, 1:16.

to any public or private school of their choice.³² He also continued to make public statements about McMurrin, criticizing him for a new \$100 million building plan, for not having any sort of education plan, for having a top-heavy administration, and for having low standards. He said, “As for results, the majority of students entering MPS high schools either will drop out or be graduated with less than a C average. A major reason for this, but not the only reason, is that the district is simply not well-run on almost any basic measure.”³³ McMurrin’s contract was set to expire at the end of June 1988, and Mitchell urged the board to not give him a two-year extension.³⁴

Additional criticisms came from teachers. They lamented lack of discipline in the schools, oversized classes, low academic standards, lack of preparation time during the day, low pay, lack of appreciation, and additional duties that were outside of their job descriptions. As one fourth-grade teacher said, “I spend a lot of my time dealing with kids’ emotions. We are supposed to be educating these kids, but we often end up as a dumping ground.” She said she was trying to help a girl with some mathematics problems when the student looked up and said, “My mommy just cut my daddy last night.” The teacher said she wondered how she was supposed to deal with a child who had those kinds of problems.³⁵

³² “Schools Welcome Help from Committee,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 7, 1987, 1:6.

³³ Quoted in George A. Mitchell, “McMurrin’s Performance Adds Up to Failure,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 30, 1987, 1:14.

³⁴ George A. Mitchell, “McMurrin’s Performance Adds Up to Failure,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 30, 1987, 1:14.

³⁵ Quoted in Jeff Cole, “Teachers Frustrated by Bureaucracy, Lack of Support,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 12, 1987, 1:1,17. See David I. Bednarek, “City Teachers Have Less Job Satisfaction, Study Says,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 27, 1985, 2:5, and David I. Bednarek, “Suburban Teachers Seem Happier Lot,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 31, 1981, 1:1,8, for earlier reports of teachers’ dissatisfaction with their

Parents voiced concerns that the admissions criteria for some of the best magnet schools were too low. They said that the lottery system should be abandoned in favor of strict admissions criteria that would lower the number of students accepted. Parents of students who had been rejected from Rufus King High School³⁶ and Golda Meir Gifted and Talented Elementary were particularly vocal.³⁷ There was also a concern that many of the students who chose to attend Milwaukee Trade and Technical High School were going there because it had a good reputation, not because they were interested in the curriculum. Thus, they were taking seats away from students who actually wanted to go into skilled trades.³⁸

Doris Stacy remained on the school board but chose not to run for another term as president. David Cullen, 27 years old at the time, was then elected. Some people criticized the board for not being in control of the district and ceding too much power to McMurrin, who had been superintendent for twelve years. Cullen responded by saying, “The school board has to set its own agenda, and then determine whether McMurrin is the person to lead us in that direction.”³⁹

jobs.

³⁶ David I. Bednarek, “All-Year School Here Could Begin in ‘88,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 11, 1987, B:1,3; David I. Bednarek, “Board Rejects Tighter Entrance Rules,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 29, 1987, B:2; Grade Policy May Rise at Rufus King,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 21, 1987, B:2.

³⁷ Alan Borsuk, “Is the System Fair to Intelligent Kids?,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 3, 1984.

³⁸ David I. Bednarek, “Tech’s Success Creates Trouble for Plan to Build New School,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 20, 1987, B:1–2.

³⁹ Quoted in Chester Sheard, “Chief Says School Board in Control,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 4, 1987, 1:5.

McMurrin began to hint that he was looking for another job in July.⁴⁰ The *Milwaukee Sentinel* deplored “sneak attacks” by his critics and lauded his desegregation efforts,⁴¹ as did the *Milwaukee Journal*.⁴² He ultimately accepted the position of superintendent in Beechwood, Ohio, a wealthy suburb of Cleveland, by the end of the month. Returning to Ohio, where had been a teacher and administrator for twenty-three years, meant that he could complete enough years in the Ohio pension system to earn \$4,000 to \$5,000 per month in retirement income, compared to about \$1,000 per month in Wisconsin.⁴³ The school board agreed to let him out of his contract in a nine-to-nothing vote, and several board members, including some of his critics, such as Joyce Mallory, praised him for desegregation and the magnet schools he started. Mallory said she admired him for the goals he set and said, “He stood for integration, and he fought for it.” McMurrin, ever the kind-hearted gentleman, replied that it was the school board and parents who made the magnet schools work: “What we attempted to do to integrate the school system in 1976, 1977, and 1978 wouldn’t have worked if we didn’t have the cooperation of the parents.”⁴⁴

McMurrin’s critics ignored the fact that middle-class families were leaving the

⁴⁰ McMurrin Says He’s Tired of Complaints, Undecided about Leaving,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 6, 1987, 1:10.

⁴¹ “McMurrin Move Demands Attention,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 22, 1987, 1:10.

⁴² “Replacing McMurrin No Simple Task,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 1, 1987, A:14, and McMurrin Leaves a Solid Record,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 28, 1987, A:10.

⁴³ “Ohio District Plans Offer for McMurrin,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 24, 1987, B:1, and McMurrin Leaves a Solid Record,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 28, 1987, A:10.

⁴⁴ Quoted in “Board Applauds Departing McMurrin,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 30, 1987, 1:5. See also Milwaukee Board of School Directors, *Proceedings of the Board of School Directors* (Milwaukee: The Board of School Directors), July 29, 1987, (hereafter cited as “*Proceedings*”).

district. According to Marc Levine and John Zipp, Milwaukee lost more than 80 percent of its manufacturing jobs between 1960 and 1985.⁴⁵ Unemployment rose, as twenty-eight thousand jobs left the city between 1979 and 1986, and the jobs that were left were low paying and in the service industry. Meanwhile, the suburbs added thirty-three thousand jobs in the same period.⁴⁶ The new jobs in the suburbs went to whites, because African Americans were confined to living in the city by various legal and illegal means (see chapter 3). African Americans, therefore, sank deeper into poverty.⁴⁷

Indeed, by 1980, more than 37 percent of Milwaukee's African Americans lived at or near the poverty line.⁴⁸ According to contemporary scholars, impoverished students are less likely than their middle-class peers to have parents who read to them, who teach them to pay attention and listen, and who supervise homework. Poor students may start school not knowing how to spell their names, they may direct profanity or violent behavior at teachers or peers, and they may not be able to pay attention to lessons; and they are unlikely to complete homework assignments or study.⁴⁹

The *Milwaukee Journal* compared a non-magnet elementary school to a magnet

⁴⁵ Mark Levine and John Zipp, "A City at Risk," in *Seeds of Crisis*, ed. John L. Rury and Frank A. Cassell, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 43. See also Dougherty, 187–188.

⁴⁶ This shift in employment could be considered a negative side effect of the "spreading out" of Milwaukeeans (see chapter 3).

⁴⁷ Levine and Zipp, 56.

⁴⁸ Levine and Zipp, 43.

⁴⁹ Greg J. Duncan and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, eds., *Consequences of Growing Up Poor* (New York: Russell Sage, 1997); Meredith Phillips et al., "Family Background, Parenting Practices, and the Black-White Test Score Gap," in *Black-White Test Score Gap*, ed. Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998); Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 2004); and Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003) are some of the best studies on this subject.

elementary school in 1986. Palmer, the non-magnet, had a poverty rate of 83 percent. There were only about a dozen parents who volunteered to help at school, and teachers referred about two hundred students to school support services. The population was transient—296 students left the school and 290 entered it during the 1985–86 school year, and teachers reported that their students read below grade level. Golda Meir, on the other hand, was a middle-class school that was about half African American and half white. Its list of parent volunteers was four pages long, and teachers referred only ten students to support services. The population was stable, and its students were among the highest performers in the district.⁵⁰ Thus, it should not have been a surprise that magnet schools did well while non-magnets did poorly.

MPS's use of magnet schools did not change much in the years immediately following McMurrin's resignation. Deputy Superintendent Hawthorne Faison, an African American, was named acting superintendent.⁵¹ Many African Americans saw Faison's promotion as a big opportunity to raise standards, decentralize the district, and return to neighborhood schools.⁵² Fuller tried to seize his opportunity immediately after McMurrin's resignation and proposed that North Division High School, two feeder middle schools, and seven (later five) feeder elementary schools leave MPS and become their own school district. Fuller and his followers argued that African American achievement would improve if students were taught by African American teachers and

⁵⁰ Alan J. Borsuk, "Dreams vs. Reality: Despite Gains, Blacks Still Lag in Education," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 14, 1986, A:1,8

⁵¹ *Proceedings*, August 6, 1987.

⁵² Dahlk, 469–471.

governed by a school board elected from the surrounding community.⁵³ The plan was very similar to the experimental one that was in effect for North Division from 1969 until 1972 (see chapter 3).

Milwaukee's African American community was split on the issue. As explained in chapter 3, there were three divergent streams of African Americans in Milwaukee—business interests who wanted to cooperate with whites, integrationists led by Lloyd Barbee, and black separatists led by Larry Harwell, who was an aide to Polly Williams. The first group had fallen from power in the late 1960s, and Barbee had retired to private life by 1987. That left the separatists as the dominant group. Polly Williams and state representative Spencer Coggs supported the new district, as did alderpersons Michael McGee Sr., Marlene Johnson, and Marvin Pratt and former assistant superintendent Gloria Mason.⁵⁴ They and their followers believed a return to neighborhood schools would increase parent involvement, improve teacher morale, and encourage the development of a focused curriculum that would reduce the dropout rate. The plan's supporters would have ended involuntary busing but continued voluntary busing within the city and between the city and suburbs through Chapter 220.⁵⁵ The plan's supporters said they were not against integration but still wanted control over their

⁵³ David I. Bednarek, "Blacks Push School Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 11, 1987, A:1,8; Dahlk, 477–478; Dougherty, 189–190; "Black Leaders Want Own School District," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 12, 1987, A:1; and "Black School District Plan Too Risky," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 14, 1987, B:1

⁵⁴ Jeff Cole, "New Separate School District Called Only Solution for Blacks," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 11, 1988, 1:10; Dahlk, 482–485; and *Milwaukee Journal*, March 18, 1988.

⁵⁵ Press release in Kathleen Mary Hart, Milwaukee Public Schools Desegregation Collection, 1975–1987, UWM Manuscript Collection 90, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, box 1, folder 6 (hereafter cited as Hart Papers).

own schools. In other words, they wanted choices for African American families, choices that had not existed under the previous, segregated system and choices that did not exist within the magnet system. Their “Manifesto for New Directions in the Education of Black Children in the City of Milwaukee” began with a quote from W. E. B. Du Bois:

...theoretically, the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education. What he must remember is that there is no magic, either in mixed schools or in segregated schools. A mixed school with poor and unsympathetic teachers, with hostile public opinion, and not teaching of truth concerning black folk, is bad. A segregated school with ignorant placeholders, inadequate equipment, poor salaries...is equally bad. Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader more natural basis for the education of all youth. It gives wider contacts: it inspires greater self-confidence; and suppresses the inferiority complex. But other things seldom are equal, and in that case, Sympathy, Knowledge, and the Truth, outweigh all that mixed school can offer.⁵⁶

In other words, it was the view of Fuller and his supporters that integrated education was better than segregated education in the best of all possible worlds. But this was not that world, and it was the opinion of Fuller that until attitudes changed toward African American students, they were better off attending their own schools, where they could participate in and benefit from their own community and unique American heritage. The plan’s supporters referred to MPS’s busing program as “madness” and criticized it for breaking up the black community. They also pointed to Federal Judge Robert Carter, one of the leading attorneys in the *Brown* litigation, who stated that the only way to improve the lives of poor minority students was to focus resources on the schools they were already attending. They rejected metropolitan desegregation, for in their view, it would only worsen the problem of black underachievement by dispersing African

⁵⁶ Quoted in press release found in Hart Papers, box 1, folder 6.

Americans throughout the suburbs, as if they were not good enough to have their own schools. They also, however, strongly supported the right of parents to send their children to any Milwaukee-area schools if they chose to. This manifesto was endorsed by twenty-seven locally prominent African Americans, including Mel Hall, president of the Central City Scholarship Organization; Wesley Scott, executive director of the Milwaukee Urban League (retired); and former Wisconsin Secretary of State Vel Phillips.⁵⁷ Governor Tommy Thompson and Assembly Speaker Tom Loftus, both of whom were white, also gave their support to an independent North Division district.⁵⁸

On the other side of the issue one found Marcia Coggs, Barbee's protégée in the state assembly, and state senator Gary George in opposition to the plan. Cecil Brown, former co-chairperson of the Committee of 100 (see chapters 4–6); Acting Superintendent Faison; and several prominent African American clergymen were also against it.⁵⁹ Grover Hankins, general counsel for the NAACP, called proponents of the plan "apostles of urban apartheid."⁶⁰ Among whites, Milwaukee School Board President David Cullen vowed to challenge the bill's constitutionality in court if it became law,⁶¹ and City Attorney Grant Langley said it was against the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the *Amos* decision. Perhaps most importantly, a *Milwaukee Journal*

⁵⁷ David I. Bednarek, "Blacks Push School Plan," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 11, 1987, A:1,8, and press release, Hart Papers, box 1, folder 6.

⁵⁸ Fran Bauer, "Black School Idea Gains Favor," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 2, 1987, A:1,15.

⁵⁹ Fran Bauer, "Black School Idea Gains Favor," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 2, 1987, A:1,15, and *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 18, 1988.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Jeffrey L. Katz and David I. Bednarek, "Black School District Rejected in Survey," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 28, 1987, A:1,8.

⁶¹ Fran Bauer, "Black School Idea Gains Favor," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 2, 1987, A:1,15.

survey found that 62 percent of all likely Milwaukee voters were against the plan, only 27 percent supported it, and 11 percent were undecided. These findings cut across all age, gender, and racial lines.⁶²

The bill managed to pass the state assembly on March 17, 1988, by a sixty-one-to-thirty-six vote,⁶³ but a concerted effort of Gary George killed it in the Senate.⁶⁴ Though they lost the vote, black separatists continued to advocate neighborhood schools and community control of public schools and vouchers for private schools in the 1990s.

With the North Division scheme defeated, it was time for the school board to name a permanent superintendent. Faison was well liked by the teachers union in general and especially by African American teachers. He won the union's endorsement,⁶⁵ but the school board wanted to conduct a nationwide search,⁶⁶ believing that Faison did not have enough experience to run a school district as big as Milwaukee.⁶⁷

Dr. Robert Peterkin emerged as the frontrunner. Like Faison, Peterkin was African American, which appealed to the school board's three African American

⁶² Jeffrey L. Katz and David I. Bednarek, "Black School District Rejected in Survey," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 28, 1987, A:1,8.

⁶³ Bill Hurley, "Black School District OK'd by Assembly," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 18, 1988, 1:1,13; Steve Schultze and David I. Bednarek, "Black District Clears One Hurdle," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 17, 1988, A:1,7; "Separate District No Cure for Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 18, 1988, A:8.

⁶⁴ Dahlk, 486-487, and Charles E. Freiderich, "Senators Scrap Black District," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 25, 1988, A:1,13.

⁶⁵ Jeff Cole, "Teachers Union Endorses Faison for Superintendent," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 9, 1987, 1:5.

⁶⁶ *Proceedings*, December 8, 1987, and "School Chief Search Finds 30 Candidates," *Milwaukee Journal*, January 4, 1988, B:1.

⁶⁷ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Top Candidate Wants School Job," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 29, 1988, A:1,6.

members and Mary Bills, who was a white reformer. Peterkin was the superintendent of the schools in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which had only about eight thousand students, compared to MPS, which had one hundred thousand students. But he had also been deputy superintendent in Boston, where he was credited with increasing standardized test scores.⁶⁸ Peterkin's appointment in Milwaukee was approved on a nine-to-nothing vote by the school board. He received rave reviews from the school board⁶⁹ and the general public.⁷⁰ As school board member Jeanette Mitchell said, "It's almost a dream come true."⁷¹

Peterkin faced several daunting challenges. He inherited a school system that had lost most of its white middle-class students; test scores, attendance, and grades had declined to an all-time low;⁷² and the state legislature and Department of Public Instruction were threatening to reconstitute MPS into several smaller districts.⁷³ But

⁶⁸ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Top Candidate Wants School Job," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 29, 1988, A:1,6. See also Priscilla Ahlgren, "School in Peterkin's District Uses Diverse, Innovative System," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 3, 1988. Mary Bills would be a staunch advocate for closing the achievement gap between white and African American students in the late 1980s and early 1990s. See chapter 17 of Dahlk for more information.

⁶⁹ Jeff Cole, "Peterkin Named Superintendent of City Schools," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 7, 1988, 1:1,5,10. See also Jeff Cole, "Schools Need Clear Goals, Peterkin Says," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 24, 1988, 1:5, and "Peterkin, Teachers Off to a Good Start," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 24, 1988, 1:6.

⁷⁰ Jeff Cole, "Peterkin Appearances Well-Received," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 21, 1988, 1:5.

⁷¹ Quoted in Priscilla Ahlgren, "Peterkin Aims High," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 7, 1988, A:1,9.

⁷² See appendix B, tables 3 and 4.

⁷³ "Decentralization: Why, How, and What Ends?," North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1993, <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/go/93-1milw.htm>. Various people and agencies have proposed a breakup of MPS from at least 1985 through 2010. See David I. Bednerak, "10 School Districts Suggested for City," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 6, 1985, 2:1-2; Kenneth R. Lamke and Gretchen Schuldt, "Grover Suggests Breaking MPS into 33 Districts," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 7, 1990, 1:5; "MPS Given 2 Years, or Else," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 21, 1998.

Peterkin promised to raise academic achievement⁷⁴ and decided the best approach to reform was one of decentralization. He broke MPS into six “service delivery areas,” each with its own deputy superintendent who was responsible for high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. By moving administrators out of the MPS central office, Peterkin hoped to put the administration directly in touch with the parents and communities they served, which would lead toward increased accountability. Once accountability was ingrained, achievement would improve.⁷⁵ Racial diversity would be achieved by incorporating a portion of the central city into each service delivery area.⁷⁶

The plan failed to improve MPS and lasted only two years. There were essentially two levels of bureaucracy, which was expensive and doubled the paperwork. It also slowed the system down in some cases. Reports surfaced that the community superintendents were reluctant to leave the comforts of their offices and get into the schools to help people.⁷⁷ The plan did nothing to reduce busing, and instead of making

⁷⁴ Jeff Cole, “Peterkin Named Superintendent of City Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 7, 1988, 1:1,5,10, and “Schools Need Clear Goals, Peterkin Says,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 24, 1988, 1:5.

⁷⁵ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Board Member Questions Racial Equity of 6 School District Appointments,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 1, 1989, B:4, “Now It’s Up to Peterkin to Put His Plan to Work,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 27, 1988, B:1,4; “Peterkin Plan Gains Support,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 17, 1989, B:1,4, “Peterkin to Seek Money as School Reorganization Advances,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 22, 1988, B:7; and “School Plan Follows Neighborhood Lines,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 8, 1989, B:1–2; Jeff Cole, “Overhaul of Schools Presented,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 22, 1988, 1:1,4, and “Peterkin Sees Combination Neighborhood-Specialty Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 1:5; “Decentralization: Why, How, and What Ends?,” “Peterkin Plan Wins Quick Backing,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 20, 1988, B:2; Paula A. Poda, “Promise Is Seen in Management Plan for Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 1:6; Jim Stingl, “5 Endorsed to Lead School Regions,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 16, 1989, B:7.

⁷⁶ McKenzie Group, “Options for Organizing the Milwaukee Public Schools” (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools, August 15, 1988), 16–19, 32, and *Proceedings*, January 25, 1989.

⁷⁷ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Now It’s Up to Peterkin to Put His Plan to Work,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 27, 1988, B:1,4; Dahlk, 497; “Decentralization: Why, How, and What Ends?,” and Gretchen Schuldt, “Board Member Raps School ‘Zones’ Plan,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 13, 1990, 1:5.

the bureaucracy more accessible to parents, it may have actually isolated them. As

George Mitchell said:

They (a family that lives in the Palmer Elementary School attendance area) live in one attendance area, which is part of a new Service Delivery Area headed by a new community superintendent. They are represented on the School Board by the member from District Four. Yet their child likely attends another school, in another Service Delivery Area, headed by another community superintendent, represented by another member of the School Board. These circumstances will be present in neighborhoods throughout the city.⁷⁸

The service delivery areas did not improve student achievement. In fact, student achievement continued to decline.⁷⁹ The average high school student had a 1.62 grade point average,⁸⁰ the average daily attendance in all schools was around only 90 percent in 1989,⁸¹ and 9,359 students were suspended from school in the 1988–89 school year.⁸²

Peterkin proposed two solutions, both of which included magnet schools. The first solution was called the Long-Range Educational Equity Plan, or the Willie Plan, named after its principal author, Charles V. Willie, of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The city would have been split into two zones—east and west—under the Willie Plan, with magnet schools and other opportunities placed in both halves. Students

⁷⁸ George A. Mitchell and the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute. *An Evaluation of State-Financed School Integration in Metropolitan Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, 1989), 51.

⁷⁹ See appendix B, tables 3 and 4. See also Jeff Cole, “Integration Plan Gets Failing Grade,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 27, 1989, 1:1,9, and Section III of Mitchell.

⁸⁰ Priscilla Ahlgren, “High School Grades Down Again,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 27, 1989, A:1,8.

⁸¹ Gretchen Schuldt, “Attendance Still Dropping at MPS, Figures Show,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 10, 1990.

⁸² “Suspension Report Merits Serious Study,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 16, 1989, 1:10. See also Priscilla Ahlgren, “Peterkin Takes Aim at Troublemakers,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 3, 1989, A:1–2.

would have to choose a school in their zone, which should have reduced busing. The only exceptions would be Rufus King, Riverside, Milwaukee High School of the Arts, and Milwaukee Trade and Technology, which would remain citywide magnet schools. Busing would have been bilateral, and the schools would have been integrated.⁸³ Peterkin hoped to reduce feelings among parents that there were only a few good magnet schools in the district.⁸⁴

The Willie Plan met opposition from white parents who felt threatened at the possibility of losing their magnet schools. A crowd of about 175 parents and teachers went to the auditorium at Marshall High School on February 27, 1990, to complain about the plan. As a parent of a Greenfield Avenue Elementary Montessori School student said, “You will see what a revolt is really like.”⁸⁵ White parents liked their child’s magnet schools and did not want to lose them. They predicted white flight, and asked the school board to leave the school assignment process alone. Some African Americans whose children attended magnet schools had the same concern; others, who did not have children in magnet schools, worried that the Willie plan would limit their choices and busing options.⁸⁶ A third set of African American parents at another meeting urged a

⁸³ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Choice Plan Learns from Other Tries,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 25, 1990, “Consultant’s Plan Would Target Weakest Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 12, 1990, A:1,4, “School Plan: Less Busing, More Choice,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 11, 1990, A:1,26, and “School Plan Puts Onus on Principals, Staff,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 13, 1990, B:1,4; and Jeff Cole, “Choice Plan May Help Bad Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 10, 1989, 1:5.

⁸⁴ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Pupils, Parents Race for Seats in Specialty School,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 30, 1989, B:1,5.

⁸⁵ Quoted in “Gretchen Schuldt, “‘Willie Plan’ for Schools Criticized at Hearing,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 28, 1990, 1:5.

⁸⁶ “Gretchen Schuldt, “‘Willie Plan’ for Schools Criticized at Hearing,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 28, 1990, 1:5.

return to neighborhood schools.⁸⁷ The Willie Plan was not approved, mostly due to white opposition.⁸⁸ Peterkin lamented, “People didn’t see what they were going to gain, only what they were going to lose.”⁸⁹

With the failure of the service delivery areas and the Willie Plan, the public was beginning to lose faith in Peterkin. As Jean Tyler, executive director of the Public Policy Forum, a local agency that studies public policies that pertain to metropolitan problems, said, “I’d give him an A for effort, for understanding the major kinds of changes that need to be taken to improve the Milwaukee Public Schools. But I’d also have to give him an incomplete for his accomplishments so far.”⁹⁰

Peterkin’s last attempt to improve MPS came in the form of a new magnet school. Peterkin, himself African American, knew young black males were the largest “at-risk” group in MPS. African Americans made up 55 percent of the student population in 1990, and about half of them were male. MPS’s African American males had a 19.3 percent dropout rate, compared to 6.2 percent nationally. They had a grade point average of 1.35, compared to the district average of 1.6; only 2 percent had a 3.0 or higher. Eleven

⁸⁷ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Schools Near Home a Tough Assignment,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 21, 1990, B:1,5.

⁸⁸ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Peterkin Asks to Scrap Much of Willie Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 20, 1990, A:1,28, “School Plan a Beginning, Board Agrees,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 16, 1990, B:1,4, and “Stacy Calls on Peterkin to Scrap Assignment Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 9, 1990, B:1,4; 20, and 21, 1990; Dahlk, 498–500; and *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 10 and May 21, 1990; Jim Stingl, “Hearing Reveals Distrust of Attendance Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 28, 1990, and “School Board Presses for Changes in Student Assignment Proposal,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 10, 1990; and David E. Umhoefer, “Aldermen Want Say in School Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 1, 1990, B:1,9.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Priscilla Ahlgren, “Peterkin Asks to Scrap Much of Willie Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 20, 1990, A:1,28.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Priscilla Ahlgren, “Observers Wait for Proof of Peterkin’s School Reform,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 1, 1990, A:1,18.

percent flunked a grade; and 17 percent were suspended in the 1989–90 school year, compared to 7 percent of non-African Americans.⁹¹ Peterkin hoped that an immersion program, focusing on African culture and self-pride, might help change these numbers. In his words, “A population is literally dying, both educationally and physically. We can wring . . . our hands or we can try something new.”⁹²

The immersion program set off a storm of controversy that gathered national media attention. Some people said targeting African American males for a “special” school would be a return to segregation. Others said it ignored much more complex issues involved in the lack of male achievement, such as poverty and the weakening of the family.⁹³ Dr. Kenneth Clark, who provided much of the social-psychological research on segregation’s harmful effects on black students for the *Brown* decision, said, “I can’t believe that we’re regressing like this Why are we talking about segregating and stigmatizing black males?”⁹⁴

Supporters of the plan disagreed with such statements. They saw integration as a means to an end—quality education for all of Milwaukee’s children. But involuntary busing was not working in their view, so they wanted to try another method that might

⁹¹ “Can the Boys Be Saved?” *Newsweek*, October 15, 1990. It also appeared in *USA Today*, October 11, 1990; and *Washington Post*, February 15, 1991. Additional statistics are in Priscilla Ahlgren, “‘D+’ Image a Reflection of Truancy,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 21, 1990, A:1, 26, Priscilla Ahlgren, “Peterkin Funnels Money to Classrooms,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 23, 1990, B:1,3; and Gretchen Schuldt, “Many Minorities Fail at MPS Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 23, 1990, 1:1,13.

⁹² Quoted in “Can the Boys Be Saved?” See also Priscilla Ahlgren, “Plan Pays Parents to Help Kids,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 11, 1990, B:1,5, and Priscilla Ahlgren, “Stacy Says Begel Oversteps Bounds, Should Be Reviewed,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 20, 1990, B:1.

⁹³ Kevin Johnson, “A Bold Experiment in Educating Black Males,” *USA Today*, October 11, 1990.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Charles Whitaker, “Do Black Males Need Special Schools?,” *Ebony*, March 1991, 18.

result in better schools. Joyce Mallory, an African American member of the school board and mother of a sixteen-year-old son, was one such person. She said she wanted to “create a climate and a culture that says to all children, particularly black boys, that you’re OK.”⁹⁵ Ken Holt, another African American and principal of Alexander Graham Bell Middle School, put it more directly: “The school system is going to have to be surrogate parents. These kids see despair in the community. Dope pushers, not role models. They don’t know how to be a man.”⁹⁶

Peterkin, Mallory, Holt, and other supporters of the immersion plan were able to put together enough votes on the school board to get a plan approved. Two schools—Martin Luther King Elementary School (formerly Victor Berger Elementary) and Malcolm X Academy (formerly Fulton Middle School, which had had academic and behavioral problems for years)—were designated for the new program, but they were open to all students regardless of race or gender. All would participate in the Afro-centric curriculum and daily counseling sessions, and uniforms would be required. Once approved, Peterkin set out to recruit a mostly black male staff—he wanted them to be role models as well as teachers⁹⁷—but as the controversy deepened and Peterkin fell under closer media attention, his desire to remain on the job waned. He announced in late 1990

⁹⁵ Quoted in “Can the Boys Be Saved?”

⁹⁶ Quoted in Kevin Johnson, “A Bold Experiment in Educating Black Males,” *USA Today*, October 11, 1990.

⁹⁷ “African-American Immersion Schools Aim to Help Failing Students,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 14, 1991, 10; Priscilla Ahlgren, “Immersion Schools Not Just for Boys,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 9, 1991; “Can the Boys Be Saved?,” Dahlk, 501–506, 581; and Dan Parks, “MPS Board Okays Change to Malcolm X,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 25, 1993, A:5. See also *Proceedings*, March 22 and June 27, 1989, September 26, 1990, and December 18, 1991.

that he would take a position at Harvard University the following fall.⁹⁸

Malcolm X Academy did not do very well. Although its founders envisioned well-ordered classrooms where students would take rigorous courses and improve their self-esteem, what they got was students with some of lowest attendance, grades, and test scores in MPS.⁹⁹ Leon Todd, an African American integrationist who had been on the school board in the 1970s (see chapters 4 and 6), returned to the board in the 1990s and alleged that the school was teaching its students separatism and racism.¹⁰⁰ There were several attempts to close the school in the 1990s. Eventually, the enrollment shrank to such a low level that a high school had to be added.¹⁰¹ The middle school component was cut in the mid-2000s. Then the school became the African American Immersion High School after a few years and merged with the small Metropolitan High School. It then moved into North Division, which itself had been reconfigured as three small high schools in 2005,¹⁰² and it still had some of the lowest performing students in MPS.¹⁰³

Howard Fuller emerged as one of the top candidates for superintendent to replace

⁹⁸ Gretchen Schuldt, "Peterkin Quitting to Take Harvard Job," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 20, 1990, 1:1,6, and *Proceedings*, November 20, 1990. Peterkin's letter of resignation is in *Proceedings*, May 29, 1991.

⁹⁹ Dahlk, 507.

¹⁰⁰ Dahlk, 508–509.

¹⁰¹ "Four Milwaukee Middle Schools Want to Merge into Two," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 11, 2007, and *Proceedings*, November 30, 2006, and January 25 and February 22, 2007.

¹⁰² "North Division High School to Make a Comeback in 2010," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 26, 2009; *Proceedings*, November 20, 2006, and June 29, 2007; "School Options Are Multiplying" *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 17, 2007.

¹⁰³ "12 Milwaukee High School Identified as Low Performers," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 11, 2011, and "Federal Funds Could Help with North Division Overhaul," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 12, 2010.

Peterkin. He had put together an impressive résumé in the 1980s. Already known as a civil rights advocate, leader of the Coalition to Save North, and a proponent of vouchers, Fuller, who had a PhD, had served as dean of general education for the Milwaukee Area Technical College, as the director of the Wisconsin Department of Employment Relations under Governor Tony Earl, and as the head of Milwaukee County's Department of Health and Human Services. Thus, he was considered an expert in his field and had connections all over the state. He also had endorsements from Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist, County Executive Dave Schultz, and County Board Chairman Tom Ament. State law, however, required a minimum of three years as a classroom teacher to be superintendent, experience that Fuller lacked.¹⁰⁴

The school board waited until after the spring elections to appoint a superintendent. Deputy Superintendent Deborah McGriff, the only other serious candidate for the job, was tired of waiting so many months for an appointment and accepted the position of Detroit's superintendent instead. That left Fuller,¹⁰⁵ and with the end of the school year drawing near, the state legislature and governor changed the law so that he could become Milwaukee superintendent.¹⁰⁶ Both the black and white

¹⁰⁴ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Broad Experience Drives Interest in Fuller," *Milwaukee Journal*, February, 2, 1991, B:1,4; Bruce Murphy and John Pawasarat, "Why it Failed: Desegregation 10 Years Later," *Milwaukee Magazine*, September 1986, 45–46; Gretchen Schuldt, "Two Seek School Board's At-Large Seat," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 21, 1991, 1:11; Jim Stingl, "Fuller Pushed for Top Job," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 22, 1991, A:1,14; Steven Walters, "2 Push to Make Fuller Eligible for MPS Post," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 8, 1991, 1:5. Additional background information in Dahlk, 556–557.

¹⁰⁵ "McGriff's Departure Leaves Gap," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 27, 1991, A:1,10, and "MPS Loses; Slim Pickings Exist," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 28, 1991, 1:10.

¹⁰⁶ "All MPS Board Needs Now is Rubber Stamp," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 20, 1991, 1:6; Richard P. Jones, "Hurdle to Fuller's Candidacy about to Fall," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 19, 1991, and "Senate Approves Waiver for Fuller," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 18, 1991; Steven Walters, "Assembly Okays Bill on MPS," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 18, 1991, 1:1; and Steven Walters and Jeff Cole, "Fuller Gets the Go-Ahead to Seek MPS Job," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 19, 1991, 1:7.

communities rallied around him.¹⁰⁷ The school board, wary of the man who had been their greatest critic, searched for other candidates¹⁰⁸ but could find none. The school board unanimously elected Fuller on May 29, 1991.¹⁰⁹ Fuller was also vested with more power than any other superintendent before him, because the school board eliminated the separate secretary-business manager position, which gave Fuller complete control over district finances.¹¹⁰

Fuller had his work cut out for him. A report issued in 1992 by the Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the United States Civil Rights Commission indicated that white migration had continued in Milwaukee, though its acceleration had declined. According to the report, 57 percent of MPS's students were African American in 1991; 27 percent were white; 10 percent were Latino; and the rest were Asian, Native American, or "other." This included 5,714 Milwaukee students who attended suburban schools through Chapter 220. Of those students, 71.5 percent were African American.

¹⁰⁷ Priscilla Ahlgren, "50% in Poll Support Fuller for School Superintendent," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 17, 1991, and "Prominent Blacks Urge Swift Action on School Job," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 21, 1991, A:1,6; Jeff Bentoff, "Ament Endorses Fuller as MPS Superintendent," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 27, 1991, 1:8; "Fuller Finds Support Among North Students," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 23, 1991, B:5; Kenneth R. Lamke, "Teachers Favor Further Search," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 22, 1991, 1:1,9; and Leonard Sykes Jr. "Mayor Backs Fuller's Ideas for Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 23, 1991, B:1, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Decision Nearer on Selection," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 14, 1991, B:1,5, and "Superintendent Finalists Narrowed to 2," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 15, 1991, B:1,5; "Candidate to Be Revealed Next Week," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 16, 1991, B:8; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 23 and May 7 and 12–14 1991; and Celeste Williams, "Other Competitors Likely for School Job," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 4, 1991, A:22. See also *Proceedings*, November 29 and December 10, 1990, and February 20 and 25 and March 6, 1991.

¹⁰⁹ Priscilla Ahlgren and Leonard Sykes Jr., "Exultant Fuller at Head of the Class," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 30, 1991, B:1, and Paula A. Poda, "New School Chief Approved Unanimously," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 30, 1991, 1:1,4. See also *Proceedings*, June 26, 1991.

¹¹⁰ Mark J. Rochester, "Peterburs Leaves with Books in Order," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 8, 1991, B:7.

Conversely, only 873 white suburban students attended city schools.¹¹¹ As a state, more than 70 percent of all African American students attended segregated schools. Almost all of these were in MPS.¹¹²

According to research conducted at the University of Chicago, Milwaukee-area schools could be broken up into three classifications. The first was white, middle class, and suburban. Their students were doing very well and were above the national medians in several standardized categories. The second classification was the college-preparatory MPS magnet schools. They were fairly well integrated and were also above national medians in several categories but were not doing as well as suburban schools. Most of their students were low to middle income. The third classification of schools, which the vast majority of MPS students attended, were traditional schools dominated by low-income, minority children. Their level of educational achievement was significantly below that of students in the other two types of school and was below the national median in most statistical categories.¹¹³ The average grade point average in thirteen of Milwaukee's fifteen public high schools was less than 2.0. More than one-quarter of the courses taken in MPS high schools ended in failing grades, and the percentage of failures was more than 30 percent in seven high schools.¹¹⁴ Only about 40 percent of freshmen graduated from high school in four years. The rest dropped out or spent more than four

¹¹¹ Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the United States Civil Rights Commission, "Impact of School Desegregation in Milwaukee Public Schools on Quality Education for Minorities . . . 15 Years Later" (August 1992); hereafter cited as "Wisconsin Advisory Committee."

¹¹² Wisconsin Advisory Committee, 2.

¹¹³ Wisconsin Advisory Committee, 6–7.

¹¹⁴ Wisconsin Advisory Committee, 8.

years in high school.¹¹⁵

These facts caused several people, including the state assembly, the NAACP, and Mayor John Norquist, to question the success of desegregation.¹¹⁶ In a survey by the *Milwaukee Community Journal*, only 55 percent of white parents, 55 percent of African American parents, and 52 percent of Latino parents believed the desegregation guidelines should be continued.¹¹⁷ Howard Fuller, who had not yet become superintendent at the time this research was done, said, “Milwaukee pursued a discriminatory implementation of desegregation; and, in essence, what happened in Milwaukee was they stood the *Brown* decision on its head.” In other words, *Brown* was supposed to improve educational opportunities for African American students, but in Milwaukee’s case, desegregation had put a tremendous burden on the students it was supposed to help.¹¹⁸

When Fuller became superintendent, he put forth a number of innovative reforms to try to correct these problems. Almost immediately, he announced the closure of the six service delivery offices, calling the experiment “noble” but inefficient and expensive,¹¹⁹ but he also turned over most school functions directly to the principals, including

¹¹⁵ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Dismal Report No Help, Mitchell Says,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 23, 1991, B:1,5. See also Celeste Williams, “Saving the Kids,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 17–21, 24, 1991.

¹¹⁶ Wisconsin Advisory Committee, 7.

¹¹⁷ “Parents Give Public Schools Passing Grade,” *Milwaukee Community Journal*, September 26, 1990, 1,10.

¹¹⁸ Wisconsin Advisory Committee, 11–12.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Mark J. Rochester, “Fuller Won’t Keep Begel in Cabinet Post,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 18, 1991, B:5. See also Paula Poda, “Major Kindergarten Expansion Sought,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 19, 1991, A:1,10.

budgeting and personnel decisions,¹²⁰ so that MPS would be a “system of schools,” rather than a school system.¹²¹ Cutting administrative positions also made more money available to be used at the school level.¹²² He wanted high schools to be more rigorous, so he asked the school board to increase the high school graduation requirements, to require all ninth-grade students to take algebra, and to pass new policies to make schools safer and discipline standards stronger,¹²³ He also wanted parents to play a greater role in choosing and being involved in schools.¹²⁴ He planned to close schools and reopen them with new staffs and programs, possibly as charter schools, if they were chronically low

¹²⁰ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Fuller: More Power to Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 19, 1991, A:1,24, and “Fuller Ready to Give More Power to the Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 30, 1991, and “Decentralization: Why, How, and What Ends?”

¹²¹ Dahlk, 556.

¹²² Priscilla Ahlgren, “92 Administrative Jobs May Be Cut,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 19, 1991, B:4; “Fuller Fears Not, Clips Layers of Bureaucracy,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 22, 1991, A:6; Paula Poda, “Major Kindergarten Expansion Sought,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 19, 1991, A:10; Mark J. Rochester, “Board Sees Most of Budget Fuller’s Way,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 20, 1991, B:1,7.

¹²³ Priscilla Ahlgren, “23 Tech Students Suspended for Brawl,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 13, 1991, A:1,12, “Fuller Faces Risks in Discipline Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 11, 1991, B:1,5, “Fuller Names New Principal for Marshall,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 19, 1991, A:1,20, “Fuller Offers Do-Or-Die Way to Fix Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 6, 1991, A:1,7, “Fuller Says Staff Must Be Responsible for Enforcing Rules,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 15, 1991, B:5, “Principals Supporting Expulsion,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 14, 1991; “Good First Steps to Dealing with Disrupters,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 15, 1991, A:8; Erin Knoche and Tina Burnside, “Fuller Vows to Crack down on Rowdiness in Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 16, 1991, A:1,7; “Manuel Mendoza and Celeste Williams, “Principal at South Division Wants Unruly Students Ousted,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 1, 1991, A:1,4; Dan Parks, “MPS Teachers Rap Disruptions,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 7, 1992, A:5,7; Paula A. Poda, “More Study Sought on Fuller Proposals,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 7, 1991, A:5; Mark J. Rochester and Priscilla Ahlgren, “Young Pupils to Get Tougher Rules,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 6, 1992, B:1,7; Lori Skalitzky and Jan Uebehr, “Marshall Not the Only School with Problems, Fuller Says,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 21, 1991, A:7; “Tougher Discipline so Students Can Learn,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 10, 1992; and “When Street Gangs Disrupt Job Fair, Crackdown Is Imperative,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 19, 1991, A:10. See also Howard Fuller, telephone interview with author, August 30, 2010.

¹²⁴ Wisconsin Advisory Committee, 12.

achieving.¹²⁵ The teachers union interpreted Fuller's plans for school reconstitution and non-union charter schools as an attack on teachers. The teachers union continued to fight with Fuller as it went into contract negotiations that year¹²⁶ when he proposed a wage freeze to help hold property taxes in check, which was a growing concern in Wisconsin in the early 1990s.¹²⁷ The union also remained concerned about staff safety in schools.¹²⁸

Another reform involved school funding. At the time Fuller came into office, the citywide magnet schools received \$2,297 per pupil, while the neighborhood schools received only \$1,855 per pupil.¹²⁹ The magnet schools drew mostly middle-class students, who were often times white, while the neighborhood schools had mostly poor students who were minorities. In Fuller's view, poor students needed more money, and Fuller, never a fan of magnet schools, decided to equalize funding. His proposal also

¹²⁵ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Board Rejects Charter Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 19, 1991, "Fuller Offers Do-Or-Die Way to Fix Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 6, 1991, A:1,7, and "New Leader Cites Need to Cooperate," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 14, 1991, B:1,2; Priscilla Ahlgren and Mark J. Rochester, "Fuller's School-Closing Plan Draws Fire," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 17, 1991, B:1,5; "Closing 'Failing' Schools Ignores Host of Other Factors," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 14, 1992; Paula A. Poda, "More Study Sought on Fuller Proposals," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 7, 1991, A:5; Paula A. Poda and Rick Romell, "Power Over Failing Schools Sought," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 17, 1991, A:5-6.

¹²⁶ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Fuller Facing a Job that Just Got Tougher," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 22, 1991, B:1,3, and "Fuller's Reform Will Be Tested in the Coming Year," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 29, 1991, B:1,5; Priscilla Ahlgren and Mark J. Rochester, "Fuller's School-Closing Plan Draws Fire," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 17, 1991; and Tanette Johnson-Elie, "Teachers Meet with Fuller," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 5, 1991, A:5.

¹²⁷ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Budget Seeks Equity in Per-Pupil Funding," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 5, 1992, A:1,7, "Fuller's Challenge Cuts Right to the Soul," *Milwaukee Journal*, March, 20, 1993, B:4, "In the End, MPS Budget Must Be Proved in Classroom," *Milwaukee Journal*, B:5; "Property Tax Showdown Tonight," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 30, 1991, B:1,6; and "School Board Achieves Goal of Cutting Tax Rate," *Milwaukee Journal*, July 1, 1992, A:1,14.

¹²⁸ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Teachers Union Probes Conditions at 2 Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 7, 1991.

¹²⁹ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Poor Schools Get Less School Money," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 17, 1992, B:1-2.

included shifting money from high schools and middle schools to elementary schools to try to raise achievement, even though high schools are more expensive to operate. Not surprisingly, the students, parents, and staffs of the magnet schools and high schools protested these cuts.¹³⁰ Fuller eventually restored 30 percent of the cuts to the high schools and middle schools but did not restore funding to the magnet schools.¹³¹

Fuller also proposed a return to neighborhood schools and said busing was a failure that “destroyed communities.”¹³² He divided the city into five elementary school districts, and required students to choose an elementary school in their district if they were not going to attend a magnet school.¹³³ He also proposed a ten-year \$474 million building plan for neighborhood schools, of which \$366 million would be financed by long-term borrowing. Fifteen schools would be constructed, and fourteen existing schools would expand. State law required a referendum to get the loans. Mayor Norquist and other public officials expressed doubt that the referendum would pass without MPS cutting busing and showing “a dramatic increase in the quality” of education.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Priscilla Ahlgren, “600 Protestors Assail Fuller on Budget Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 10, 1992, B:1–2, “Budget Seeks Equity in Per-Pupil Funding,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 5, 1992, A:1,7 “Equality Plan Brings Fears of Mediocrity for All Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 26, 1991, B:1,5, and “Frustrated Students, Others Plead with Fuller Against Fund Reallocation,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 27, 1991, B:1–2; Paula A. Poda and Gretchen Schuldt, “Fuller Raps Mayor’s Comments,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 3, 1992; and “School Budget Hits Bulls-Eye,” *Milwaukee Journal*, July 2, 1992.

¹³¹ Dan Parks, “MPS Budget Equals Change,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 25, 1992, A:1,9.

¹³² Quoted in Manuel Mendoza, “Fuller’s Board Appeal Isn’t Attractive to Anyone,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 18, 1991.

¹³³ Paula A. Poda, “Plan Backed to Cut School Bus Routes,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 12, 1991, A:5, and Mark J. Rochester, “Board Rejects Proposal on Gay Issues,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 21, 1991, B:1,5.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Paula A. Poda, “Plan Would Narrow School Facilities Gap,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 26, 1992, A:1,8. See also Priscilla Ahlgren, “Forum Has Questions on School Building Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 18, 1992, “Fuller Promises Radical Change,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 2,

Early polling data made the chances of an affirmative vote look good,¹³⁵ but citizens began to have doubts when the financial costs of the building plan were calculated. Therefore, when not battling the teachers union, Fuller spent the rest of 1992 and part of 1993 trying to promote his building plan and get the support of voters.¹³⁶ County Executive Dave Schultz called it “a referendum on Howard Fuller.”¹³⁷ Most African Americans supported the plan, but many whites, especially those on the south side and northwest side, opposed the plan because it would cause an increase in their property taxes.¹³⁸ The latter group prevailed, and the referendum was voted down by a three-to-one margin.¹³⁹ Lee McMurrin’s magnet school plan and the busing it required would remain in place for at least the next few years.

1992, B:1, “Fuller’s Building Plan Would Cost \$474.3 Million,” September 20, 1992, B:1,5, “School Plan Would Top \$1 Billion,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 29, 1992, and “Schools Plan Would Boost Tax Bills,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 26, 1992, A:1,12; Kenneth R. Lamke, “Norquist Doubts Referendum on School Building Would Pass,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 9, 1992, A:11; Paula A. Poda, “Fuller Plan Stirs Split on Board,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 4, 1992, A:5; Gretchen Schuldt, “Norquist Backs Fuller on Reorganization,” April 2, 1992, A:5; and Leonard Sykes Jr., and Priscilla Ahlgren, *Milwaukee Journal*, October 6, 1992.

¹³⁵ Priscilla Ahlgren, “Schools Plan Would Boost Tax Bills,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 26, 1992, A:1,12.

¹³⁶ See articles in *Milwaukee Journal*, June 6, September 27, October 30, November 3 and 5, and December 6–7, 12, and 24, 1992, and January 6, 8, 12, 14, 19, 24, and 31, and February 3–4 and 7–8, 1993, and *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 4–5, 24, and 31, April 23, June 9, September 21, 24, and 30, October 23 and 26, November 6 and 20, and December 1, 4, 9, and 25, 1992, and January 2, 18, 21, 23, and 25, and February 2, 4, 10–13, and 15, 1993.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Paula A. Poda, “Plan Would Narrow School Facilities Gap,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 26, 1992, A:1,8.

¹³⁸ Jeff Browne, “Support Soft on School Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 7, 1993; Jerry Goldstein, “Broader Base Must Ungird Public School Funding,” *Milwaukee Journal*, December 7, 1993, A:10; and Karen Herzog, “Poll Shows Most Blacks Back Plan,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 23, 1993, A:14.

¹³⁹ Priscilla Ahlgren, “‘No’ Votes Resound,” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 17, 1993, A:1,8, and Dan Parks, “MPS Resurrects Plan to Close Failing Schools,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 18, 1993, A:1,11.

Fuller continued to push other reforms while he was superintendent, including a school-to-work program,¹⁴⁰ a classification system of schools as “high achieving,” “improving,” or “in need of assistance,”¹⁴¹ and expanded school choice through charter schools. Charter schools used non-union labor, because, Fuller said, the MTEA hamstrung his efforts to be innovative and to fire ineffective teachers. The MTEA fought back and forced Fuller to observe union rules at Edison Middle School, which was the one independent charter school he able to start.¹⁴²

The school board and the public at large seemed to support most of Fuller’s plans, but some insiders resented Fuller’s disruption to their lives and felt alienated by what they perceived as a heavy-handed approach to school administration. Relations with the teachers union also continued to sour. When Fuller wanted to bypass seniority and appoint additional African American teachers to the two African American immersion schools, the teachers’ union objected, but Fuller did it anyway. The MTEA filed a grievance and won.¹⁴³

Fuller also introduced radical changes to the administration of North Division. He

¹⁴⁰ See articles in *Milwaukee Journal*, April 22, August 22, September 14 and 19, October 10, 14, and 17, 1993, and January 16 and 20, February 1 and 24, March 16, April 8, 16, and 25–26, May 3, July 15, August 3 and 22, October 24, November 27, and December 12, 1994; *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 24, March 6 and 16, April 24–25, and June 28, 1995; and *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 18, 1992, March 26, and August 1 and 23, 1994, and January 24, 1995.

¹⁴¹ Curtis Lawrence, “Fuller Vows to Enforce MPS Standards,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 25, 1994, and Curtis Lawrence, “Schools Challenged to Improve,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 19, 1994, B:1,5.

¹⁴² Dahlk, 571–574.

¹⁴³ Curtis Lawrence, “Forum to Focus on Limits on Black Teachers,” *Milwaukee Journal*, September 27, 1993, and “Taking Up the Gauntlet Union,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 21, 1995; Mark J. Rochester, “Flexibility Sought on Black Teachers,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 6, 1992, B:1,7; Gregory Stanford, “Teacher Union Seeks Foul Deal,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 24, 1993, A:13; and Michael R. Zahn, “Black Schools Found to Defy Racial Formula,” March 19, 1992, B:3.

fired Cecil Austin, North's principal, in April 1992 for being ineffective and replaced him with a committee of teachers, parents, alumni, and business leaders. The committee was given five years to turn North around and was given control over budgeting, scheduling, staffing decisions, and curriculum, but the MTEA charged that the staff members had not been elected to the committee and were under the direct control of Fuller. This violated the teachers' contract and collective bargaining process. Maxine Hannibal, a North teacher who was appointed by Fuller as chairperson of the committee, said the teachers on the committee lacked support from the union and central office administrators.¹⁴⁴ Fuller eventually named a new principal in 1993.¹⁴⁵ In return, the union agreed to the creation of a new advisory committee of teachers, administrators, and union representatives. It also waived portions of the contract and allowed North to have more African American teachers than the usual level.¹⁴⁶

The school board's support for Fuller waned in the wake of his defeats. Fuller had been hired on a unanimous vote in 1991, but two of his allies, Joyce Mallory and Jeannette Mitchell, resigned in 1993 and 1994, respectively. Mallory's position was filled by Leon Todd in a special election in 1994. Todd had been a Fuller foe when Todd was on the school board in the 1970s and had been particularly critical of Fuller's

¹⁴⁴ Priscilla Ahlgren, "Fuller Announces Panel to Set New Course for North Division," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 17, 1992, B:2, and "Panel Watches North Division Open," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 24, 1992, B:1; Curtis Lawrence, "Taking Up the Gauntlet Union," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 21, 1995; Paula A. Poda, "North Division Principal Says He's Been Fired by Fuller," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 17, 1992, A:1,8, and "North Division's Students Say Austin's Firing Hurts School," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 28, 1992.

¹⁴⁵ "South Division Assistant to Lead North Division," *Milwaukee Journal*, June 5, 1993.

¹⁴⁶ Curtis Lawrence, "Taking Up the Gauntlet Union," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 21, 1995.

proposal that the North Division neighborhood be its own school district (see chapter 6).

Todd continued to criticize Fuller in the 1990s.¹⁴⁷

But the conflict did not stop there. Adding fuel to the fire, Fuller pushed for a big expansion of charter schools. The teachers' union raised objections because the program took money away from public schools (and union salary increases) and gave it to non-union public schools.¹⁴⁸ As a result, MTEA lobbied hard and helped elect Leon Todd and three other school board candidates, all of whom rejected the expansion of charter schools, in April 1995.¹⁴⁹ Fuller resigned in frustration two weeks after the election. He blamed the teachers union in his resignation statement, saying their “scurrilous messages” were designed to “smear any effort to bring genuine reform to the system.”¹⁵⁰

Fuller may not have accomplished as much as he thought he would, but he left a lasting legacy. Charter schools and choice schools flourished in the decade following the Fuller administration, and MPS finally made the move back to neighborhood schools. These schools and suburban schools would compete with magnet schools for Milwaukee's best students. This would be the third era of educational choice in Milwaukee—the era of school choice.

¹⁴⁷ Dahlk, 585.

¹⁴⁸ Daniel McGroarty, “Teacher Knows Best,” *National Review* 47 (1995): 62–64, and Wisconsin Advisory Committee, 12, 22–23.

¹⁴⁹ Daynel L. Hooker, “Anti-Privatization Candidates Win,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 5, 1995, and “Teachers Union Spent \$40,000 on Candidates,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 7, 1995; Daynel L. Hooker, “Fuller Consults Allies on Next Move,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 16, 1995; Curtis Lawrence, “School Board Leader to Give Up Top Seat,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 11, 1995; and Curtis Lawrence and Daynel L. Hooker, “Governor, Others Back Fuller,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 12, 1995.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Daynel L. Hooker, “Fuller Resigns,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 19, 1995. See also *Proceedings*, April 18, 1995.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ERA OF SCHOOL CHOICE:

FIVE MORE CHOICES, 1987–2011

Magnet schools did not provide the educational improvement for which Americans had hoped. They did not integrate students at the level supporters had hoped and did not lead to academic improvement. They also disenfranchised African Americans who wanted community control over schools. Milwaukeeans began to look for other educational options by the late 1980s, which were charter schools, “school choice,” and open enrollment. MPS would counter with two additional choices—neighborhood schools and small schools. These five reforms would give Milwaukee parents and students an unprecedented level of choice in schooling.

Several national studies were conducted since the late 1980s that attempted to determine the effectiveness of magnet schools. Some pointed out the successes of magnet schools. William Boyd, who cited several conservative educational scholars, found that magnet schools were part of an important package of choices for students and families and that competition among magnet schools resulted in academic achievement.¹ Magnet schools were also shown as effective means to engage students in fine arts, technology, or Advanced Placement (AP)² and could successfully matriculate students to

¹ William Lowe Boyd, “Choice Plans for Public Schools in the USA: Issues and Answers,” *Local Government Policy Making* 18 (July 1993): 20–27.

² See chapter 5 of Darlene Leiding, *The Hows and Whys of Alternative Education: Schools Where Students Thrive* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2008).

college, if appropriate guidance counseling and other academic supports were in place.³

But the majority of recent studies show that magnet schools actually exacerbate segregation. Jordan Rickles and Paul Ong studied five California metropolitan areas in 2002 and found that magnet schools tend to be integrated but leave traditional neighborhood schools segregated.⁴ Lois Andre-Bechely found similar results in 2007,⁵ as did Handel Wright and Sidonia Alenuma, who criticized magnet schools for trying to recruit only middle-class students.⁶

Magnet schools may also segregate students within supposedly integrated schools. Kimberly West did a legal study in 1994 and found that African American students were almost always placed in lower-ability classes compared to whites.⁷ A 2001 study of a high school in a mid-sized southern city with a magnet school inside a non-magnet building (a “school-within-a-school” format) also found that whites were a minority in the building but made up the majority of students in the magnet program. Non-magnet students also received the distinct impression that their teachers would rather teach

³ Anysia P. Mayer, “Expanding Opportunities for High Academic Achievement: An International Baccalaureate Diploma Program in an Urban High School,” *Journal of Advanced Academics* 19, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 202–235. See also Dale Ballou, “Magnet School Outcomes,” in Berend’s *Handbook*, 408–426.

⁴ Jordan Rickles and Paul M. Ong, “The Integrating (and Segregating) Effect of Charter, Magnet, and Traditional Elementary Schools: The Case of Five California Metropolitan Areas,” *California Politics & Policy* 9, no. 1 (June 2005): 16–38.

⁵ Lois Andre-Bechely, “Finding Space and Managing Distance: Public School Choice in an Urban California District,” *Urban Studies* 44, no. 7 (June 2007): 1355–1376.

⁶ Handel Kashope Wright and Sidonia Alenuma. “Race, Urban Schools, and Educational Reform: The Context, Utility, Pros, and Cons of the Magnet Example.” In *Teaching City Kids: Understanding and Appreciating Them*, ed. Joe L. Kincheloe and Kecia Hayes (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

⁷ Kimberly C. West, “A Desegregation Tool That Backfired: Magnet Schools and Classroom Segregation,” *The Yale Law Journal* 103, no. 8, (June 1994): 2567–2592.

classes in the magnet program. They said their teachers had less enthusiasm than magnet teachers and tended to use worksheets rather than teaching lessons.⁸ One teacher reportedly referred to her non-magnet class as being full of “lazy Mexicans.”⁹ In 2002, data from the National Center of Education Statistics showed that schools with large numbers of students taking AP exams rarely had substantial numbers of African American students.¹⁰

A study of a magnet school in Newtown, California, revealed similar findings. One student referred to the “regular” program in his school as a “moron academy.”¹¹ A Latino student reported that the regular program actually retards intellectual growth: “The white man, the white people that come here, they get better classes. I don’t know why. Most classes, they’re easy for us. That’s why we become lazy, and we don’t work hard. It’s boring. Most of us are getting Cs and Ds.” When asked why he did not work harder and try to get in the magnet program, the student responded, “I wouldn’t see no [sic] Hispanics there. I wouldn’t relate to nobody [sic] out there. One of the black girls in my English class wanted to take an AP English class, and they wouldn’t give it to her. She gets straight As, and they wouldn’t give it to her.”¹² A third student said he was aware

⁸ Lawson V. Bush, Hansel Burley, and Tonia Causey-Bush, “Magnet Schools: Desegregation or Resegregation? Students’ Voices from Inside the Walls,” *American Secondary Education* 29, no. 3 (2001): 38–44.

⁹ Quoted in Bush, Burley, and Causey-Bush, 41.

¹⁰ The JBHE Foundation, “Almost No Blacks at Many of the Nation’s Highest-Rated Public High Schools,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 41 (Autumn 2003): 60–62.

¹¹ Quoted in Annegret Staiger, “Whiteness as Giftedness: Racial Formation at an Urban High School,” *Social Problems* 51, no. 3 (2004): 175.

¹² Quoted in Staiger, 176.

that he had higher test scores than some white students but still could not get into the magnet program. An African American senior reached this conclusion: “A person . . . should be able to have the same classes as any other student. It’s weird how in school and in life we are taught not to discriminate or segregate, but yet we are going through this every day at school.”¹³

A couple studies have also been done on magnet schools and segregation by economic class. Timothy Duax found that magnet schools that tested applicants admitted a disproportionate share of middle-class students, but magnet schools that admitted everyone admitted only a few more middle-class students than neighborhood schools.¹⁴ More comprehensively, Salvatore Saporito and Deenesh Sohoni studied twenty-one of the twenty-two largest school districts in the United States and found that neighborhood schools have much higher concentrations of poverty than magnet schools. (Unfortunately, Milwaukee was the one school district excluded from the study, because Milwaukee did not report school-by-school poverty statistics at the time the study was conducted.) Thirty-seven percent of students in these districts were poor, but 58 percent of the students in neighborhood schools were poor. These students were almost always African American or Latino.¹⁵

On the local level, a 1989 study of Milwaukee’s magnet schools produced by the

¹³ Quoted in Staiger, 177.

¹⁴ Timothy C.T. Duax, “The Impact of Nonselective Magnet Schools on a Predominately Black Neighborhood” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1988), 174–175.

¹⁵ Salvatore Saporito and Deenesh Sohoni, “Mapping Educational Inequality: Concentrations of Poverty among Poor and Minority Students in Public Schools” *Social Forces* 85, no. 3 (2007): 1227–1253, especially the charts and graphs on 1232, 1236–1237.

Wisconsin Policy Research Institute reached conclusions similar to those of other cities' studies. George Mitchell, the conservative author of the study (see chapter 7), was much more critical of Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) than earlier work by Ian Harris had been (see chapter 7). Mitchell showed that MPS spent \$1,846 per pupil in the 1975–76 school year, a figure that had increased by 190 percent to \$5,351 by 1987–88, while the rate of inflation in that period was 114 percent. Most of the new revenue came from the state, which increased per-pupil funding to MPS by 278 percent.¹⁶ But despite all this spending, the Mitchell report argued that busing did not racially integrate schools. As already shown in chapters 6 and 7, MPS employed a system of unilateral busing in which African American students were bused either voluntarily or involuntarily to southside schools, while white students were seldom bused against their wills. This policy was strengthened by a construction plan that built more than 75 percent of all new schools in white neighborhoods.¹⁷ As a result, nine times as many African American students were bused compared to whites, and the few whites who were bused were usually bused to white schools.¹⁸ When too many African Americans chose to stay in their neighborhood schools, MPS closed neighborhood schools, so African Americans were forced to make a choice they did not want. MPS attempted to use this one-way policy to curtail white migration, but it was unsuccessful—African American enrollment increased by more than

¹⁶ George A. Mitchell and the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, *An Evaluation of State-Financed School Integration in Metropolitan Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, 1989), 6–8.

¹⁷ Mitchell, 26.

¹⁸ Mitchell, 27–28.

20 percent while white enrollment declined by more than 50 percent in the 1970s.¹⁹ Mitchell also argued that busing made community involvement and accountability difficult, because the school board member who represented a child's neighborhood might not represent that child's school.²⁰

Mitchell also concluded that the magnet schools did not increase academic achievement. Although students at the four citywide high schools (Rufus King, Riverside, Milwaukee High School of the Arts, and Milwaukee Trade and Technical) had grade point averages that were higher than the grade point averages of students at the other eleven high schools, there was still an achievement gap between African American and white students that was not much different from the gap at other MPS high schools, where the average grade point average was in the D range.²¹ Test scores declined in almost every MPS high school, and African American students failed almost one third of their courses.²² African Americans had a dropout rate of 12.5 percent in MPS in 1985, but it was substantially higher at three white southside high schools. Pulaski had a black dropout rate of 14.3 percent, Bay View's was 18.5 percent, and Hamilton—the whitest high school in MPS—had a black dropout rate of 23.6 percent.²³ African American students did well in magnet schools, but they also did about the same in suburban schools

¹⁹ Mitchell, 34.

²⁰ Mitchell, 51.

²¹ Mitchell, 58, 65, 80.

²² Mitchell, 63–65.

²³ David Bednarek, "Are Dropouts Tied to Desegregation?" *Milwaukee Journal*, May 13, 1985, 2:1,2. See also David Bednarek, "School Budget Focuses on High Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 16, 1985, 1:1,7.

when they were in the Chapter 220 program.²⁴ In other words, magnet schools were really no better than average suburban schools.

Generally speaking, most people were dissatisfied with the quality of education in MPS. A survey conducted by the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) asked a sample of MPS teachers and parents to grade the schools on an A-B-C-D-F scale. Close to 37.9 percent of teachers and 17.2 percent of parents graded their schools as D or F. Sixty percent of teachers said they would not send their own children to their own schools.²⁵ Administrators said education happened at a rate of about half the time in their schools because their schools had attendance rates of less than 50 percent. Students might arrive to school to find their friends, then go to a shopping mall or other teen hangout with them, before returning to school to get their free transportation home. Some students went to class only once per week, and it was to pick up a bus pass. Those who did attend class often did so without supplies and did not do any work. Many teachers gave up under the circumstances, lowered their expectations, and showed videos rather than teaching.²⁶

When these data were synthesized, Mitchell concluded that magnet schools did not improve academic achievement—the black-white achievement gap was about the same for all Milwaukee students. The reason magnet schools appeared more successful was that their students came from stable, middle-class families. Thus, black-white segregation was replaced by a system of segregating the achieving from nonachieving

²⁴ Mitchell, 84–104.

²⁵ Mitchell, 69.

²⁶ Mitchell, 66–68. See appendix C, tables 5–13 for more recent data.

students, with middle-class students getting into their desired Milwaukee magnet schools or suburban schools and poor students with low levels of parent involvement going into “traditional” MPS schools.²⁷ As school board member and former principal Larry Miller said in 2009, “We’re creating two school districts. One district offers schools that select who can get in, and one takes everyone who applies.”²⁸ Milwaukeeans lost faith in the magnet plan and searched for alternatives. They were more concerned with academic achievement than racial integration and would take advantage of three new programs—charter schools, school choice, and open enrollment.

Charter schools are the most common alternative to traditional public schools in the United States. Charter schools operate under a special agreement (or “charter”) with a chartering authority that is often times a school district, city government, or university. They are public schools but may be privately run and are exempt from most state and local regulations.²⁹ There were 4,600 charter schools serving 1.4 million children in kindergarten through twelfth grade in the United States in 2010.³⁰ Criteria for receiving a charter vary from state to state, but generally speaking, the holder of the charter must

²⁷ Mitchell, 83.

²⁸ Quoted in Alan J. Borsuk, “MPS Committee Recommends Expanding King,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 11, 2009. See also “3 High Schools Seeing High Admissions Criteria 15 Other MPS Schools to Require that Students Just Pass 8th Grade,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 3, 1997.

²⁹ Brunno V. Mano, “Charter School Politics,” in *Choice and Competition in American Education*, ed. Paul E. Peterson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 161.

³⁰ Janet D. Mulvey et al., *Blurring the Lines: Charter, Public, Private and Religious Schools Coming Together* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2010), 3. See also chapter 4 of Leiding. See Tom Loveless and Katharyn Field, “Perspectives on Charter Schools,” in Berends, *Handbook*, 99–114 for the best review of the current literature on charter schools. These works and those in the next few footnotes are the most recent studies of charter schools.

exhibit some kind of commitment to educating children.³¹ Some charter schools are sponsored by community groups, while others are sponsored by religious institutions or ethnic organizations that are seeking to preserve their values or cultural traditions, though charter schools usually do not teach specific theologies, which would violate the principle of separation between church and state.³² Charter schools are usually easier to close than traditional public schools, because the school closes automatically if the chartering authority does not renew the charter. However, if a chartering authority attempts to revoke a charter before the charter has elapsed, the authority may face a lawsuit for breach of contract.³³ Charter school supporters argue that not only can their schools offer a superior education, but that their existence will prompt improvements in other public schools to improve by forcing those schools to compete for students and funding.³⁴ Charter schools garner high praise when they are academically successful and run by the public school system, but they create controversy when they use non-union labor and are run by for-profit companies.³⁵ Charter schools have also been criticized in some states where they are not required to accept students with disabilities or students who do not

³¹ Preston Green, "Charter School Law," in Berends, *Handbook*, 142–145.

³² Mulvey et al., 1–6.

³³ Green, 145–148.

³⁴ See William Lowe Boyd and Herbert J. Walberg, eds., *Choice in Education: Potential and Problems* (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan, 1990) for an early collection of articles written mostly by classic conservative educators who support choice in the broad sense of the word, including charter schools, school choice, open enrollment, magnet schools. The introduction directly references *A Nation at Risk* and hypothesizes that choice and competition are the solutions to improving schools.

³⁵ See Bryan C. Hassel, "Charter Schools: Mom and Pops or Corporate Design," Jay Matthews, "Contracting Out: The Story Behind Philadelphia's Edison Contract," and Terry M. Moe, "A Union by Any Other Name," in *Choice and Competition in American Education*, ed. Paul E. Peterson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

score well on standardized tests.³⁶ There is also some evidence that charter schools may contribute to racial segregation, as they do not typically provide transportation to students, and therefore may market themselves to the neighborhood population or middle-class families that can afford transportation.³⁷

Charter schools have expanded in Wisconsin since they were initially authorized in 1993. Originally, only ten school districts were allowed to charter up to two schools each, but that expanded to an unlimited number of schools in all school districts in 1995. The City of Milwaukee, UWM, Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), the University of Wisconsin–Parkside have been allowed to charter schools since 1997. Some MPS charter schools and all non-MPS charter schools do not use unionized labor, but as they are public schools, all teachers must hold some sort of valid teaching license (see chapter 7).³⁸ In terms of performance, some studies show that competition between charter schools and regular public schools raises academic achievement in both types of

³⁶ R. Kenneth Godwin, “Sinking ‘Swann’: Public School Choice and the Resegregation of Charlotte’s Public Schools,” *Review of Policy Research* 23, no. 5 (2006): 983–997, and Kevin G. Welner and Kenneth R. Howe, “Steering Toward Separation: The Policy and Legal Implications of ‘Counseling’ Special Education Students Away from Charter Schools,” in *School Choice and Diversity: What the Evidence Says*, ed. Janelle T. Scott (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 93–111.

³⁷ Hamilton Lankford and James Wyckoff, “Why Are Schools Racially Segregated?: Implications for School Choice Policies,” in Scott, 9–26; Rickles and Ong, 16–38; W. David Stevens et al., “Barriers to Access: High School Choice Processes in Chicago,” in *School Choice and School Improvement*, ed. Mark Berends et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2011), 125–145; and Ron Zimmer et al., “Charter Schools: Do They Cream Skim, Increasing Student Segregation?” in Berends et al., *School Choice*, 215–232. See also “Extensive Lit Review Shows More School Choice = More Segregation,” *10th Period*, February 9, 2012, available April 15, 2012, <http://10thperiod.blogspot.com/2012/02/extensive-lit-review-shows-more-school.html>.

³⁸ Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans and the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963–2002* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), 599–603, and Matthew E. Vick, “The Effects of Charter Schools, Race, Socioeconomics, and Teacher Characteristics in Wisconsin’s Urban School Districts” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2009), 46–47.

schools,³⁹ but most studies, including studies of Milwaukee charter schools, show no difference. These studies usually attribute the lack of improvement to the fact that most charter schools serve students of the same socioeconomic background as nearby regular public schools.⁴⁰

“School choice” is a euphemism for a voucher program that is more radical than charter schools. The voucher idea was first popularized by the well-known economist Milton Friedman in 1955⁴¹ and allows low-income students to attend private schools at public expense. Parents are issued a voucher, usually from the state, that they may use to cover tuition at a private school, which choice supporters argue gives poor parents the same level of choice in schools that wealthy parents already have. Like charter schools, they are supposed to spur public schools to improve by providing the public schools with competition. Voucher programs are active in Cleveland; Dayton, Ohio; Indianapolis; Milwaukee; New York City; San Antonio; Washington, DC; and several other cities.⁴²

³⁹ Caroline M. Hoxby, “Do Vouchers and Charters Push Public Schools to Improve?” in Peterson 194–205, especially 200.

⁴⁰ Julian R. Betts, “The Competitive Effects of Charter Schools on Traditional Public Schools,” in Peterson, 195–207, especially pages 206–207; Stéphane Lavertu and John Witte, “The Impact of Milwaukee Charter Schools on Student Achievement,” *Issues in Governance Studies* 23 (March 2009); Erin Richards, “Studies Show No Big Advantage for Charter Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 29, 2010; Becky Vevea, “Charters Score No Better than MPS,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 17, 2010; and Bettie Teasly, “Charter School Outcomes,” in Peterson, 209–226, especially 223–224.

⁴¹ Jeffrey R. Henig, *Rethinking School Choice: Limits of the Market Metaphor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 6–7, and John F. Witte, *The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America’s First Voucher Program* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11. Friedman’s ideas were not entirely new. See Charles L. Glenn, *Contrasting Models of State and School: A Comparative Historical Study of Parental Choice and State Control* (New York: Continuum, 2011) for an interesting comparative history of the tension between state-run schools in Germany and Austria and state-funded private schools in Belgium and the Netherlands that stretches back to the Protestant Reformation. These works and those in the next few footnotes are the most recent studies of choice schools. Dozens more are available through libraries and websites.

⁴² William G. Howell et al., “The Impact of Vouchers on Student Performance,” in Peterson, 183. See also chapter 7 of Leiding.

The Wisconsin State Legislature created the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in 1989. The program was originally limited to poor students in Milwaukee, and there were caps on the number of students who could receive vouchers and who could enroll at individual schools.⁴³ The state took the money for the vouchers out of MPS's budget, even if the students had not previously been enrolled in MPS schools.⁴⁴ The choice program started slowly but reached its enrollment cap (about a thousand students) by 1995, the year of Fuller's resignation.⁴⁵ Parents overwhelmingly reported satisfaction with the choice schools their children attended.⁴⁶

The Milwaukee Archdiocese and Mayor John Norquist, a Democrat, soon began to lobby the state for the inclusion of parochial schools in the school choice program,⁴⁷ as supporters of the Independent Community Schools had in the 1970s (see chapter 6). Norquist blamed MPS for its students' failures and went so far as to proclaim, "Get rid of a system that stifles choice by parents of students and a system that has virtually no

⁴³ Dave Daley, "Committee Backs Plan to Help Needy Pay for Private School," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 8, 1990, A:16; Steve Schultze and Priscilla Ahlgren, "School Choice Empowers Poor, Lawmaker Says," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 23, 1990, B:1,7; Tommy Thompson, *Power to the People: An American State at Work* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 99–100; and Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, "An Evaluation: The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program" (February 2000), 3, 12–13.

⁴⁴ Tom Brokaw, "Your Kids, Our Schools, Tough Choices," *Dateline* television broadcast, Prod. Elise Pearlstein, NBC, October 29, 2000; David E. Umhoefer and Priscilla Ahlgren, "Abolish Chapter 220, Norquist Says," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 4, 1990, A:1,6; and Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, 21–24.

⁴⁵ Thompson, 103; Joe Williams, "Schools Interested in Choice," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 3, 1995, B:1,7; and Witte, 56.

⁴⁶ Paul Peterson and Chad Noyes, "School Choice in Milwaukee," in *New Schools for a New Century: The Redesign of Urban Education*, ed. Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 140, 144.

⁴⁷ Manuel Mendoza, "MICA, North Division Announce Partnership," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 30, 1990, B:1,5; Marie Rohde, "Bills Letter Angers Officials," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 23, 1990, B:6; and David E. Umhoefer and Priscilla Ahlgren, "Abolish Chapter 220, Norquist Says," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 4, 1990, A:1,6.

accountability for the employees of the system.”⁴⁸ They were joined by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation,⁴⁹ the Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce, and several other business groups that wanted higher achievement at a lower price with non-union teachers.⁵⁰ Howard Fuller⁵¹ and state representatives Polly Williams and Antonio Riley drummed up support in the African American community.⁵² Fuller and Williams were two of the leading advocates of community control of black schools in the 1970s and 1980s (see chapter 6) but shifted their priorities to encompass choice options. The Milwaukee Archdiocese also lobbied very hard for the approach, seeing vouchers as a way to save their schools, which had experienced a decline in enrollment since the 1960s as white Catholics left the inner city for the suburbs. All of these people and organizations stood a better chance of getting what they wanted if they worked together.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Priscilla Ahlgren and Leonard Sykes Jr., “Mayor Reaffirms Support for School Choice Plans,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 2, 1992, B:1,7.

⁴⁹ With more than \$600 million in assets, the Bradley Foundation funds several conservative causes across Wisconsin and the United States, including privatizing Social Security, deregulating business, strengthening national defense, and supporting Republican candidates for office. See Daniel Bice et al., “From Local Roots, Bradley Foundation Builds Conservative Empire,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 19, 2011.

⁵⁰ Craig Gilbert, “Bradley Charity Spreads Wealth Wide,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 30, 1991; “Messmer Fights Rejection,” *Milwaukee Journal*, June 14, 1992; Tannette Johnson-Elie, “Business Leaders Give to Choice Effort,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 20, 1995, D:1,7; Mary Beth Murphy, “School Choice Plan Spurs Flood of Interest,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 12, 1992, A:1,9; Dan Parks, “Choice Plan is Touted as Best for the Poor,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 13, 1992, A:15; and Paula A. Poda, “School Choice Program,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 4 1992, special section on education, 14–15.

⁵¹ Daniel L. Hooker, “Fuller Publicly Backs School Choice,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 9, 1995.

⁵² Richard P. Jones, “Choice Plan Adds Church School Option,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 15, 1995, and “Court Temporarily Bars Religious School Choice,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 28, 1995; Curtis Lawrence, “Choice Supporters Will Have to Unite,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 15, 1995, “Legislators Defnd Vote Against Choice Expansion,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 12, 1995, B:3, and “Rift Seen in Support of Choice,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 10, 1995; Amy Rinard, “Doyle Should Defend Choice, Williams Says,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 10, 1995, and “Religious School Choice Advances,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 22, 1995; and Gregory Stanford, “Unlikely Alliance for School Choice,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 23, 1995.

The expanded school choice became law in 1995, but the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA, the teachers' union) and American Civil Liberties Union sued on the grounds that it violated separation of church and state.⁵³ Finally, in 1998, the United States Supreme Court ruled a similar program in Cleveland to be constitutional and refused to hear the Milwaukee case, effectively approving the Milwaukee program. The state legislature and governor raised Milwaukee's enrollment cap to fifteen thousand students in 1999.⁵⁴ The state further raised the cap to 22,500 in 2009⁵⁵ and eliminated it altogether in 2011. The income level was also raised to allow some lower-middle-class families to participate, and any school in Milwaukee County was allowed to accept the city's "choice" students in 2011.⁵⁶

Like charter schools, choice schools are supposed to encourage public schools to improve through competition. They are also supposed to turn out a better product (students) and a lower price (non-union teachers with lower pay and benefits compared to public school teachers). There is some evidence that the first assertion may be true. One

⁵³ Daniel Bice, "\$150,000 Raised," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 1, 1995, and Thompson, 109. See Gayle Schmitz-Zien, "The Genesis of and Motivations for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, 1985–1995" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2003), 20–33 for the complete legal history.

⁵⁴ Dahlk, 603–606. See chapter 5 of R. Kenneth Godwin and Frank R. Kemerer, *School Choice Tradeoffs: Liberty, Equality, and Diversity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002) for a legal history of the Milwaukee and Cleveland cases. John J. Peterburs, "An Analysis of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in Light of the First Amendment Establishment Clause Federal Supreme Court Cases" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1998) is the best legal analysis of the school choice program. Peterburs was MPS's secretary-business in the 1980s and early 1990s (the last one in MPS) and was responsible for overseeing the lawsuit against the suburbs (see chapter 5). He may be considered the best legal expert on school choice and metropolitan integration in Milwaukee. See John J. Peterburs, interview with author, Milwaukee, WI, August 25, 2010.

⁵⁵ "Democrats Vote for Student Cap in Milwaukee's School-Choice Program," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 11, 2009.

⁵⁶ "Senate OK'd Budget Goes to Walker," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 16, 2011.

study showed that MPS made gains of 3.0 percent to 8.4 percent on standardized tests in the late 1990s after the expansion of vouchers. Supporters of vouchers said those gains were the result of public schools' being forced to improve due to competition from choice schools. Other urban districts in Wisconsin made gains of less than 3.8 percent.⁵⁷

Another study, ten year later, found similar results, but those increases in test scores could have been for any reason.⁵⁸ Another study found that schools that faced high levels of competition did not show much difference from the gains of schools that faced little competition.⁵⁹ Whatever the case, MPS test scores remain far behind scores in the rest of the state. For example, according to the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam, only 62.0 percent of Milwaukee's third-grade students were proficient or advanced in reading in 2010, compared to 80.0 percent of third-grade students in all of Wisconsin. The gap widens as students age—40.2 percent of Milwaukee's tenth-grade students were proficient or advanced in reading in 2010, compared to 74.7 percent of all of Wisconsin's tenth-grade students.⁶⁰

The second assertion is also only partly true. While no one disputes that private schools may operate at a lower cost than public schools, according to a couple studies, their students do only slightly better—less than 10 percent—than public school students

⁵⁷ Hoxby, in Peterson, 194–205, especially 200.

⁵⁸ Jay P. Greene and Ryan H. Marsh, "The Effect of Milwaukee's Parental Choice Program on Student Achievement in Milwaukee Public Schools" (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, March, 2009).

⁵⁹ Martin Carnoy et al., "Vouchers and Public School Performance: A Case Study of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program" (Washington, DC: The Economic Policy Institute, 2007).

⁶⁰ "Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS)," Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, <http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data> (accessed December 28, 2011).

on standardized tests.⁶¹ Studies have shown that choice schools have higher graduation rates than public schools, but those studies did not disaggregate the data on students who were enrolled on vouchers from those who paid tuition and came from higher income families. Also, there was no evidence that students must meet the same standards as public school students for graduation.⁶² Most other studies show there is no difference between students in voucher schools and students in public schools.⁶³ For years, some choice schools successfully resisted efforts to make their students take state achievement exams, but when actually forced to in 2010, data revealed that MPS students outperformed choice school students.⁶⁴ And even when individual choice schools did exceed MPS, that could be due to some choice schools' refusal to admit special education

⁶¹ Howell, in Peterson, 183–193, and Patrick J. Wolf et al., “School Vouchers in the Nation’s Capital,” in Berends, *School Choice*, 17–34.

⁶² Priscilla Ahlgren, “Enrollment in Choice Has Doubled,” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 3, 1991, A:1,21; Priscilla Ahlgren, “Scores Aren’t Up under School Choice,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 21, 1991, A:1,7; Alan Borsuk, “Study Echoes MPS, Voucher Findings,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 27, 2008; Erin Richards, “Voucher Schools’ Graduation Rates Top MPS in Study; Officials Question Accuracy of Findings,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 2, 2010.

⁶³ Alan Borsuk, “No Big Difference Found in MPS, Voucher School Results,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 26, 2009; Martin Carnoy, “School Vouchers: Examining the Evidence,” (Washington, DC: The Economic Policy Institute, 2001); “Choice Schools not Outperforming MPS,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 29, 2011; David Figlio, “Voucher Outcomes,” in Berends, *Handbook*, 321–337, especially 336; Johnnie M. Johnson, “School Choice and Urban Reform: A Case Study of Milwaukee’s Parental Choice Program and Black Student Achievement” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2004); Erin Richards, *Voucher vs. MPS Students New Data Shows Similar Academic Results*, April 8, 2010; “School Choice Shapes Educational Landscape,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 29, 2009; “The Story Behind School Choice Study,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 28, 2011; Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, “Test Score Data for Pupils in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program” (September 2008, August 2009, August 2010); and Patrick J. Wolf, “The Comprehensive Longitudinal Evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: Summary of Fourth Year Reports,” (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, March 2011).

⁶⁴ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, “2010–11 Wisconsin Student Assessment System Results,” <http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/pdf/mcpc-wsarsrlts.pdf> (accessed December 30, 2011).

students or students with behavior problems.⁶⁵

According to a major investigation of 106 choice schools conducted by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in 2005, well-established private schools, such as Catholic and Lutheran schools, seem to do at least as good a job as MPS—teachers worked hard, students learned, and parents reported high levels of satisfaction—but other schools were fraught with problems. Some schools did not have licensed teachers or even teachers with high school diplomas, which is not a requirement for private schools. Other teachers were not teaching or were teaching at levels below what their students should have been able to do. Some schools could not produce a curriculum, and teachers did not have grades in grade books after three months of school. Facilities were found to be substandard. Interviews with parents showed that many of them were more inclined to choose schools based on word-of-mouth rather than academic data. Some schools would not let the reporters in their buildings. Some schools reported enrollments that were higher than what they really were. This was sometimes because parents had accidentally enrolled their children in more than one school, but at other times, there was outright fraud.⁶⁶ For example, at the Mandella [sic] School of Science and Math, the school's founder reported artificially high enrollment, took \$330,000 in public funds from the school, spent part of the money on two Mercedes automobiles (one for him and one for

⁶⁵ “Board Members Rap School-Choice Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 12, 1989, and “School Choice Program Shuts Out Disabled, Federal Complaint Says,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 7, 2011.

⁶⁶ Alan Borsuk, Sarah Carr, and Leonard Sykes Jr., “Inside School Choice/15 Years of Vouchers,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 12–18, 2005. Two years later, a more scientific report indicated that parents with high economic status were more likely to be involved in their children's lives, more likely to choose successful schools, and more likely to be involved in those schools. See David Dodenhoff, “Fixing the Milwaukee Public Schools: The Limits of Parent-Driven Reform,” *Wisconsin Policy Research Institute Report* 20, no. 8 (October 2007).

his wife), and did not pay his teachers. In another case, \$414,000 was missing from a school that was supposed to have eighty students but had only fifty and barely had any furniture or supplies. In a related story, Alex's Academics of Excellence was opened by a convicted rapist, and staff members allegedly used illegal drugs on school grounds.⁶⁷

“Open enrollment” is the other main alternative to MPS in Milwaukee. In 1997, the state of Wisconsin passed Act 27,⁶⁸ which allows students to attend any public school in Wisconsin as long as the school or district is willing to take them. While only 2,464 students took part in the program in 1998–99, 18,223 participated in open enrollment in 2004–05, and close to twenty-six thousand students participated in 2008–09. If those students were in their own school district, they would have constituted the second biggest school district in the state.⁶⁹ State funding is adjusted to follow the students, and more than \$88 million was transferred in 2004–05,⁷⁰ including \$32 million out of MPS's budget.⁷¹ Half a million additional dollars were spent on transportation reimbursement to

⁶⁷ Sarah Carr, “Teachers Paid from Sale of Mercedes,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 17, 2005.

⁶⁸ Mary Jo Cleaver and Scott Eagleburger, “Public School Open Enrollment in Wisconsin 2003–04 and 2004–05: A Report to the Governor and the Legislature” (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007), i. See also “Public School Open Enrollment,” Wisconsin Department of Instruction, <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/psctoc.html>, (accessed December 31, 2011).

⁶⁹ Amy Hetzner, “More Students Cross District Lines,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 1, 2009.

⁷⁰ Cleaver and Eagleburger, iii. See Ann E. Smejkal, “The Effects of Open Enrollment on Highly Impacted Small Wisconsin School Districts and the Leadership Response” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2010) for the only systematic study of the academic and financial effects of open enrollment on school districts.

⁷¹ Tom Kertscher, “MPS Loses Big in Open Enrollment,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 10, 2005.

low-income families.⁷²

Suburban districts like the program because they get students who want to enroll in their schools and, hence, will probably behave and earn good grades and test scores. The suburbs also like the money. Greenfield High School, in Greenfield, Wisconsin, for example, had a student body that was 23 percent Milwaukee residents and received \$2.5 million in additional state aid in the 2010–11 school year. As Greenfield superintendent Conrad Farner said, “Literally, it’s keeping us alive. It’s absolutely critical to us.”⁷³ The Wauwatosa district, as another example, accepted more than seven thousand Milwaukee students through open enrollment or Chapter 220 in 2010–11. Those students yielded \$10 million in state aid and a property tax reduction of about \$2.5 million. St. Francis High School, in St. Francis, Wisconsin, where 48 percent of its 580 students live in Milwaukee, reaped an additional \$2 million in state aid in 2010–11. The superintendent of St. Francis said that without the aid the school would probably have to merge with Cudahy High School.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, Bay View High School, the MPS school in closest proximity to St. Francis, had a neighborhood population of only 7.5 percent in 2010–11. The rest of the students were bused in from other parts of the city.⁷⁵ There are racial implications to open enrollment too—of the 5,781 Milwaukee students using open

⁷² Cleaver and Eagleburger, 12, and Kava, 5.

⁷³ Quoted in Alan J. Borusk, “MPS Watches Students Hop the Border,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 5, 2011.

⁷⁴ Alan J. Borusk, “MPS Watches Students Hop the Border,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 5, 2011. See Amy Hetzner, “More Students Cross District Lines,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 1, 2009, for additional statistics.

⁷⁵ “Neighbors Seek to Revive Bay View High School,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 15, 2011.

enrollment in 2010–11, 61 percent were white,⁷⁶ while Bay View High School had a white enrollment of only 12.5 percent.⁷⁷

In summary, a lot of children who live in Milwaukee do not attend MPS. The number of students that MPS loses to charter schools, school choice, and open enrollment exceeded thirty thousand in the 2010–11 school year.⁷⁸ There were also 8,042 students from Milwaukee attending suburban schools under either open enrollment or Chapter 220 (see chapter 5) in 2010–2011.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, MPS had only 80,098 students in September 2011,⁸⁰ or less than 75 percent of the city’s students. State aid was also reduced, as the money followed the students to their new schools.

Charter schools, school choice, and open enrollment offer MPS significant competition. So the district made two moves in the 1990s, both of which represented a reduction in magnet schools. Those two changes were the Neighborhood Schools Initiative (NSI) and the “small schools initiative.”

NSI was supposed to give parents the choice many of them really wanted—neighborhood schools (see chapter 6). Advocates of neighborhood schools pointed to tremendous academic success at Hi-Mount Elementary, Clarke Street

⁷⁶ Quoted in Alan J. Borusk, “MPS Watches Students Hop the Border,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 5, 2011.

⁷⁷ “Wisconsin’s Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS), accessed June 24, 2011, <http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data>.

⁷⁸ See data cited earlier in this chapter and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/geninfo.html> (accessed July 19, 2011).

⁷⁹ Quoted in Alan J. Borusk, “MPS Watches Students Hop the Border,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 5, 2011.

⁸⁰ Erin Richards, “Fewer Students in MPS Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 13, 2011.

Elementary, Fratney Elementary, and Andrew Douglas Community Academy middle school,⁸¹ all of which served neighborhood populations that were traditionally thought of as underachieving.⁸² Neighborhood schools had several potential advantages. Schools could once again inspire neighborhood pride, as North Division had when it was a neighborhood school (see chapter 6). They might also make it more convenient for poor parents without automobiles to get involved in their children's schools and would allow children to stay after school for activities and tutoring. Logically, they would also reduce the transportation budget. The school board voted unanimously to move back toward neighborhood schools in 1997,⁸³ and in 1999 made the bold move of hiring Hi-Mount's principal, Spence Korté, as superintendent, after the brief administrations of Fuller's former deputy superintendent Robert Jasna, Acting Superintendent Barbara Horton, and outsider Alan Brown, who had been superintendent in Waukegan, Illinois.⁸⁴

There was little action at first, but after the spring elections in 1999, there were enough board members who supported a radical plan.⁸⁵ At that point, African American and Latino elementary school students were attending magnet schools and non-magnet schools all over Milwaukee (see chapter 5). MPS would borrow \$170 million to

⁸¹ Joe Williams, "MPS Plans Neighborhood School for North Side," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 20, 1998.

⁸² Dahlk, 607–609.

⁸³ "Neighborhood School Plan OK'd," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 18, 1997.

⁸⁴ Dahlk, 616–620.

⁸⁵ Alan J. Borsuk and Joe Williams, "Math Figures Heavily in Board Races," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 15, 1999, and "MPS Election Indicates Drumbeat for Change," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 7, 1999; and Joe Williams, "All 5 Union Allies Fall in MPS Races," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 7, 1999, and "Election Means Big Changes for MPS," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 8, 1999.

construct new elementary schools, build additions to overcrowded schools, and renovate non-MPS buildings for school use. Ten thousand new seats would be made available for students who wanted to attend schools in their neighborhoods. Once those students were removed from the buses, that would leave open ten thousand seats at the schools in which they were currently enrolled. That would enable additional students to choose neighborhood schools, moving more students off buses. The effect would repeat several times until an estimated twenty-seven thousand students were removed from the buses. There would be a 45 percent reduction in busing, saving almost \$25 million dollars at the beginning. If these students stayed in neighborhood schools through high school, there would be even greater savings and the new schools would be paid for in less than ten years. Some people said the plan was a return to segregation, but MPS had few white students left at that point with whom African Americans could integrate.⁸⁶ Busing was not doing much to facilitate integration, and as Polly Williams said, “We’re transferring over 20,000 black children now from one black school to another black school.”⁸⁷

According to poll data from 1999, 73 percent of people in the Milwaukee metropolitan area favored neighborhood schools over busing, even when busing was used to promote racial integration, a percentage that was consistent with earlier polling data

⁸⁶ Steven Walters, “Plan to Cut MPS Busing Joins Budget,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 9, 1999; Steven Walters and Joe Williams, “MPS Reform Plan May Face Referendum,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 23, 1999; Joe Williams, “Legislators Reach Deal to End MPS’ Mandatory Busing,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 8, 1999, “Segregation Coming Back in State’s Schools, Study Says,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. See also Dahlk, 606–609.

⁸⁷ Joe Williams, “Stop MPS Busing, Lawmakers Say,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 25, 1999.

from the 1960s (see chapter 3) and 1970s (see chapter 6).⁸⁸ The legislature approved the necessary bond issue, and Governor Thompson signed it in October,⁸⁹ despite a warning from the Public Policy Forum that the poll data were inconclusive and the plan from MPS was not certain to work.⁹⁰

The final plan received school board approval in August 2000.⁹¹ It called for only \$100 million in borrowing and predicted a decline of only twenty thousand bused students and savings of only \$15 million. The plan boosted the number of kindergarten through eighth-grade (K–8) schools from ten to forty-seven in MPS. Some of them would be converted from existing elementary schools, one would be converted from Edison Middle School, and the rest would be new schools. The shift to K–8 schools was prompted by parents who wanted to keep their children in a small environment.⁹² The big

⁸⁸ Alan J. Borsuk and Joe Williams, “Choice, Voice, Basics and Values,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 17, 1999, and Gregory Stanford, “Black Community Must Ask Who’s Driving the School,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 24, 1999.

⁸⁹ Dennis Chaptman and Joe Williams, “Education Measures Key to State Budget Deal,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 5, 1999, Steven Walters and Joe Williams, “Thompson Clears Way for Ending Busing,” October 26, 1999; and Felicia Thomas-Lynn, “Segregation Ruins Neighborhood Schools, Expert Says,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 12, 2000.

⁹⁰ Anneliese Dickman with Emily Van Dunk, “The Implications of Eliminating Busing: Considerations at the End of an Era,” The Public Policy Forum (November 1999).

⁹¹ Milwaukee Board of School Directors, *Proceedings of the Board of School Directors* (Milwaukee: The Board of School Directors), May 30, and August 24, 2000 (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*); Alan J. Borsuk, “MPS Plan Leaves Room for Choices,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 14, 2000, “MPS Takes a Page from Korté’s Book,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 29, 2000, and “School Plan Wins Board’s Approval 8-0,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 25, 2000; Alan J. Borsuck and Mark Johnson, “MPS Takes Overhaul to Neighborhoods,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 21, 2000; and “Public Seems to Accept MPS Plan,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 22, 2000.

⁹² Alan J. Borsuk, “MPS Plan Emphasizes Neighborhood, K–8 Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 15, 2000, and Wisconsin Legislative Council Staff, “Information Memorandum 99-7, Milwaukee Public Schools Neighborhood School Initiative (1999 Wisconsin Act 9)” (December 6, 1999). See also Dahlk, 609–612.

boost in K–8 schools necessitated the closure of several of the district’s middle schools.⁹³

But things did not work out as planned. Parents, for all their demands to have neighborhood schools, did not sign up in the predicted numbers—only 15.7 percent opted to do so for the fall of 2001.⁹⁴ Seventy percent of all students were still bused.⁹⁵

Milwaukeeans also elected two new school board members who were opposed to the Neighborhood Schools Initiative.⁹⁶ The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* said Superintendent Korté’s job was in jeopardy.⁹⁷ Korté, by most accounts, was an able administrator, but he let the school board determine too many district policies, and the board had grossly miscalculated parents’ desire to enroll their children in neighborhood schools.⁹⁸ MPS continued to be plagued by low test scores,⁹⁹ a high school graduation rate of only 56

⁹³ Alan J. Borsuk, “Initiatives Rapidly Reshaping MPS,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 23, 2004, and “MPS to Shut 2 Middle Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 22, 2004.

⁹⁴ Alan J. Borsuk, “Parents Sill Prefer Distant MPS Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 12, 2001.

⁹⁵ Alan J. Borsuk, “MPS in Gear to Bus Fewer Students,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 23, 2001.

⁹⁶ Alan J. Borsuk, “Korte Prepared to Quit,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 3, 2001, and “MPS Board Passes on Electing Korte Ally,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 4, 2001, and Alan J. Borsuk and Sam Schulhofer-Wohl, “Voters Shake Up School Board,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 4, 2001.

⁹⁷ Alan Borsuk, “Board Will Discuss Korte’s Job Status at Meeting Thursday,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 26, 2001, and Alan J. Borsuk and Sam Schulhofer-Wohl, “MPS Reform, Korte’s Job in Jeopardy,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 15, 2001.

⁹⁸ Dahlk, 620.

⁹⁹ Steven Walters, “State ACT Scores Again Best in Nation,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 17, 2000.

percent,¹⁰⁰ and an African American graduation rate of only 34 percent.¹⁰¹ Korté managed to hold out for two years before resigning under pressure from the board in 2002.¹⁰²

William Andrekopolous became the new superintendent that summer. He promised to continue to decentralize the school district; to continue the NSI; and to raise standards for teachers, administrators, and students.¹⁰³ Construction of neighborhood schools continued to boom into 2003, and Andrekoplous decided to nudge students into them by limiting students' choices at the elementary level to magnet schools and a few schools in the region of the city in which each student lived.¹⁰⁴ Students whose parents did not meet enrollment deadlines were assigned to their neighborhood schools.¹⁰⁵

Parents, however, still wanted a broad array of choices,¹⁰⁶ while classrooms stood

¹⁰⁰ Alan Borsuk, "MPS Graduates Just 56% of Class," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 11, 2000, and "9th Grade is 'Parking Lot' for Thousands of MPS Kids," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 16, 2000.

¹⁰¹ Sam Schulhofer-Wohl, "Report Shows Gap in Graduation Rates," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 14, 2001.

¹⁰² Alan J. Borsuk, "Citing School Board, MPS Chief Quitting," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 15, 2002, and "Korte Had Enough after Performance Review Meeting," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 16, 2002; Sam Schulhofer-Wohl and Tom Held, "Admirers, Critics Generally Agree that Job is a Tough One," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 15, 2002; and Gregory Stanford, "MPS Takes One on the Chin," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 15, 2002.

¹⁰³ Alan J. Borsuk and Vikki Ortiz, "Andrekopoulos Gets School Chief Job," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 23, 2002, and "Full of Energy, New MPS Chief Ready to Tackle District's Problems," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 24, 2002. See also *Proceedings*, August 22, 2002.

¹⁰⁴ Alan J. Borsuk, "MPS Ready to Shake Up System to Make Most of Tight Budget," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 9, 2003, and "Mission Not Yet Accomplished," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 25, 2003. See also *Proceedings*, August 28, 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Sarah Carr, "MPS Overhauls Enrollment Process," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 19, 2004.

¹⁰⁶ Alan J. Borsuk, "Building Program on Track in MPS," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 8, 2003; "MPS Seeks to Drop Plans for New School," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 10, 2003; Amy Hetzner, "Some Fear Busing Cuts Put Students in Harm's Way," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 13, 2003; and Gregory Stanford, "What Drives MPS Spending," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 10, 2003.

empty in many new schools and additions to old schools. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* visited every one of those schools in 2008, which is the first and, as of this writing, only comprehensive review of the NSI. The *Journal Sentinel* found that enrollment dropped at nearly half the schools that added classrooms. Reporters found that excess classrooms had been converted to storage and detention areas, recreation rooms, and teachers' lounges or just sat empty. Students near Auer Avenue School, for example, attended more than ninety different MPS schools, while its \$2 million addition went unused. In another example, Hi-Mount Boulevard School, of which Spence Korté had been principal, added six classrooms when it expanded to a K–8, but Hi-Mount had an increase of only thirty-four students by 2007. The new construction included a science lab, but the school could not afford a science specialist.¹⁰⁷

Clarke Street Elementary School experienced similar problems. The school had high test scores and had reached enrollment capacity, so MPS built a \$4.1 million middle-school addition for it. But as staff positions and before- and after-school programs were cut, the remaining teachers faced a workload increase, and the quality of instruction suffered. Test scores declined, and families left the school. Enrollment declined by thirty-three percent after the addition was built.¹⁰⁸

One of MPS's biggest failures was a partnership with Holy Redeemer Institutional Church of God in Christ. MPS agreed to convert a warehouse near 35th Street and Hampton Avenue into a school complex with space to accommodate 405 district students,

¹⁰⁷ Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, "Subtraction by Addition," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 17, 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, "Subtraction by Addition," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 18, 2008.

which would serve as a satellite for the Thirty-Fifth Street School two blocks away. The complex would include a new Boys & Girls Club and a private school for Holy Redeemer, which was financed by the state's voucher program. The building cost more than \$15 million. Holy Redeemer owned it and built it. MPS paid \$7 million upfront to lease space for fourth- through eighth-graders, essentially providing nearly half the construction money. The district spent \$4.5 million more on a second addition for kindergarten through third grade at the original Thirty-Fifth Street campus near West Hampton Avenue. But enrollment was so low that by September 2007, after being open for three years and with twenty-one years remaining on the lease, MPS quietly moved out and consolidated the school in the original Thirty-Fifth Street building. Thus, the district gave a \$7 million subsidy to a church to build a school that MPS was not even using, and it still had to pay \$223,000 to provide building maintenance. Wilson Wells, a parent active at Thirty-Fifth Street School, said, "It was a waste of a lot of resources and money. Now they are paying for the space, and it's unoccupied. And they want to raise my taxes." MPS did not save money on busing, because parents still chose schools outside of their neighborhoods. The district looked for other ways to save money and concluded that it should cut art, music, physical education, and other electives, creating even more empty classrooms.¹⁰⁹

And that was not the only time MPS partnered with a church. MPS paired up LaFollette Elementary School with Rockhill Missionary Baptist Church in 2003 at school board member Charlene Hardin's urging. MPS gave the congregation \$740,000 to build

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, "Subtraction by Addition," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 17, 2008.

a new church with four attached classrooms. Rockhill used the money to make a down payment on construction and borrowed the rest. MPS planned to operate the school as an extension of LaFollette for twenty years, even though LaFollette's enrollment was declining, which made the extension unnecessary. Rockhill was supposed to recruit students from its congregation. Environmental problems caused a delay, so MPS allowed the church to temporarily meet in LaFollette's new gymnasium, which itself cost \$900,000 to build, while a second contractor was recruited. The church and classroom additions were finished in 2006, but the rooms were never used due to a further decline in LaFollette's enrollment. Rockhill's enrollment declined too—it was down to just twenty families.¹¹⁰ The school board voted in 2011 to close LaFollette at the end of the school year.¹¹¹

All total, the district spent \$102 million on the NSI from 2001 until 2005. Thirty million dollars of that sum was spent on major additions to schools where enrollment had actually declined, and an additional \$19.5 million went toward construction at schools where enrollment gains had fallen far short of expectations. Interest payments will push the final cost past \$175 million by 2024 because most of the money was borrowed. Just before the construction program was approved in 2000, MPS spent \$57 million a year on busing, but in 2007–2008 the district spent \$59.5 million. The percentage of MPS children attending their neighborhood schools actually declined during that interval, and even the expanded schools that gained students got less than 40 percent of them from

¹¹⁰ Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, "Subtraction by Addition," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 17, 2008.

¹¹¹ Rick Romell, "Proposal Would Close 3 Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 14, 2011.

their designated neighborhoods—the rest were bused to school.¹¹²

The district based its construction decisions on misleading data. MPS paid for phone and door-to-door surveys and held hundreds of community meetings before developing the plan. According to the survey, seven out of ten parents who sent their children to schools outside their neighborhood, mostly by bus, were very satisfied with their choice, and three out of four parents said they did not consider their neighborhood school a viable option. Parents were also asked to list what they wanted in their children's schools. Then they were asked whether they would choose a neighborhood school if it had all those attributes. Fewer than half the respondents said they would be “very likely” to do so. But the parents at the community meetings, which were poorly attended, were very vocal about wanting neighborhood schools. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* implied that some board members, such as Charlene Hardin, may have ignored enrollment trends so they could get construction contracts for their constituents. MPS chose to ignore the survey data and went ahead with construction, a fact that surprised Craig Maher, who oversaw the survey and later became a University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh public administration professor: “MPS’s outreach effort failed in the sense that the policy outcome did not accurately reflect the opinions of the citizens.” Or as parent Tina Johnson, who was concerned about neighborhood safety, said, “You can’t just build a facility and expect people to come when in between is a violent environment. That’s why parents continue to opt for busing.”¹¹³

¹¹² Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, “Subtraction by Addition,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 17, 2008.

¹¹³ Quoted in Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, “Subtraction by Addition,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 18, 2008.

MPS also failed to take other types of schools into account. Specifically, when MPS surveyed parents, it did not consider that some parents had their children enrolled or were planning on enrolling their children in magnet schools, charter schools, and choice schools. Charter and choice were growing at substantial rates in the early 2000s. The number of students in charter schools grew to more than five thousand by 2008, and choice enrollment was at more than nineteen thousand. MPS did not factor any of that growth into its demographic calculations, and so it built schools for students who would not enroll in any MPS school.¹¹⁴

Simply put, the district acted as though it could stop students from leaving just by building schools. It cut its marketing budget and told its schools to recruit students on their own, but not all of them did. Reading scores declined at sixteen of the twenty-two schools with new buildings or additions, which hindered enrollment. At Thirty-Fifth Street School, for example, where no use was being made of classrooms that cost \$7.2 million, the percentage of fourth-graders who were proficient at reading fell from 56 percent in 2002 to 33 percent in 2007, and math scores declined from 40 percent to 33 percent. When interviewed, teachers cited disorganization in MPS, budget cuts, poverty, and the lack of strong principals as factors in the decline of student achievement. These are factors that cannot be addressed by new construction. In fact, the neighborhood schools that did show increases were frequently in white neighborhoods on the south side, which had higher numbers of middle-class students and had principals who were

¹¹⁴ Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, "Subtraction by Addition," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 18, 2008.

identified as strong. Parents flocked to these schools.¹¹⁵

In contrast to the southside schools, one found McNair Elementary at North 23rd Street and West Fairmount Avenue. McNair was located in a residential neighborhood with a low crime rate and light traffic. The school is physically attractive and has lots of playground space, and a reporter from the *Journal Sentinel* observed that “teachers and students appeared focused on appropriate activities and hallways were orderly. Principal Willie Fuller was friendly, and so were teachers and students. A writing contest sponsored by an outside group seemed to encourage students to take extra steps aimed at achievement.” But reading proficiency scores slipped from 48 percent in 2002 to 42 percent in 2007, and math proficiency declined from 52 percent to 42 percent in the same period. The addition on the school did not attract more students. In fact, enrollment fell from 313 in September 1999 to 243 in September 2000—even as space for 162 more students was added to the school. Funding from MPS decreased in proportion to the decrease in enrollment. Art and music were dropped completely to save money, and physical education was cut back to two days per week. The new library had a librarian only one day per week. Six of the nine new classrooms were not used for conducting classes, and six classrooms in the older sections of the building were also unused. The additions cost \$2.7 million.¹¹⁶ McNair closed in 2010 and reopened as a middle school

¹¹⁵ Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, “Subtraction by Addition,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 19, 2008.

¹¹⁶ Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, “Subtraction by Addition,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 19, 2008.

and extension of Rufus King High School, which was less than two miles away.¹¹⁷ A magnet school had won ownership over what was supposed to be a neighborhood school.

The failure of NSI and persistent exodus of students to non-MPS charter, choice, and suburban schools combined so that, by 2005, MPS had capacity for more than 120,000 students but had about only eighty-six thousand. The school board then proceeded to close several elementary schools, most of the middle schools, and Juneau High School, despite the fact that it had built new schools and additions to others.¹¹⁸ The closure of Juneau was particularly contentious. Built in 1933 on Milwaukee's west side, the school had a capacity of twelve hundred but had an enrollment of only 942. The staff and students protested the closure at a six-and-a-half hour school board meeting to no avail. The school board voted 5–4 to shut it down. The projected savings from closing the school was \$1.4 million.¹¹⁹ People began to criticize NSI, but Superintendent William Andrekopoulos defended it: “When you build a school, you’re building it for over 100 years. If we would have put up shanties and put up temporary buildings . . . that would have been very shortsighted.”¹²⁰

In retrospect, people who feared that the NSI would be a return to segregation were completely unwarranted in their assumptions. What Christine Rossell has said

¹¹⁷ Alan J. Borsuk, “MPS Committee Recommends Expanding King,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 11, 2009, and *Proceedings*, June 25, 2009.

¹¹⁸ Alan J. Borsuk, “Four More MPS Schools Marked for Closing in Fall,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 3, 2005, and Alan J. Borsuk, “4 MPS Schools Chosen for Closure,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 21, 2005.

¹¹⁹ Georgia Pabst, “Facing an Uncertain Future,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 5, 2005, and *Proceedings*, June 25, 2005.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Dave Umhoefer and Alan J. Borsuk, “Subtraction by Addition,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 17, 2008.

about magnet schools is also true of neighborhood schools: parents' first choice is schools with solid records of academic success in safe neighborhoods. If they do not observe these qualities in their neighborhood schools, then they will send their children elsewhere (see chapter 5).

MPS also pursued one last major reform strategy involving choice in the 2000s—the Small Schools Initiative. The small schools movement began in the late 1980s in urban districts that were looking for innovative ideas on how to meet the needs of students who were not successful in traditional comprehensive high schools. Small high schools typically have fewer than four hundred students and some have fewer than two hundred. The schools may be in stand-alone buildings, such as a closed elementary school or a rented space, or they may be in a multiplex—a building that used to house a comprehensive high school but is reconfigured to accommodate three to six small high schools. Each school is supposed to have a particular theme, much like magnet schools, and it is hoped students will pick the schools for which they are best suited. Small schools are supposed to foster a sense of connectedness among students and between students and teachers. Classes rotate from one teacher to another, as in a middle school. Because the enrollment is so small, students may have the same teachers for all four years of high school. Sports, clubs, and electives are hard to offer,¹²¹ and budgetary decisions

¹²¹ Several books have been written on the small schools movement. Thomas B. Gregory and Gerald R. Smith, *High Schools as Communities: The Small School Reconsidered* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1987) was one of the first. Recent works include Tim L. Adsit, *Small Schools, Education, and the Importance of Community: Pathways to Improvement and a Sustainable Future* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2011); William Ayers et al., eds., *Simple Justice: The Challenge of Small Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000); Gilberto Q. Conchas and Louie F. Rodriguez, *Small Schools and Urban Youth: Using the Power of School Culture to Engage Students* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008); Evans Clinchy, ed., *Creating New Schools: How Small Schools Are Changing American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000); Jay Feldman et al., *Choosing Small: The Essential Guide to Successful High School Conversion* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006); and Thomas

may be difficult because small schools cannot take advantage of economies of scale.¹²²

Little notice was taken of the small school movement until 2003, when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation donated \$51 million to New York City to start sixty-seven small schools. The Foundation gave millions more to other districts, including Milwaukee, to establish small high schools in subsequent years.¹²³

After studying small high school designs in Baltimore and New York, MPS planned to create forty-five new small schools between 2003 and 2008 that would serve about sixteen thousand students, despite inconclusive research on the effectiveness of small schools.¹²⁴ Originally, the district planned to convert seven of the fifteen high schools to multiplexes, effectively abolishing a large portion of the magnet school plan. The Gates Foundation committed more than \$17 million to the effort, which would help with modifying buildings and retraining staff.¹²⁵

But the district converted only three high schools to multiplexes. North Division,

Toch, *High Schools on a Human Scale: How Small Schools Can Transform American Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003). See also Alain Jehlen and Cynthia Kopkowski, "Is Smaller Better?," *NEA Today* (February 2006), <http://www.nea.org/home/12214.htm> (accessed December 22, 2011), and Sema Shah et al., "Building a Districtwide Small Schools Movement," Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (April 2009), http://annenberginstitute.org/pdf/Mott_Oakland_high.pdf (accessed December 22, 2011).

¹²² Sarah Carr, "Smaller High Schools Seen as Challenge, Opportunity," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 25, 2003.

¹²³ "Gates Foundation to Give Millions to N.Y. Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 18, 2003.

¹²⁴ Sarah Carr, "MPS Calls for Creating 45 'Small' High Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 22, 2003, and "MPS Hope in Small High Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 15, 2006. See also Sarah Carr, "Baltimore Thinks 'Small' in Revamp of High Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 23, 2003.

¹²⁵ Nahal Toosi, "Gates Foundation Gives Millions to MPS," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 15, 2003.

once the medical and dental science magnet, was broken up into three schools in 2003, which were called the School of the Humanities, the Truth Institute for Leadership and Service, and the Genesis School of Business Technology/Trade, Health, and Human Services. At the time, about half of North Division's entering freshmen read below a fourth-grade level, and the school's attendance was only about two-thirds. District officials hoped the small schools would foster a sense of belonging and that achievement would improve.¹²⁶ Washington (the computer magnet) and Marshall (the broadcasting magnet) were broken up in 2004. South Division (tourism, food service, and recreation) and Bradley Tech were allowed to remain comprehensive schools but were reconfigured internally to create "small learning communities" in the schools, similar to the schools in the multiplex but with one administrative structure.¹²⁷

Although most district officials praised the moves, there were a few dissenters. A few officials worried that, districtwide, the conversion to small schools was moving too fast. Tom Balistreri, a School Board member and former principal of Rufus King High School, said the initiative involved too many schools and was rushed through without the opportunity to train new administrators and lead teachers: "The schools have not been set up for success, and there's no evidence that they are going to have a higher level of achievement," he said. John Schissler, who taught at Marshall for thirty-two years and coordinated the school's alumni association, predicted that the initiative would fail due to

¹²⁶ Sarah Carr, "Change Comes, but Changing Perceptions Isn't So Easy," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 3, 2003, and *Proceedings*, April 22, and May 27, 2004.

¹²⁷ Sarah Carr, "Dramatic Reconfiguration at MPS Endorsed," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 12, 2003. See also Alan J. Borsuk, "Small High Schools Would Mean Big Changes for MPS," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 15, 2003.

high costs: “I know they’ve tried it in New York and a few other large cities, but after 32 years teaching in MPS, all the new programs they’ve tried to implement, unfortunately, have gone awry, especially as soon as the money dries up.”¹²⁸ Jay Bullock, an English teacher at Madison University High School, wrote a letter to the *Journal Sentinel* and explained, “We have heard, from colleagues at schools such as Marshall, Washington, and the erstwhile North Division, that the transitions are messy, support is insufficient, and the teachers are shouldering responsibilities that take away from teaching duties.” He also said that schools are much more likely to be successful if they are “developed from the bottom-up, democratically,” and reform is not imposed from above.¹²⁹

Data on the freshman class from the 2004–05 school year showed that plans were not working out as expected. There were 9,857 students in ninth grade, but only 4,551 students in twelfth grade, or 46 percent of the ninth grade total, in 2004–05. The rest dropped out or left MPS. Twenty-two percent of all freshmen were repeating the ninth grade. Some of the repeating freshmen would never graduate—more than 40 percent of the district’s dropouts were in grade nine. The ninth-grade suspension rate (number of suspensions divided by number of students) was 48 percent, though that was because many students were suspended more than once. The ninth-grade attendance rate was only 77 percent. District officials pointed out that those startling numbers were why they were creating more K–8 schools and more small high schools, ignoring the facts that the percentage of students in K–8s had already increased from 9 percent to 29 percent and

¹²⁸ Quoted in Sarah Carr, “Teachers Hope New, Smaller Schools Will Make the Difference,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 2, 2004.

¹²⁹ Sarah Carr, “At Some New MPS High Schools, A-B-Seas and a Haven from Bullies,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 1, 2005.

that the percentage of students in small high schools had increased from 2 percent to 23 percent from 1999 to 2005 with no noticeable improvement in achievement, attendance, or behavior.¹³⁰

MPS opened more small high schools in 2005, including:

- Alliance School, a school for gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered students and other students who felt bullied in their previous schools
- The Maasai Institute, which took its approach to education from the culture and philosophy of an African tribe
- Foster & Williams, which taught American Sign Language
- The Milwaukee Learning Laboratory & Institute, which was supposed to teach social justice, leadership, and service through participation in the community
- Three schools inside Washington: Washington High School of Expeditionary Learning (a project-based curriculum); Washington High School of Information Technology; and Washington High School of Law, Education and Public Service (LEAPS)
- Three schools inside Marshall: W. E. B. Du Bois High School, which took over Marshall's communications specialty; Milwaukee Academy of Aviation, Science & Technology, where students were supposed to train in aviation, aerospace, and aeronautics; and Marshall Montessori, a college-

¹³⁰ Alan J. Borsuk, "MPS Report Finds Continued Crowding in 9th Grade," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 13, 2005.

prep school that used the Montessori system of education¹³¹

Almost none of MPS's plans worked out the way they were intended. One problem was that students wanted sports, clubs, and electives, which the small schools did not have the resources to provide. Hundreds of students enrolled in schools they knew nothing about, then complained that they did not like the school's specialty, and other students were randomly assigned to schools that had low enrollments. Many of these students were so far behind academically that they could not take classes in the school's specialty. Some teachers who had spent a year planning curricula found that they had to take a big step back and concentrate on reading and mathematics. But test scores and attendance rates did not improve. Schools could not always meet the needs of special education students—some did not have the equipment and others did not even hire special education teachers.¹³² Teachers had to teach multiple subjects because the schools were so small and could not afford full-time teachers in every area. That meant teachers had to teach some classes for which they did not have licenses.¹³³

Many of the small high schools were not successful in other ways. The Alliance School received positive media attention for its efforts to make students feel comfortable

¹³¹ Sarah Carr, "At Some New MPS High Schools, A-B-Seas [sic] and a Haven from Bullies," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 1, 2005.

¹³² Alan J. Borsuk, "School Conceived in Idealism, Closed in Sadness," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 30, 2010; Sarah Carr, "Schools Deal with Shrinking Pains," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 12, 2005; and Erin Richards, "Charter School Faces Closing Despite Pleas of Students, Staff," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 27, 2011. See also Alan J. Borsuk, "MPS Attendance Slips," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 27, 2007, and Erin Richards, "Good City Schools Scarce," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 27, 2010.

¹³³ Alan J. Borsuk, "Small Schools under Microscope," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 12, 2007. See Sarah Carr, "The Struggle to Keep Milwaukee Schools Safe," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 6–9, 2007, for more on the increase in violence in MPS.

in the face of bullying, but has not performed well academically and has been threatened with closure.¹³⁴ The Maasai Institute closed in 2008 with 150 students and four hundred thousand dollars in debt.¹³⁵ The school board voted to close Foster and Williams at the end of the 2009–10 school year.¹³⁶ The teachers at Milwaukee Language Laboratory & Institute had to change its curriculum completely when they found out most of their students lacked basic reading, writing, and math skills. The project-based classes they envisioned never developed. Finally, escalating costs in the face of low enrollment and staff cuts caused the nine remaining staff members to request closure by the school board.¹³⁷

The multiplexes could circumvent some of these problems by sharing resources, but none of the schools inside North Division worked out well. Of the twenty-four sophomores at the School of Humanities, only one was proficient in reading and none were proficient in mathematics, according to state test scores. Humanities had a truancy rate of 132 percent, indicating that there was a high turnover in the student body during the year. To be specific, 189 students were chronically truant in a school that had an official enrollment of 143. It had a 92 percent suspension rate in 2004–05, and there were

¹³⁴ *Bully*, written by Lee Hirsch and Cynthia Owen, directed by Lee Hirsch, produced by the Bully Project, 2011; Erin Richards, “MPS’ Alliance Charter School Gets 2-Year Reprieve,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 9, 2010; and Erin Richards, “MPS Panel to Debate Future of Alliance Charter School,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 8, 2010.

¹³⁵ Alan J. Borsuk, “Maasai Institute Closes,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 26, 2008.

¹³⁶ Erin Richards, “Free Condom Plan Clears MPS Panel,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 9, 2010; Erin Richards, “MPS Plan Targets Weakest Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 12, 2010; and Becky Vevea, “MPS’ Vel Phillips School is Targeted for Closure,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 15, 2010.

¹³⁷ Alan J. Borsuk, “School Conceived in Idealism, Closed in Sadness,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 30, 2010

eleven reported incidents involving weapons or drugs. The violence continued the next year, and it got so bad that Superintendent Andrekopoulos ordered the school closed in October for safety reasons. The school board ratified his decision at their next meeting.¹³⁸ The Truth Institute struggled along for three more years¹³⁹ and was finally closed in 2009. Metropolitan High School, another small school that moved in after Humanities closed, was itself closed in 2009. Genesis was allowed to continue at a new location. The African American Immersion High School (formerly Malcolm X, see chapter 7) another recent tenant, was allowed to take over the entire North Division building in 2009,¹⁴⁰ despite the fact that the Department of Public Instruction had named it the lowest performing school in the state in that year. African American Immersion was given the name North Division in 2011.¹⁴¹

The small schools inside Washington High School still did not show significant improvement either. Data from fall 2005 showed an attendance rate of only 45.5 at the School of Expeditionary Learning and 59.7 percent at the School of Information Technology, in contrast to a district high school rate of 72.5 percent.¹⁴² Washington High

¹³⁸ Alan J. Borsuk, "Fights, Financial Trouble Blamed for School's Demise," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 19, 2006; Alan J. Borsuk and Erin Richards, "MPS High School Ordered Closed," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 18, 2006; and *Proceedings*, October 19, 2006.

¹³⁹ Sarah Carr, "Board Split on School," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 27, 2006.

¹⁴⁰ Alan J. Borsuk, "Hardin Signals Her Departure," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 12, 2009; Alan J. Borsuk, "North Division Makes Comeback," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 27, 2009; and *Proceedings*, October 23, 2008, and March 26, 2009.

¹⁴¹ Erin Richards, "Funds Could Help North Division," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 12, 2010.

¹⁴² Sarah Carr, "Grants Revoked for Two of MPS's Small High Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 10, 2006.

School LEAPS was put on the state's list of lowest performing schools in 2010,¹⁴³ and so MPS closed it at the end of the school year. The School of Expeditionary Learning closed the following year, and Washington School of Information Technology was allowed to expand to fill the building, ironically returning it to McMurrin's original magnet specialty,¹⁴⁴ although enrollment remained below capacity.

The schools inside Marshall did not fare any better. The aviation school closed in 2009 when it became apparent that there were budgetary shortfalls and that the students were not actually being trained in aviation due to their inability to pass required classes.¹⁴⁵ The Montessori school asked to be moved to the old Juneau High School to get away from DuBois High School, which was plagued with violence.¹⁴⁶ But the Montessori school did not show enough improvement¹⁴⁷ or high enough enrollment at Juneau, so the school board voted in 2011 to close it, move the McDowell Montessori K–8 into Juneau, and turn the McDowell program into a K–12 school.¹⁴⁸ Du Bois ended up on the same

¹⁴³ Erin Richards, "MPS Plan Targets Weakest Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 12, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ Sarah Carr, "Grants Revoked at Two of MPS Small High Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 10, 2006; Erin Richards, "MPS Agrees to Close, Merge, Move Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 1, 2011, and "12 Schools Cited for Low Test Results," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 11, 2011; and *Proceedings*, April 21, 2011.

¹⁴⁵ Alan J. Borsuk, "MPS Panel Votes to Pull School's Charter," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 9, 2008, and *Proceedings*, April 24, 2008.

¹⁴⁶ Alan J. Borsuk, "Two Small MPS High Schools Might Close," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 12, 2009; Dani McClain, "High School Seeks New Quarters," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 20, 2008; and *Proceedings*, October 23, 2008, and January 29, and February 26, 2009. See also Linda Spice, "Milwaukee Officers Respond to High School Fight," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 25, 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Erin Richards, "MPS Plan Targets Weakest Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 12, 2010.

¹⁴⁸ Erin Richards, "MPS Board Overhauls Schools Lineup for Next Year," December 13, 2011, and Erin Richards, "MPS Considers Closing Some Schools, Expanding Others," December 5, 2011.

list as Washington LEAPS in 2010¹⁴⁹ and closed a year later.¹⁵⁰

One small school, Ronald Reagan High School, was actually very successful. Located in the old Sholes Middle School, Reagan grew from 127 students in 2003 to more than one thousand in 2011 by locating itself on the far south side, appealing to southside parents though the same rigorous academic program in use at Rufus King High School, and by having a dynamic principal who expected the best from students, teachers, and district administrators.¹⁵¹ But in growing to more than a thousand students, Reagan may have demonstrated that big high schools are actually more effective than small ones.

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* ran a series of articles in 2006 examining MPS high schools, both big and small. It found that, generally speaking, MPS graduates were not as well prepared for higher education or employment as their suburban counterparts were. The average MPS ACT score was 17.5 in 2004–05, compared to a statewide average of 22.2. MPS students were not assigned as much homework as suburban students, and the assignments were usually shorter. Students who had attended suburban middle schools and MPS high schools reported that their middle school classes were more difficult than their high school classes. There was variation within MPS too. One student who transferred from Marshall to Riverside said, “A 4.0 in John Marshall is like the equivalent of a 2.5 at Riverside.” The student successfully graduated and enrolled at

¹⁴⁹ Erin Richards, “MPS Plan Targets Weakest Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 12, 2010.

¹⁵⁰ Erin Richards, “Contraceptives at High Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 9, 2009, and *Proceedings*, December 17, 2009.

¹⁵¹ Erin Richards, “Principal of High-Achieving MPS High School Steps Down,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 16, 2011.

the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM), but after he saw how much more suburban students knew, he said, “I feel like [the MPS] kids have been cheated out of an education.”¹⁵²

Teachers said that they had to lower their expectations because students were reading very far behind grade level. They reported that students were no longer registering for advanced math or science classes¹⁵³ and that teachers had to use low-level worksheets because students were disruptive during lecture and engaged in horseplay during group work. But even then, work was not submitted. Reporters found students were disengaged no matter how big or small the school. Large groups of students walked the halls all day long in the big high schools, though administrators and safety aides had to constantly patrol the halls, looking for students. Classroom doors were locked, and students were not allowed in the halls unless it was an emergency.¹⁵⁴ Reporters believed that small schools made better connections between teachers and students, but again, the work was not very rigorous.¹⁵⁵

UWM officials agreed that MPS students were often unprepared for college. Seventy-two percent of MPS graduates who were UWM freshmen in 2004–05 required remedial math classes, compared to only 25 percent of graduates from other districts.

¹⁵² Quoted in Alan J. Borsuk, “Making the Grade? Inside MPS High Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 11, 2006.

¹⁵³ Alan J. Borsuk, “Making the Grade? Inside MPS High Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 11, 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Alan J. Borsuk, “Making the Grade? Inside MPS High Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 12, 2006.

¹⁵⁵ Alan J. Borsuk, “Making the Grade? Inside MPS High Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 13 and 14, 2006.

Twenty-two percent of MPS seniors who graduated in 1999 earned a UWM degree after six years, compared to forty-three percent of other students. When looking only at students in the top quarter of their high school class, 36 percent from MPS graduated from UWM, compared with 59 percent of other students. MATC reported similar achievement gaps, and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce said its membership reported that MPS graduates were often late for work and did not put forth much effort while there.¹⁵⁶

When Gregory Thornton took over as superintendent in 2010, he promised big changes in MPS, including higher standards, a more uniform curriculum, better professional development for teachers, higher tests scores and graduation rates, more students enrolling in college after graduation, safer schools, lower suspension rates, better engagement with parents and community members, increased collaboration with teachers, and more fiscal responsibility.¹⁵⁷

As other schools continued to decline in both enrollment and academic performance, MPS closed schools under Andrekopoulos and continued to do so under Thornton in 2010. Of the forty-two small high schools that opened under the small schools initiative, only twenty-three were still open that fall.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, as the

¹⁵⁶ Alan J. Borsuk, "Making the Grade? Inside MPS High Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 11, 2006.

¹⁵⁷ "A Candid Conversation with Gregory Thornton" and "Thornton Promises Big Changes for MPS," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 11, 2010; "Making the Grade? Inside MPS High Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 11, 2006; Erin Richards, "It's Day One for MPS' New Leader," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 2, 2010; Erin Richards, "Thornton Voted New MPS Chief," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 23, 2010. See also Dahlk, 609–612.

¹⁵⁸ Alan J. Borsuk, "School Conceived in Idealism, Closed in Sadness," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 30, 2010.

number of middle schools shrank due to competition from K–8 schools, MPS allowed five middle schools to grow into what it called “6–12” schools or middle school/high schools, giving students and parents even more choices.¹⁵⁹ Samuel Morse Middle School for the Gifted and Talented expanded to this format and moved into Marshall after the small schools inside Marshall closed or moved.¹⁶⁰ Custer High School closed after years of low achievement and reopened as a multiplex with two 6–12 schools and one K–8 school.¹⁶¹ Bay View High School merged with Fritsche Middle School as a 6–12 school too, but the new configuration of Bay View did not improve academic achievement, and the school was plagued by a rash of violence in 2011. The Bay View neighborhood, which is noted for its liberal values and commitment to the city and urban life, balked at the idea of a high school that does not attract neighborhood students. Parents asked that the current Bay View student body be removed, that a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum be introduced for neighborhood students, and that an admissions test be required for non-neighborhood students.¹⁶² Some people have accused Bay View parents of being “elitist,” but Bay View parents say they just want what is best for their

¹⁵⁹ Erin Richards, “Parents Fret about MPS Mixing Ages,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 19, 2010.

¹⁶⁰ Alan J. Borsuk, “MPS Has Plans for Marshall Building,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 27, 2009; Alan J. Borsuk, “Two Small MPS High Schools Might Close,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 12, 2009; Erin Richards, “Panel Votes on Charter Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 12, 2009; and *Proceedings*, October 23, 2008.

¹⁶¹ Erin Richards, “Failing Schools Chase U.S. Grants,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 7, 2010; Erin Richards, “MPS Agrees to Close, Merge, Move Schools,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 1, 2011; Erin Richards, “MPS Lists Cutback Proposals,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 19 and 20, 2011; Erin Richards, “Moved Principal Could Be Manager,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 26, 2011; and Erin Richards, “Parents Fret about Mixing Ages,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 19, 2010.

¹⁶² “Melee at Bay View High School,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 7, 2012; Erin Richards, “Bay View to Get New Principal . . . Again?” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 27, 2012; and Erin Richards, “Neighbors Seek to Revive Bay View High,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 16, 2011.

children.¹⁶³

More changes occurred in 2011. All three of original multiplexed high schools were each occupied by only a single school, the school board reopened Juneau High School, and some of the middle schools as multiplexes, hoping that schools could share resources and keep costs down. There were only six middle schools and eleven big high schools left by 2011.¹⁶⁴ Superintendent Thornton also introduced a “Long-Range Facilities Master Plan,” which aimed to close even more underused schools and to duplicate popular magnet programs, such as Montessori and Gifted and Talented, and spread them around the city to reduce transportation costs.¹⁶⁵ High school specialties are barely mentioned in the plan, the website recommends that parents visit individual schools to find out about their programs,¹⁶⁶ and the MPS school catalog describes many schools in vague terms, such as “college-prep,” “at-risk,” or “rigorous”¹⁶⁷ that make them sound mostly the same.

Thus, the city of Milwaukee moved into an era of unprecedented school choice in the twenty-first century. It was far different from the school system that had existed a century before with a neighborhood system and only a few citywide schools. It was also

¹⁶³ Jay Bullock, “Don’t Ignore Strides Made at Bay View High,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 17, 2012, and Daniel Slapczynski, “How to Fix Bay View High,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 10, 2012.

¹⁶⁴ “Long-Range Facilities Master Plan,” Milwaukee Public Schools (November, 2011), 32, and Erin Richards, “MPS Considers Future of Buildings,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 20, 2011.

¹⁶⁵ “Long-Range Facilities Master Plan,” 74–75, and Erin Richards, “MPS Considers Future of Buildings,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 20, 2011.

¹⁶⁶ See MPS high school list at http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/comm/high_schools/327 (accessed January 6, 2011).

¹⁶⁷ See MPS school selection guide, 2011–12.

unlike anything Lloyd Barbee envisioned, with its reemphasis on neighborhoods and reliance on religious schools to provide choice to families. And it was also very much the opposite of Lee McMurrin's plan for schools, with the abandonment of most aspects of the magnet plan, the expansion of small high schools, and the exodus of students to the suburbs.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION:

REFLECTIONS ON CHOICE

Milwaukee schools in the twenty-first century are a far cry from the comprehensive schools and neighborhood attendance patterns of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The expansion of choice from no choice to forced choice to school choice has been the theme throughout time. Lloyd Barbee sued the school board to integrate students. The result was a magnet school plan that was supposed to induce racial integration and increase academic achievement by giving students choices. But the plan was difficult to implement, was not well received by parents (African American or white), and did not meet its goals for most Milwaukee students. Charter schools, choice schools, suburban schools, neighborhood schools, and small schools brought Milwaukee even more choice but also did not improve education, if one controls for students' economic background and upbringing. MPS, the state of Wisconsin, and federal government did, however, spend a lot of time and money to offer students and families these choices. It makes one wonder whether choice is really worth the price paid.

Psychologist Barry Schwartz explains it this way: Schwartz walked into a store and asked to buy a pair of jeans. The salesclerk asked, "Do you want them slim fit, easy fit, relaxed fit, baggy, or extra baggy? Do you want them stonewashed, acid washed, or distressed? Do you want them button-fly or zipper-fly? Do you want them faded or regular?" Schwartz was stunned—all he wanted was a "regular" pair of jeans. He ended up trying on all the styles and left with a pair that he liked, but he also left with feelings of

wasted time, fatigue, self-doubt, anxiety, and dread.¹

Schwartz concluded that although some choice is good, more choice is not necessarily better. In fact, Schwartz says an overabundance of choice can lead to bad decisions, stress, dissatisfaction, and even clinical depression. Schwartz writes that, by some estimates, depression rates in the year 2000 were ten times that of 1900,² and suicide rates tripled between 1965 and 2000.³ The American standard of living was much higher in 2000 than it was a century before. As the standard of living increased, so did the choices offered to people. But expanding choice did not make people happy.⁴

Likewise, the idea of many choices in schools makes people feel good at first, but education has not improved substantially in Milwaukee in the last forty years. In fact, many people argue that the schools are worse than ever, and the thought of the problems with education in Milwaukee makes people tired, frustrated, and depressed, as Schwartz was when he tried to buy a pair of jeans. It also makes one think that perhaps Milwaukee and Wisconsin should offer a one or two-choice model of district organization and simply concentrate on providing a really good education to students.

Furthermore, choice, in a school context, assumes that parents are well informed, but many parents are not, as explained in chapter 8. Consider, as Schwartz does, that most respondents to a recent medical survey claimed said they would want to choose their own treatment if they developed cancer, but an overwhelming number of cancer patients do

¹ Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice* (HarperCollins Publishers, New York: 2004), 1–3.

² Schwartz, 202.

³ Schwartz, 209.

⁴ Schwartz, 106–107.

not actually choose their own treatment. They defer to their doctors, assuming their doctors know best.⁵ Yet advocates of choice in urban education somehow think that parents, who often times were not successful in school, can make the best choices for their children with almost no guidance.

Nonetheless, civic leaders and business interests often insist competition and choice are essential components to a business model to education.⁶ According to the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) had lower reading and mathematics scores in grades four and eight than seventeen or eighteen other urban school districts. Only 38 percent of fourth graders and 47 percent of eighth graders were reading at or above grade level, and only 57 percent of fourth graders and 42 percent of eighth graders were doing mathematics at or above grade level.⁷ Furthermore, the MPS four-year graduation rate was only 62.8 percent in 2011, compared to a statewide rate of 87 percent.⁸ But, as chapter 8 explained, charter schools and choice schools do about the same as MPS schools. It would seem then, that competition and choice do not actually improve achievement. Therefore, people who advocate a “business

⁵ Schwartz, 104.

⁶ Chester Finn, *We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future* (New York: The Free Press, 1991); Jay P. Greene, “The Business Model,” *Education Next* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2002); Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), especially chapter 5; and “Testing Our Schools,” *Frontline*, 20:7 (March 28, 2002), also available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2UG0UGsqVM>, available June 4, 2012.

⁷ Erin Richards, “MPS Scores Near Bottom in National Test,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 7, 2011. Detailed reports are available at *The Nation's Report Card*, <http://www.nationsreportcard.gov>, available June 4, 2012.

⁸ Erin Richards, “State, MPS Post Improved High School Graduation Rates,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 17, 2012.

model” should be mindful too that methods of manufacturing (teaching), quality of management (administration), and competition (choices), while important, do not make up for lack of quality materials (students).

When it comes to student quality, numerous studies have pointed to the link between poverty, family background, and student achievement.⁹ Milwaukee was the fourth poorest city in the United States in 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau¹⁰ After checking the poverty list against the NAEP list, it is revealed that there is strong correlation between poverty and student achievement. Both liberal and conservative scholars agree that family background also makes an important difference. For example, parents who were successful in school usually raise children who are successful in school, and parents with advanced degrees will usually have children with advanced degrees. Stable, middle-class families are more likely to have parents who monitor homework, get involved at their children’s schools, and teach their children the values of hard work, good attendance, and school-appropriate behavior.¹¹ No amount of choice or competition

⁹ Samuel Casey Carter, *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2001); Chester Hartman, ed. *Poverty & Race in America: The Emerging Agenda* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006); Laura Lippman et al., *Urban Schools: The Challenge of Location and Poverty*, National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (July 1996); Susan B. Neuman, *Changing the Odds for Children at Risk: Seven Essential Principles of Educational Programs That Break the Cycle of Poverty* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009); Susan B. Neuman, ed., *Educating the Other America: Top Experts Tackle Poverty, Literacy, and Achievement in Our Schools* (Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Pub., 2008); and Beth Lindsay Templeton, *Understanding Poverty in the Classroom: Changing Perceptions for Student Success* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2011) are some of the recent books on this topic.

¹⁰ Bill Glauber and Ben Poston, “Milwaukee Now Fourth Poorest City in Nation,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 28, 2010.

¹¹ There are an abundance of studies on the relationship between family background and educational achievement. Some of the recent ones, from both ends of the political spectrum, include Daniele Checchi, *The Economics of Education: Human Capital, Family Background and Inequality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (March 27, 2006); Dalton Conley and Karen Albright, eds., *After the Bell: Family Background, Public Policy and Educational Success* (London: Routledge, 2004); W.

can affect these family-related factors in a child's success in school.

There is also some evidence that choice may harm some students by segregating students based on ability level. Specifically, as explained in chapter 8, magnet schools and private schools may only want to enroll the intelligent, motivated students and may try to prevent students with disabilities, behavior problems, and low test scores from enrolling. In 2009–10, for example, 20.1 percent of MPS high school students were classified as special education, but Custer High School's percentage was 30.8, while Rufus King High School's was 14 percent and Ronald Reagan High School's was 10.1.¹² Custer was closed by the school board at the end of the 2010–11 school year (see chapter 8), while Rufus King and Ronald Reagan were named the number one and two schools in Wisconsin by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2012.¹³ Certainly, one can understand why schools would want to restrict who can enroll, especially in light of the movement to tie teacher pay to student test scores. And one can also understand why MPS allows certain schools to have admissions criteria. MPS needs academically talented students to stay in the city and not use the state's open enrollment law to attend suburban schools. When Reagan's principal, Julia D'Amato, was asked about enrolling more special education students at her school, she said that would mean she would have to take fewer regular education students who wanted to enroll in Reagan's college-bound program. She

Norton Grubb, *The Money Myth: School Resources, Outcomes, and Equity* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009); and Timothy M. Smeeding et al., *Persistence, Privilege, and Parenting: The Comparative Study of Intergenerational Mobility* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011).

¹² Erin Richards, "MPS Wants to Even Out Special Ed," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 23, 2009.

¹³ "Best High Schools in Wisconsin," *U.S. News & World Report*, <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/wisconsin>, available June 4, 2012.

warned, “These children will leave the district.”¹⁴

Milwaukee’s movement toward more choice was intended to give students equal educational opportunities. Lloyd Barbee wanted integrated schools, Lee McMurrin chose to do that through magnet schools, Howard Fuller and business leaders countered with vouchers, and the state of Wisconsin also offered charter schools and suburban schools as options. All of these movements fall under the mantle of “choice.” But while the choice of where to attend school is ostensibly vested in the students and their parents, the enrollment practices described here make one wonder who is doing the choosing—the students or the schools. These practices also raise questions about the fairness of setting up a hierarchy of schools, a hierarchy that runs counter to the comprehensive school movement of the early twentieth century. Surely that was not what reformers intended.

¹⁴ Quoted in Erin Richards, “MPS Wants to Even Out Special Ed,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 23, 2009.

APPENDIX A

Table 1.
SCHOOL BOARD FACTIONS, 1963–79¹

	Liberals	Conservatives
1963 –65	Clare Dreyfus Cornelius Golightly Elisabeth Holmes Lloyd Larson Frederick Mett ² John Pederson Evelyn Pfeiffer	President Lorraine Radtke Thomas Brennan Margaret Dinges John Foley Edward Krause/Patrick Fass ³ Frederick Potter Milan Potter Harold Story
1965 –67	Clare Deyfus Walter Gerken Cornelius Golightly Elisabeth Holmes Lloyd Larson Frederick Mett Evelyn Pfeiffer	President John Foley Thomas Brennan Margaret Dinges Patrick Fass Frederick Potter Milan Potter/Lillian Sicula ⁴ Lorraine Radtke Harold Story

¹ These factions were relevant only on racial integration. The school board frequently dealt with curriculum, appointment of administrators, the budget, school construction/repair, and legal matters. The voting records indicate that the factions were not present on these other issues. Also, the terms “liberal” and “conservative” are used here in the traditional sense of the words, not the connotation prevalent in the early twenty-first century—liberals wanted change, while conservatives resisted change. Some of the liberals and conservatives could be considered moderates and occasionally voted with the other faction and elected presidents. Some board members switched sides as the context of the racial integration debate changed.

² Elected to fill a vacancy left by George Hampel Jr., who resigned October 31, 1963.

³ Patrick Fass was elected after Edward Krause died on April 17, 1965.

⁴ Lillian Sicula was elected on April 5, 1967, after Milan Potter resigned.

1967 –69	Clare Dreyfus Walter Gerken ⁵ Frederick Mett Lloyd Larson Donald O’Connell Evelyn Pfeiffer John Stocking ⁶	President Margaret Dinges Russell Darrow ⁷ Thomas Brennan Patrick Fass John Foley ⁸ Adele Horbinski Frederick Potter Lorraine Radtke Lillian Sicula Harold Story
1969 –71	Clare Dreyfus Harold Jackson ⁹ Lloyd Larson Frederick Mett Donald O’Connell Evelyn Pfeiffer John Stocking	President Patrick Fass (to Sept. 1, 1970) President Thomas Brennan (after Sept. 1) Russell Darrow Margaret Dinges John Foley ¹⁰ Adele Horbinski/Virginia Stolhand ¹¹ Frederick Potter Lorraine Radtke Harold Story
1971 –73	Pres. Harold Jackson (to Nov. 22, 1972) ¹² Pres. Ronald San Felippo (after Nov. 22) Anthony Busalacchi Clare Dreyfus/James Wojciechowski ¹³ Lloyd Larson Frederick Mett/Doris Stacy ¹⁴ Donald O’Connell Evelyn Pfeiffer Robert Wegmann	Thomas Brennan Russell Darrow Margaret Dinges Frederick Potter Lorraine Radtke Virginia Stolhand

⁵ Resigned November 30, 1967.

⁶ Elected to fill Foley’s position.

⁷ Elected to fill Gerken’s position.

⁸ Resigned June 4, 1968.

⁹ Elected to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of John Foley.

¹⁰ Resigned October 27, 1969.

¹¹ Virginia Stolhand was elected after Adele Horbinski resigned on July 11, 1969.

¹² Resigned November 24, 1972.

¹³ Clare Dreyfus died on November 8, 1971; James Wojciechowski was elected March 8, 1972.

¹⁴ Frederick Mett died on May 17, 1972; Doris Stacy was elected June 6, 1972.

1973 –75	President Ronald San Felippo ¹⁵ President Donald O’Connell Anthony Busalacchi Lloyd Larson Maurice McSweeny Evelyn Pfeiffer Doris Stacy Robert Wegmann/Clara New ¹⁶	Thomas Brennan Arlene Conners Russell Darrow/Stephen Jesmok ¹⁷ Margaret Dinges Gerald Farley Edward Michalski ¹⁸ Frederick Potter Lorraine Radtke
1975 –77	President Donald O’Connell (1975–76) ¹⁹ Joseph Koneazny ²⁰ Marian McEvelly Maurice McSweeny Clara New Lois Riley Doris Stacy Leon Todd	President Evelyn Pfeiffer (1976–77) Thomas Brennan Anthony Busalacchi Margaret Dinges Gerald Farley Stephen Jesmok Edward Michalski Lorraine Radtke
1977 –79	Joseph Koneazny Marian McEvelly Maurice McSweeny Lois Riley Doris Stacy Leon Todd	President Anthony Busalacchi (1978–79) President Evelyn Pfeiffer (1977–78) Thomas Brennan Margaret Dinges Gerald Farley Stephen Jesmok Edward Michalski Lawrence O’Neil Lorraine Radtke

¹⁵ Resigned as president on September 24, 1974. Resigned from the board on January 7, 1975.

¹⁶ Robert Wegmann resigned on May 31, 1974; Clara New was elected on September 3, 1974.

¹⁷ Russell Darrow resigned on February 6, 1974; Stephen Jesmok was elected on May 6, 1975.

¹⁸ Elected May 6, 1975 to complete the term of Ronald San Felippo.

¹⁹ Resigned on December 15, 1976.

²⁰ Appointed to fill Donald O’Connell’s position on the board.

Table 2.
AFRICAN AMERICAN FACTIONS

Integrationists	Community Control Advocates
Llyod Barbee Cecil Brown Marica Coggs Gary George Cornelius Golightly Leon Todd	Jake Beason Spencer Coggs Howard Fuller Robert Harris Larry Harwell Marlene Johnson Gloria Mason Michael McGee Marvin Pratt Polly Williams

APPENDIX B

Table 3.
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (Grades 2, 4–8) and Tests of Achievement and Proficiency
(Grades 10, 12) in Reading (1966–1994)
Percentage Scoring “Average” or “Above Average/High”

	Grade 2	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 12
1966–67	-	61	-	64	-	63	-	-
1967–68	-	62	-	61	-	61	70	66
1968–69	-	64	-	61	-	60	69	64
1969–70	-	65	-	62	-	58	69	60
1970–71	-	62	-	57	-	55	66	55
1971–72	-	62	-	56	-	53	63	54
1972–73	-	66	-	59	-	55	65	52
1973–74	-	61	-	56	-	53	64	62
1974–75	-	-	66	-	63	-	74	72
1975–76	-	-	65	-	63	-	73	71
1976–77	-	-	64	-	64	-	70	73
1977–78	-	-	65	-	66	-	70	76
1978–79	-	-	66	-	64	-	69	72
1979–80	-	-	68	-	66	-	73	73
1980–81	-	-	72	-	67	-	75	69
1981–82	68	-	71	-	69	-	70	64
1982–83	77	-	72	-	73	-	70	66
1983–84	82	-	76	-	75	-	71	64
1984–85	81	-	74	-	76	-	74	62
1985–86	85	-	75	-	76	-	73	62
1986–87	52	-	39	-	37	-	41	-
1987–88	43	-	37	-	39	-	38	-
1988–89	42	-	36	-	40	-	38	-
1989–90	43	-	38	-	43	-	40	-
1990–91	43	-	37	-	41	-	37	-
1991–92	-	-	38	-	-	-	-	-
1992–93	-	-	38	-	-	-	-	-
1993–94	-	-	38	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Milwaukee Public Schools Office of Research and Assessment. Note: This table indicates general trends only. Changes in tests and the method of reporting scores in 1974, 1981, 1986, 1988, and 1991 make it impossible to make exact comparisons across the entire time period.

Table 4.
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (Grades 2, 4-8)
and Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (Grades 10, 12)
Mathematics (1966-1998)

Percentage Scoring “Average” or “Above Average/High”								
	Grade 2	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 12
1966-67	-	63	-	58	-	61	-	-
1967-68	-	65	-	56	-	60	68	73
1968-69	-	70	-	54	-	56	73	75
1969-70	-	71	-	58	-	55	72	72
1970-71	-	66	-	55	-	53	69	74
1971-72	-	66	-	54	-	50	70	72
1972-73	-	62	-	55	-	57	68	73
1973-74	-	63	-	54	-	56	68	76
1974-75	-	-	65	-	63	-	77	86
1975-76	-	-	66	-	63	-	75	84
1976-77	-	-	64	-	64	-	72	85
1977-78	-	-	68	-	66	-	74	84
1978-79	-	-	70	-	64	-	72	84
1979-80	-	-	74	-	66	-	75	81
1980-81	-	-	80	-	67	-	76	81
1981-82	80	-	83	-	74	-	69	70
1982-83	83	-	82	-	78	-	70	72
1983-84	85	-	83	-	81	-	71	71
1984-85	82	-	82	-	81	-	75	81
1985-86	87	-	83	-	81	-	76	79
1986-87	64	-	55	-	55	-	52	-
1987-88	60	-	78	-	48	-	37	-
1988-89	56	-	48	-	38	-	37	-
1989-90	48	-	47	-	38	-	41	-
1990-91	52	-	46	-	38	-	39	-
1991-92	-	-	47	-	-	-	-	-
1992-93	-	-	45	-	-	-	-	-
1993-94	-	-	47	-	-	-	-	-
1994-95	-	-	41	-	-	-	-	-
1996-97	-	-	43	-	-	-	-	-
1997-98	-	-	42	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Milwaukee Public Schools Office of Research and Assessment. Note: This table indicates general trends only. Changes in tests and the method of reporting scores in 1974, 1981, 1986, 1988, and 1991 make it impossible to make exact comparisons across the entire time period.

APPENDIX C

Note: The data in figures 1–9 are from the District and School Report Cards, Milwaukee Public Schools Office of Research and Evaluation, accessed June 24, 2011, <http://www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/acctrep/mpsrc.html>. State data are from “Wisconsin’s Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS), accessed June 24, 2011, <http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data>. The percentage white and percentage poor reflect the entire school, but the percentage proficient at reading and percentage proficient at mathematics are only for grades 5, 8, and 10. Schools with grades kindergarten to grade 8, grades 6 to 12, and grades kindergarten to 12 are listed in multiple figures.

Table 5. Milwaukee Magnet Schools with Grade 5 Students, 2009–10

SCHOOL	% WHITE	% POOR	% PROF. READING	% PROF. MATH
Elm Creative Arts	20	60	75	71
La Escuela Fratney	11	78	62	70
French Immersion	21	65	90	86
German Immersion	66	33	95	88
Golda Meir Gifted and Talented	30	38	95	91
Hayes Bilingual	2	97	52	47
Milwaukee Sign Language	10	80	60	65
Morgandale Bilingual Center	11	74	72	67
Spanish Immersion	22	55	85	69
Wis. Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	16	86	57	52
MPS Grade 5 All Schools	12	81	58	54
Wisconsin Grade 5 All Schools	76	37	80	78

Table 6. Milwaukee Magnet Schools with Grade 8 Students, 2009–10

SCHOOL	% WHITE	% POOR	% PROF. READING	% PROF. MATH
Golda Meir Gifted and Talented	30	38	93	90
Lincoln Middle School	4	86	65	44
Milwaukee School of Languages	27	60	83	75
Milwaukee Sign Language	10	80	57	32
Morgandale Bilingual Center	11	74	78	47
Morse-Marshall Middle/High School	4	77	80	72
Roosevelt Middle School	5	79	75	57
Wis. Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	16	86	78	69
MPS Grade 8 All Schools	12	81	63	50
Wisconsin Grade 8 All Schools	76	37	84	78

Table 7. Milwaukee Magnet Schools with Grade 10 Students, 2009–10

SCHOOL	% WHITE	% POOR	% PROF. READING	% PROF. MATH
Bradley Tech High School	5	82	35	18
Milwaukee High School of the Arts	21	65	57	29
Milwaukee School of Languages	27	60	66	60
New School for Community Service	6	76	N/A	N/A
Reagan High School	32	64	76	60
Riverside High School	7	71	56	45
Rufus King High School	18	54	76	71
Wis. Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	16	86	48	43
MPS Grade 10 All Schools	12	81	40	29
Wisconsin Grade 10 All Schools	76	37	76	70

Table 8. Milwaukee Elementary School Value-Added Data, 2009–10

SCHOOL	READING	MATH
Elm Creative Arts	3.3	3.2
La Escuela Fratney	2.7	3.6
French Immersion	4.5	3.4
German Immersion	3.6	3.9
Golda Meir Gifted and Talented	4.3	4.6
Hayes Bilingual	3.7	3.3
Milwaukee Sign Language	2.4	3.2
Morgandale Bilingual Center	3.8	3.8
Spanish Immersion	3.8	2.7
Wisconsin Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	3.9	3.7
Magnet Elementary School Average	3.2	3.5
MPS All Schools	3.0	3.0

Table 9. Milwaukee Middle School Value-Added Data, 2009–10

SCHOOL	READING	MATH
Golda Meir Gifted and Talented	4.1	3.5
Lincoln Middle School	3.0	2.1
Milwaukee School of Languages	3.8	3.8
Milwaukee Sign Language	2.4	3.2
Morgandale Bilingual Center	3.2	2.2
Morse-Marshall Middle/High School	3.8	2.8
Roosevelt Middle School	3.2	2.9
Wisconsin Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	4.0	4.7
Magnet Middle School Average	2.8	2.5
MPS All Schools	3.0	3.0

Table 10. Milwaukee High School Value-Added Data, 2006–07

SCHOOL	READING	MATH
Bradley Tech High School	3.2	3.2
Milwaukee High School of the Arts	2.9	2.3
Milwaukee School of Languages	4.2	3.8
New School for Community Service	N/A	N/A
Reagan High School	4.2	3.8
Riverside High School	2.7	2.3
Rufus King High School	4.7	4.5
Wisconsin Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	2.1	3.5
Magnet High School Average	3.4	3.3
MPS All Schools	3.0	3.0

Note: MPS surveys its students, parents, and teachers about school climate in four areas. Figures 7–9 show the average of the three surveys. High scores indicate successful schools. A 4.0 is a perfect score.

Table 11. Milwaukee Elementary School Climate Data, 2009–10

SCHOOL	RIGOR	SAFETY	ENVIRO NMENT	GOVERN ANCE
Elm Creative Arts	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.2
La Escuela Fratney	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.4
French Immersion	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.1
German Immersion	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.2
Golda Meir Gifted and Talented	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.3
Hayes Bilingual	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.2
Milwaukee Sign Language	3.2	3.0	3.0	2.8
Morgandale Bilingual Center	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.2
Spanish Immersion	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.1
Wis. Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.1
Magnet Elementary School Average	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.2
MPS All Elementary Schools	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.1

Table 12. Milwaukee Middle School Climate Data, 2009–10

SCHOOL	RIGOR	SAFETY	ENVIRO NMENT	GOVERN ANCE
Golda Meir Gifted and Talented	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.3
Lincoln Middle School	3.1	3.0	3.1	2.9
Milwaukee School of Languages	3.3	3.0	3.2	3.0
Milwaukee Sign Language	3.2	3.0	3.0	2.8
Morgandale Bilingual Center	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.2
Morse-Marshall Middle/High School	3.1	3.0	3.1	2.7
Roosevelt Middle School	3.2	3.0	3.1	3.0
Wis. Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.1
Magnet Middle School Average	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.0
MPS All Middle Schools	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.1

Table 13. Milwaukee High School Climate Data, 2009–10

SCHOOL	RIGOR	SAFETY	ENVIRO NMENT	GOVERN ANCE
Bradley Tech High School	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.9
Milwaukee High School of the Arts	3.1	3.0	3.2	2.9
Milwaukee School of Languages	3.3	3.1	3.3	3.1
New School for Community Service	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.4
Reagan High School	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.2
Riverside High School	3.2	2.9	3.0	3.0
Rufus King High School	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.0
WI Conservatory of Lifelong Learning	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1
Magnet High School Average	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.1
MPS All High Schools	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.0

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Carman, Greg J. “Wall of Exclusion: The Persistence of Residential Racial Segregation in Metropolitan Milwaukee.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2010.

Dahlk, William John. “The Black Educational Reform Movement in Milwaukee, 1963–1975.” Master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1990.

Duax, Timothy C.T. “The Impact of Nonselective Magnet Schools on a Predominately Black Neighborhood.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1988.

DeMarco, Marcella. “Magnet Programs in the Pittsburgh Schools: Development to Implementation, 1977 through 1982.” PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1983.

Ferrell, James Adrian. “A Magnet School and Desegregation: A Case Study of Booker T. Washington High School, 1975–1980.” PhD diss, Oklahoma State University, 2008.

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Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1985.

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Santacrose, Phyllis M. “Rediscovering the Role of the State: Housing Policy and Practice in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1900–1970.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2009.

Schmitz-Zien, Gayle. “The Genesis of and Motivations for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, 1985–1995.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2003.

Smejkal, Ann E. “The Effects of Open Enrollment on Highly Impacted Small Wisconsin School Districts and the Leadership Response.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2010.

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Spurlin, Paul Merrill. *Montesquieu in America, 1760–1801*. Masters thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1940; New York: Octagon Books, 1969.

Straus, Ryane McAuliffe. “Reconstructing Magnet Schools: Social Construction and the Demise of Desegregation.” PhD diss., University of California–Irvine, 2005.

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Vargas-Harrison, Juana Alejandrina. “A History of Hispanic Bilingual Education in Milwaukee’s Public Schools: People, Policies, and Programs, 1969–1988.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1995.

UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

Harris, Ian M. "The Committee of 100: Citizen Participation in Desegregation."
Unpublished report, Milwaukee Public Library, 1977.

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**CURRICULUM VITAE
FOR
JAMES K. NELSEN**

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Teaching Licences: Broadfield Social Studies (grades 6–12), History, Political Science, Geography, Economics, Sociology

Research Interests: 20th Century United States History, Urban History, History of Education

Educational Background

Ph.D., Urban History, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2012

Dissertation: From No Choice to Forced Choice to School Choice: A History of Educational Options in Milwaukee Public Schools

M.A., History, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2003

Thesis: Racial Integration in Milwaukee Public Schools, 1963–2003

B.S., Secondary Education/Social Studies, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, *summa cum laude*, 1998

Alexander Hamilton High School (part of the Milwaukee Public Schools system), 1993

Teaching Experience

Social Studies Dept. Chair, Alexander Hamilton High School, Milwaukee, WI, 2006–present

Responsibilities include attending district meetings and disseminating information to department members; mentoring colleagues; coordinating teaching assignments; supervising student teachers and field students; assisting substitute teachers; providing examples of best practices; ordering, distributing, and organizing textbooks, media, and supplies; recommending course offerings; monitoring integrity of course descriptions; aligning curriculum and instruction to state standards for social studies; coordinating and communicating social studies curriculum with other departments; communicating with administrators and university personnel; data collection and reporting; and assisting in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the school's education plan

Teacher, Alexander Hamilton High School, Milwaukee, WI, 1998–present
 Taught Advanced Placement Human Geography, Advanced Placement European History, Advanced Placement U.S. Government and Politics, American Government, Honors United States History, Honors World History, World History, World History Through Film, United States History, and World Studies
 Wrote the Curriculum for World History Through Film
 Advanced Placement Teacher, 1998–present
 Advanced Placement Liaison, 2003–2011
 National Honor Society Advisor, 1998–2011
 Yearbook Advisor 1999–2000

Associate Lecturer, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Department of History, Spring and Fall, 2010
 Taught History 152: United States History, 1877–Present

Associate Lecturer, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Fall, 2009
 Taught C&I 313: The Teaching of Economics in the Social Studies Curriculum

Gustav Fritsche Middle School, Milwaukee, 1997
 Student-Taught 8th grade United States History and English

Seventeen years of experience as a volunteer in the Boy Scouts of America, teaching both youth and adults

Other Relevant Employment

Researched the Grain Exchange building, the Mitchell building, and the Loyalty building for Stonewater Historic Milwaukee, 2006

Research Assistant, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2003–2004
 Conducted research on behalf of two professors for their books

Book Review

Review of Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans and the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963–2002* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2010) in *Milwaukee History*, Spring, 2012.

Presentations

“Careers in History Teaching” for History 294: Seminar on Historical Method: Research Techniques, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Spring 2007, Summer 2008, Spring 2010, Spring 2012

Guest speaker at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee graduate student orientation, September 1, 2011.

“A Flawed Attempt at Integration: Implementing Milwaukee’s Magnet Plan, 1976–1986,” Sixteenth Annual Urban Studies Student Forum, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, April 2, 2011.

“The Reaction to Milwaukee’s Magnet Plan, 1976–1986,” Fifteenth Annual Urban Studies Student Forum, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, April 10, 2010.

“Origins of Milwaukee’s Magnet Schools, 1967–1976,” Conference on the History of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area, October 24, 2009.

“The Creation of Milwaukee Public Schools, 1846–1860,” Tenth Annual Urban Studies Student Forum, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, May 7, 2005.

Professional Affiliations

Member, Phi Alpha Theta International Honor Society in History, Delta Phi Chapter, 1996–present

Member, National Education Association (NEA), 1998–present

Member, Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC), 1998–present

Member, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA), 1998–present

Member, National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), 1999–present

Building Representative, Milwaukee Teacher Education Association (MTEA), 2002–present

Member, Milwaukee Schools’ Historical Society (MSHS), 2003–present

Member, World History Association (WHA), 2007–present

Member, Midwest World History Association (MWWHA), 2009–present

MTEA Alternate Building Representative, 2001–2002

Service to the Teaching Profession

Chair, Advanced Placement Human Geography and International Baccalaureate Geography Textbook Adoption Committee, Milwaukee Public Schools, 2012

Participant, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Summer Teaching Seminar, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011

Conducted a series of workshops on “Milwaukee History as American History” and “Milwaukee in the Civil Rights Movement” for K–12 teachers in Milwaukee Public Schools in 2010 and 2011

Participant, train-the-trainer workshop for the Teaching with Primary Sources Midwest Region, Library of Congress, 2010

Lead Teacher for the Milwaukee Public Schools Summer School Social Studies Committee, 2009–2010
Editor and Co-Writer of the Citizenship Curriculum in 2009
Editor and Co-Writer of the United States History Curriculum in 2010

Acting Administrator, Advanced Placement Textbook Adoption Committee, 2009
Oversaw the adoptions for AP English Language and Composition, AP United States Government and Politics, and AP United States History

Member, K–8 Social Studies Textbook Adoption Committee, Milwaukee Public Schools, 2008

Participant, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Advanced Placement Summer Institute on World History, 2007

Member, local arrangements committee for the World History Association international conference, 2007

Taught three seminars on the improvement of writing and use of primary sources in grades 6–12 and Advanced Placement classes, 2005

Judge, National History Day, Milwaukee Regional, 2005

Co-Chair, World History Textbook Adoption Committee, Milwaukee Public Schools, 2004

Participant, Milwaukee Public Schools Advanced Placement Summer Institute on World History and Art History, 2003

Member, Social Studies Learning Targets Committee, Milwaukee Public Schools, 2003

Member, United States History Textbook Adoption Committee, Milwaukee Public Schools, 2002

Member, Social Studies Assessment Committee, Milwaukee Public Schools, wrote the district's standardized essay questions and rubrics, 1999

Various committees at Hamilton High School, including Budget, Common Skills Assessments, the Educational Plan, Interview Team (chair), Learning Team, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Mentored more than a dozen student teachers from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin–Platteville, Alverno College, Marquette University, and National Lewis University

Honors and Awards

Cited in Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 2004

A.T. Brown Award for Best Graduate Thesis in History at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2003

Profiled in *Research Profile*, a publication of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 26, no. 1 (Fall/Winter, 2003). Available at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad_Sch/Publications/ResearchProfile/Archive/Vol26No1/synopsis.html

Who's Who Among American Teachers

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Available upon request