

Still Fulfilling

The Dream

St. Louis Student Transfer Program



50th

Anniversary

Brown v. Board of Education

In the field of public
education, the
doctrine of 'sep
out equal'



The Dream



**"In the field of public
education, the doctrine
of 'separate but equal'
has no place.
Separate educational
facilities are
inherently unequal."**

Earl Warren,

Earl Warren,

Brown v. Board of Education, May 17, 1954

Brown v. Board of Education, May 17, 1954

Much Has Been Accomplished But Hard Work Remains

Ever notice how hard it is to get started on a big project that's going to take a lot of time, energy and effort? Maybe that's why so many of us fail to follow through on those New Year's resolutions. Perhaps we just shoot so high that we soon get discouraged and give up, silently promising ourselves that we'll do better next time. Or maybe we're just too busy with other priorities and don't have enough hours in the day.

Well, thank goodness the schools and families involved in the voluntary transfer program have more commitment and willpower than that!

I wonder what everyone thought over 20 years ago when the first 125 brave student volunteers arrived at county districts in that first year of public school desegregation in St. Louis. I wonder if anyone knew this first step would eventually grow into the largest public school choice program in the nation, having served more than 60,000 students and 18 school districts since its modest beginnings in 1981. I'm fairly sure this wasn't an easy adjustment for the families of the students

involved — or the districts for that matter. Change is difficult enough to bring about in oneself, much less when it involves others — particularly others who appear to be "different" in some way. Yet the families and districts persevered over the years and all involved have benefitted and grown from the experience. One only has to read the success stories contained in this "Report to the Community" to witness the lifelong benefits that can result from having diversity in our schools.

These benefits need to be kept in mind

during the next few years as the student transfer program enters a new phase. Reduced state funding to public education in general and to the voluntary transfer program in particular will test the region's continuing commitment to diversity and to the concept of public school choice as we go through this period of financial challenge.

Let's just hope those involved draw their willpower and dedication from the same source as the students profiled here. As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark decision in the Brown case, we should reflect not only on what has been accomplished in St. Louis but on the tasks remaining to completely fulfill the promise of equal opportunity for all. And let's renew our resolution to be part of delivering on that promise for public education.



Bruce Ellerman
VICC CEO



Bruce Ellerman

Bruce Ellerman
CEO

The significance of the Brown decision can perhaps best be seen in the context of this time line which chronicles the struggle for equal educational opportunities and equal rights in America. The St. Louis Student Transfer Program, which began with a lawsuit filed by a group of parents in 1972, is an important part of this history.

1776 Declaration of Independence, which declares that "all men are created equal," is drafted and approved. Due to the objections of South Carolina and Georgia, an anti-slavery clause was omitted from the final draft.

1838 St. Louis Public Schools opened their first school, near what is now Fourth and Spruce Streets.

1846 A Missouri law formally prohibiting the education of blacks was approved. Despite this law, clandestine teaching did take place. John Berry Meachum, an ex-slave from Virginia, bought slaves, taught them reading, writing and job skills, and then freed them. Meachum also operated a "Freedom School" on a steamboat moored on the Mississippi River, which was under federal jurisdiction and exempt from the restrictive Missouri law.

1848 Benjamin Roberts, a free black living in Boston, unsuccessfully attempts to enroll his daughter Sarah in the Boston public schools. Roberts, joined by anti-slavery activist Charles Sumner sues the city, challenging its segregated school system. The two men argue that black schools have inferior resources to white schools and that segregation injures both races, creating feelings of degradation among blacks and fostering prejudice in whites. The Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts rejects their arguments, and holds that they had not proven that the black school was inferior.

1857 In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, a case that began in St. Louis, the Supreme Court declares that the U.S. territories cannot prohibit slavery and that blacks, including free blacks, do not have constitutional rights.

1863 President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation takes effect, freeing slaves in parts of the Confederacy not occupied by the North.

1865 The Civil War ends, and Congress passes and the states ratify the Thirteenth Amendment which abolishes slavery and involuntary servitude.

1868 The Fourteenth Amendment, which overturns the *Dred Scott* decision and guarantees equal protection and due process under the law is ratified by the states.

1870 Senator Charles Sumner introduces a bill in Congress to outlaw public school segregation and segregation in common carriers and public accommodations. The school desegregation provision is later removed and a modified version of the bill passes as the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The Fifteenth Amendment, which guarantees blacks the right to vote, is ratified.

Bond Between Transfer and Resident Student



Provided Insight, Shaped their Values Friendship of 20 Years Continues

Last fall's ten-year reunion of Hancock High School's class of 1993 was an opportunity for Harold Cooper Jr. and Tom Dittrich Jr. to reminisce, going all the way back to their elementary school years in the Hancock Place district. That's when the pair struck up their friendship – one that would become life long and which, they say, helped make them the men they are today.

It was in the third grade that Harold left his north St. Louis neighborhood and entered Hancock Elementary School as a voluntary transfer student. He and Tom, who lived down the street from the school, were drawn to one another and played together at recess.

Harold had never attended school with students of another race, but he says his third-grade teacher Donna Alden "helped me transition well." The principal, too, made him feel at ease, so much so, that he joined the school band, playing clarinet. His friend Tom also played in the band and both boys were members of the school's Junior Beta honors organization.

The distance between his Walnut Park home and the school, coupled with his parents' work schedules, made it difficult for Harold to attend evening band concerts and Junior Beta events at his school. Tom's parents, Tom Sr. and Debbie Dittrich, solved that problem by welcoming Harold into their home after school.

At the time, Tom Sr. was serving on the Hancock school board, a post he held for 17 years. Debbie was active in the Mother's Club. The couple's lives revolved around the activities of Tom and his younger brother Mike. They gladly opened their home to their sons' friends, including another of Tom's classmates who was also a voluntary transfer student. The presence of black children in their home became an opportunity for Tom and Debbie to impart their values. "We wanted our children to see people for who they are on the inside and not to judge or define by outward appearances."

On Harold's visits to the Dittrich's house, he played basketball and laser tag with Tom, joined the family for dinner, and then accompanied them to the school event.

In middle school, this "stay-over" arrangement intensified when both Harold and Tom played together on their school's basketball team. Often, the quiet and agreeable Harold would sleep over at the Dittrichs and tag along on family errands or activities the next day. He formed a connection with Tom's younger brother and also got to know their grandparents.

Former Hancock Place voluntary transfer student Harold Cooper Jr., middle, recently visited with his extended family, the Dittrichs of Lemay: parents Tom and Debbie and their sons Mike, left and Tom Jr. The friendship Harold and Tom forged nearly 20 years ago in the third grade continues today. It helped make them the men they are today, they say.

Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

Generally, Harold's father would pick him up from the Dittrichs. On a couple occasions, the Dittrichs drove Harold home and visited with his parents, Ida and Harold Cooper Sr.

Harold Jr. says his relationship with the Dittrichs "clarified the unknown" for him because he had no real experience socializing with white people. "I learned that people are the same even through we may have different skin color."

He especially praises Tom and Debbie. "They saw my potential and guided me in the same way they did their own sons." This was at the onset of the voluntary transfer program and Harold says Tom and Debbie set "standards of acceptance" for him. "They are good people. I have the utmost respect for them."

The feelings are reciprocated. "We couldn't have asked for a better person to be part of our family," notes Debbie, adding that Harold was always well mannered, respectful and funny. "We considered him one of our own."

Young Tom also speaks highly of Harold. "He's a great-hearted person. It's hard for anyone not to like him."

With all the comings and goings between homes, both sets of parents came to know one another. And when the Coopers' schedules allowed them to attend school events, the families sat together. "Ida and I discovered that we had a lot in common," says Debbie. "We share the same wedding anniversary and we are both short women who married tall men. Ida use to tell me I was like a sister to her." Harold confirms that he and his parents regarded the Dittrichs as extended family.

At Hancock High, Tom and Harold's friendship flourished. While the honor students no longer shared the same extracurricular

activities, they were enrolled in some of the same advanced placement classes.

Harold continued in the band, and looking back, appreciates the support his band director Harold Ostergard gave him. His former guidance counselor Barbara Klocke also holds a special place in his heart. She steered him to Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg where he studied business, headed up many campus organizations and graduated in 1998.

That same year, Tom earned his bachelor's degree in secondary English from Harris-Stowe University. During their college years, the friends continued to keep in touch and got together when Harold came home on breaks.

Now both 28 years old, they live and work in St. Louis. Tom serves as an administrative intern at Hancock Middle School. He lives with his wife and two young children in Lemay. Harold, who is single, is a local sales consultant for SBC and a small business owner. He recently purchased a home in Ferguson where he lives with his mom.

Each credit their friendship with helping them develop into well-rounded individuals, appreciative of people from other social and ethnic backgrounds. Tom says that the insight he gained about the black culture helps him relate better to African-American students at his school. Likewise, Harold has benefited on a business level from his ability to communicate with all types of people, he says.

When Tom and Harold saw each other recently at their class reunion, they vowed to try to get together more often. But regardless of how often they see each other, both are extremely grateful to have had the other one in their life. "I wouldn't be the person I am today without my friend Harold Cooper," says Tom.

Describing his relationship with Tom as "my first experience at true friendship," Harold says it set a wonderful precedent for future relationships. "I learned, as Dr. Martin Luther King said, not to judge people by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."



Tom Dittrich Jr. and Harold Cooper Jr. pose together after their 1993 graduation from Hancock High School. *Dittrich Family Photo*

1896 In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court holds that separate but equal facilities for white and black railroad passengers do not violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In a lone dissenting opinion, Justice John M. Harlan argues that forced segregation of the races stamps blacks with a badge of inferiority.

1938 In *Gaines v. Canada*, the Supreme Court decides in favor of Lloyd Gaines, a black student who had been refused admission to the University of Missouri Law School. The Court rules that the state must provide Gaines, within its boundaries, a legal education substantially equal to what is offered for white students, even if no other black students request the same opportunity. Gaines disappears before he is able to enroll in law school.

1946 President Harry Truman creates the President's Committee on Civil Rights. The committee's report calls for a broad range of policies against racism.

1948 In *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the Supreme Court rules that judicial enforcement of racially restrictive covenants in private housing violates the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. This case originated in St. Louis. The home involved at 4600 Labadie Avenue, although a National Historic Landmark, remains a private residence and is not open to the public.

President Truman orders the desegregation of the Armed Forces.

1949 Thurgood Marshall and NAACP officials launch a test case against segregation in public schools, filing a class action lawsuit against the Clarendon County (South Carolina) School Board. This case, known as *Briggs v. Elliott*, eventually becomes one of the cases consolidated by the Supreme Court into *Brown v. Board of Education*.

1951



Linda Brown, subject of the lawsuit.

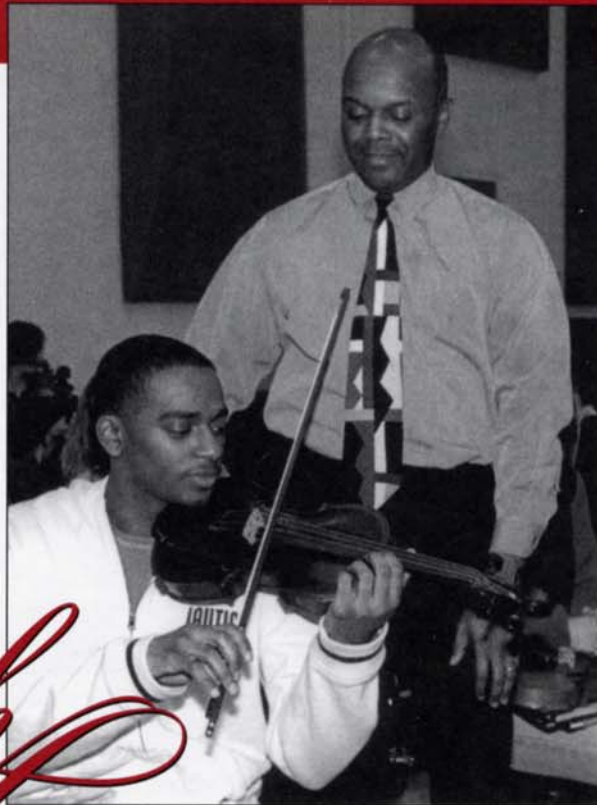
1951 *Brown v. Board of Education* goes to trial in Kansas. Although a three judge panel unanimously holds that "no willful, intentional or substantial discrimination" exists in the Topeka schools, the court also includes a finding of fact that echoes the testimony of the social science experts by noting that segregation has a detrimental effect on black school children.

1952 The Supreme Court hears the first round of arguments in *Brown* and its companion cases.

Opportunities
in County
District

Shape
Transfer
Student's
Future as

Classical Musician



As an elementary student at Kirkwood's Tillman School, Derrick Dortch took up his instrument—the violin—a year later than other students he later played with on the North Kirkwood Middle School orchestra. Still, the voluntary transfer student who is now a senior, maintained first chair throughout all his middle school years.

"It was evident he had natural ability," recalls Patrick Jackson, Kirkwood's instrumental music teacher and orchestra director. But despite his student's talent and impressive work ethic, the veteran music educator knows there are challenges facing students who want to seriously pursue classical music.

"The fact is they need a great instrument and quality private instruction which, for many African Americans, is not within their means," he said. That lack of resources, he reports, is why minorities comprise less than one percent of the seats on major symphony orchestras.

And on a smaller scale, he adds, it is why minorities are underrepresented on all-state orchestras and bands. "This year the Missouri All-State Orchestra includes only four African-Americans among its 100 musicians. Derrick is one of just four in the state; he was the only black member last year. This has been a pattern for years."

Jackson is working hard to break the pattern and Derrick Dortch is proof of that. He has eagerly taken advantage of the many resources Jackson has steered in his direction. As a result, he boasts a long list of accomplishments and recognitions as a student musician. But the key to all of this, the pair insist, is the private donor and foundation that have provided Derrick with the tools to achieve his goals.

One indispensable resource is a finely-crafted instrument. When Derrick was in the eighth grade, an Ernest Roth violin made in the 1920's and valued at \$8,000 was donated to Kirkwood's music program by a family in the district who remains anonymous. Because of his musical promise, Derrick was selected as the first Kirkwood student to have use of it. He did so, for about three years, until the Buder Foundation supplied him with another one, even older than the first, that he can keep permanently. The Ernest Roth violin has since been

In Kirkwood schools, Derrick Dortch's talents as a violinist were discovered and nurtured. The Kirkwood High voluntary transfer student plans to continue his music education and training with hopes of becoming a classical performer. Kirkwood's instrumental music teacher and orchestra director Patrick Jackson, pictured here, has steered many resources in Derrick's direction, making it possible for him to move closer to his career goals.

Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

passed on to another student who would not otherwise have access to a quality instrument.

The Buder Foundation, an organization dedicated to helping deserving arts students with financial need, is also responsible for the weekly private lessons Derrick has received throughout his high school years, as well as the sheet music he needs.

Other Kirkwood students have also received assistance in pursuing their musical endeavors. The same family who donated the expensive violin also established two separate scholarship funds earmarked for low-income student musicians — one for private lessons, the other for instruments. "We are so grateful for these scholarship monies," Jackson notes, "because they level the playing field by making it possible for musically-gifted youths with limited financial resources to acquire instruments and/or take private lessons."

Jackson's commitment to making music available to all students has paid off. His students repeatedly earn local, state and national recognition. The 2003 Kirkwood Teacher of the Year says he simply is "trying to make a difference" in the lives of his students in whatever way he can.

Derrick attests that he has done just that: "Mr. Jackson is my mentor and my motivator. Thanks to him I have received many things that have helped me become a better musician."

His violin instructor Kent Perry is at the top of that list, sharing his vast musical knowledge and experience with Derrick. Perry, of Kirkwood, is a retired violin professor at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

Another individual to whom Derrick is grateful is Allen Carl Larson, facilitator of the Buder Foundation. As music director at Webster University, Larson conducts the university's symphony orchestra. At his invitation, Derrick joined that orchestra and is thrilled to be in the company of its exceptional musicians — many who are music department graduate students and alumni.

In addition, the honor roll student serves as concert master for both the Kirkwood High School symphonic orchestra and the audition-based Cameron Youth Chamber Orchestra. He was one of three high school soloists selected this year for KFJO radio's Young Heroes in Music concert, which highlights talented African-American youth who perform classical music. Additionally, he was named by the Clayton Symphony Orchestra as a winner for this year's Florence Frager Young Artist's

Competition. He received an honorarium and was a featured soloist with the orchestra.

Jackson reports that Derrick is deserving of everything that has come his way. "He works extremely hard. He is a polite young man and very respectful. Absolutely everything I have asked of him he has done. He is an exceptional role model." The teacher predicts "a promising future" for Derrick whose ambition is to become a professional violinist, either in a symphony orchestra or as a concert soloist. His next step toward that goal is to major in music performance at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, which offered him a full scholarship.

Derrick, the son of David and June Ann Dortch, is not the only one in his family who is musically inclined. His father was the lead singer of a band that many years ago traveled around the Midwest. Two of his siblings — all who attended Kirkwood schools — were serious musicians while there.

His parents, justifiably proud of Derrick's accomplishments, praise the Kirkwood district. A volunteer board member for the Cameron Youth Chamber Orchestra, his father sees firsthand what its members are receiving from other music programs and at other schools. "The Kirkwood music program stands out with its faculty support and grants," he says. And about the district as a whole, he adds, "The long-time association we have had with Kirkwood has been a very beneficial and gratifying experience for all of my family."

1953



The Library of Congress Photographs and Prints Division

1953 Supreme Court Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson dies, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower nominates California Governor Earl Warren, shown above, to replace him. With Warren as interim Chief, the Court hears the second round of arguments in *Brown v. Board*.

New York World - Telegram & Sun Photograph Collection (Library of Congress)

1954



Thurgood Marshall, center, celebrates the landmark decision with George E. C. Hayes, left, and James M. Nabrit.

1954 On May 17, the Supreme Court rules unanimously in the *Brown* case "that in the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place."

1955 The Supreme Court hears its third round of arguments in *Brown* concerning remedies. On May 31, the last day of the Court's term, *Brown II* is handed down, ordering that desegregation occur with "all deliberate speed."

The Montgomery Bus Boycott begins, following Rosa Parks' arrest after refusing to relinquish her seat on a Montgomery (Alabama) city bus to a white passenger.

1956 The Montgomery Bus Boycott finally ends after the Supreme Court rules that the city ordinances calling for segregated seating on the Montgomery buses violate the Fourteenth Amendment.

1957 Paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division are called in to join federalized members of the Arkansas National Guard in Little Rock when Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus attempts to prevent the court-ordered admission of black students to Central High School.

County
District's
Preparation
Gives Transfer
Student

"Leg Up"

Missouri Academy
Grad's Next Stop is

University of North Carolina

From the time Erica Glenn, now 18, entered Rose Acres School, back in the first grade, she thrived in the Pattonville school district. The voluntary transfer student connected well with her teachers and made the most of all the opportunities available to her. Socially, too, she felt comfortable and connected.

So naturally she was very upset when the family, who lives in the central corridor of St. Louis, received notice of changes in the transfer program a few years ago. Because of new attendance area boundaries, Erica would have to switch to another county district or provide her own transportation to Pattonville for her last two years of high school.

But the situation had an unexpected silver lining because it steered the bright and determined



young woman in another direction entirely. She applied for admission to the highly-selective Missouri Academy of Science, Mathematics and Computing at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville. This accelerated two-year residential program for academically-talented Missouri students replaces the junior and senior years of high school. Its rigorous curriculum of college-level courses is taught by university faculty.

Erica's academic record and other distinctions as an outstanding Pattonville student, coupled with letters of recommendation from several Pattonville faculty, won her an invitation to the Academy, where she has received free tuition and room and board. In May 2004, in her two separate graduation ceremonies, she will earn an Associate of Science degree from Northwest Missouri State and a high school diploma from Pattonville High.

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She says she was "really happy" to be part of the Pattonville ceremony. Principal Jeff Marion said he wouldn't have it any other way. "Throughout Erica's many years in the Pattonville district, she contributed to the high-achieving climate we promote. With her impressive academic and leadership skills, she was a wonderful addition to our school community. We are thrilled to have her back as part of the 2004 graduating class."

Erica and her family thought it fitting that she celebrate alongside her former schoolmates and teachers the education she was blessed with at Pattonville. "Thank God for that district," her mother

On a visit home, Erica Glenn returned to Pattonville High to see her former Honors English teacher Judi Mitchell-Miller, with whom she regularly corresponds. Although the voluntary transfer student has spent her junior and senior years at Northwest Missouri State University in an academically-accelerated program, she will graduate with the Pattonville class of 2004 and also receive an associate's degree from Northwest Missouri State University. Erica and her family are grateful to the Pattonville school community for embracing her and giving her many opportunities to excel. Next fall she will enter University of North Carolina, her top pick among the many attractive scholarship offers she received.

Photo by
Bob Burns,
Photo/AV/Web Specialist,
Pattonville School District

Warice Davis, said as she summarized everything Erica gained at Pattonville.

"In the first grade her teacher Lisa Stahlhut called me and said she wanted to have Erica tested for the gifted program. From that point on, the district took the ball and gave her additional opportunities to enrich and enhance her learning. Information about these gifted programs was brought to me. I never had to seek it out."

Mrs. Davis, in fact, attributes Erica's attractive scholarship offers from top-notch universities to the "leg up" she says she received at Pattonville. From her top picks – Purdue, University of Miami and University of North Carolina (UNC) – Erica has chosen UNC for undergraduate studies in athletic training followed by graduate coursework in physical therapy. She will already have 83 college credits under her belt when she enrolls.

Pattonville also get kudos from Mrs. Davis for the "sense of security and acceptance" Erica felt there. "She was never judged by her race, but rather on her individual qualities, and that gave her confidence about the person she is." That self-assurance made for an easy transition to the Missouri Academy where, as the only African American in her class of 58 students, she has fit in well. The quiet and reserved Erica even took on some leadership roles, her mother adds, demonstrating that "she really connected."

Erica too has many complimentary words for the district and even keeps in touch with a couple of her former teachers. "It's a good community of people," she notes. The staff is very committed. They genuinely care." She recalls brief encounters with faculty members from her earlier years — teachers she didn't even have — and her elementary D.A.R.E. officer: "They've stopped me in the hallway,

told me they remember me and that they are proud of me."

Former teacher Lisa Stahlhut is especially pleased at what Erica has achieved. The pair has been emailing each other regularly for about the last year and a half. "Erica is a high-level thinker who knows her goals and goes after them. I am happy that Pattonville gave her the opportunities to maximize her potential. She is a perfect example of what the VICC program is all about."

Pattonville High teacher Judi Mitchell-Miller, who taught Erica Honors English for two years, believes the sky is the limit for her. "Erica can pretty much do anything. She is highly motivated and talented in many areas. She is an absolutely wonderful human being."

"Erica is a high-level thinker who knows her goals and goes after them. I am happy that Pattonville gave her the opportunities to maximize her potential. She is a perfect example of what the VICC program is all about."

**Lisa Stahlhut
Pattonville School District**

New York World - Telegram & Sun Photograph Collection



1960 Freshmen from all-black North Carolina A&T College sit down at the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, vowing to stay until the management agrees to desegregate the counter. Eventually lunch counter sit-ins become a vital tactic for civil rights protesters.

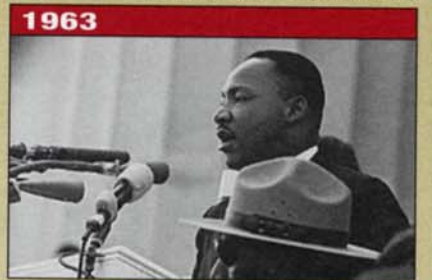
1961 Freedom Rides are begun in an effort to integrate interstate bus routes throughout the South. After months of violence, the Interstate Commerce Commission prohibits interstate bus companies from using segregated facilities.

1962 Federal marshals accompany James Meredith to the University of Mississippi to register for classes there, following days of violence and rioting.

1963 At his inauguration as Governor of Alabama, George Wallace states: "Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!"

In *Watson v. City of Memphis*, the Supreme Court rejects the City of Memphis' request for a delay in desegregating its facilities. In their ruling, the Court says, "Brown never contemplated that the concept of 'deliberate speed' would countenance indefinite delay in elimination of racial barriers in schools."

National Archives and Records Administration



Two hundred fifty thousand demonstrators participate in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., above, delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech.

The Birmingham Sixteenth Street Baptist church is bombed, killing four young black girls attending Sunday school.

1964 Congress passes and President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964, outlawing race and gender discrimination in voting, public accommodations and employment. Title IV, which prohibits discrimination in education, becomes a major tool of desegregation efforts.

*Family
Credits
Voluntary
Transfer
Program
with*

Growth & Learning Opportunities



The educational choices made by the Willis family of south St. Louis County resulted in positive growth experiences for all family members and gave daughter Allison a framework of knowledge that she now applies in her law school studies.

When Allison was in the third grade, she transferred from the Maplewood school district to St. Louis' Classical Junior Academy (CJA) as a voluntary transfer student. The school for gifted students was then located north of Forest Park. The family had heard about its challenging curriculum and was excited about the school's diversity.

About their decision, Allison's mother Dahna Willis recalls, "It was our feeling that experiences in a diverse school environment are much richer and more complimentary to our interests." Indeed, CJA was a good fit for Allison and she continued there even though her younger brother attended the

Bayless district when the family moved to south county. "Allison's experiences at CJA elevated her awareness and intensified her interest in being part of the larger world," she reports.

While Allison and her parents appreciated the global perspective, her grandmother, who lives with the family, "was at a different place entirely," according to Mrs. Willis. She explains that Grandma's apprehension about Allison taking the bus to a racially-diverse city school was an expected reaction given her generation and her upbringing in rural Missouri. Eventually though she came to better understand the family's values and "moved forward in her thinking along with the rest of us," said Mrs. Willis.

Along with the appeal of CJA's cultural diversity, Allison loved her teachers and the intense assignments. "Our teachers pushed us to achieve all that we could and to believe that anything was within our reach. This matched my parents' philosophies."

Although she did not finish out her years at CJA as she would have liked, Allison put her enthusiasm for diversity to good in the Bayless district. She got involved in Students Teaching Teachers, a program where a panel of diverse high school students representing various districts talked candidly to teachers and administrators in other districts about how it feels to be a student in a multicultural classroom. The VICC-sponsored program was designed to emphasize to faculty the realities of the impact of attitudes and behaviors on students in a non-judgmental yet engaging way.

Her participation in this program helped make up for

Allison Willis' future was shaped in part by her involvement in St. Louis' voluntary transfer program. She appreciated the cultural diversity and global perspective of the magnet school she attended. At Bayless High, she advocated for social justice issues through her involvement in VICC's Students Teaching Teachers program. Allison's experiences caused her family members to also grow and develop in their thinking. The 2000 graduate of Washington University is now in her final year at California Western School of Law. She looks forward to applying her knowledge and value system in the practice of law.

Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

the frustration she felt as a student in her district whose 87 percent white population "didn't reflect the real world," she says. "My family continually sought to verbalize the need for conversations and action toward achieving social justice in our community, but this was not a very popular viewpoint in our district."

Regardless, she rotated to county schools sharing her personal perspectives about the value of the voluntary desegregation program. "The breadth of life experiences that are present in a racially-integrated classroom are critical to both class discussion and to the life lessons learned everyday in school," she notes.

As Allison moved along in her journey of discovery, the personal growth and development she experienced became a "family affair," reports her mother. Her father Dick gave up his executive and board room responsibilities to return to the classroom — this time as a teacher and coach at Bayless High School. Her brother Trey, a senior at the University of Missouri-Columbia, is now studying abroad in Alicante, Spain, as he completes dual degrees in international studies and Spanish. Her mother, a life coach and consultant, presents keynotes and provides workshops and retreats in which participants examine their assumptions, values and actions related to social justice issues. "Reflecting on Allison's experiences prompted all of us to actualize our beliefs and to learn our roles regarding cultural differences and racial tolerance," she says.

From Bayless High, Allison enrolled at Washington University as an African-American Studies major. "My studies focused on institutional racism. I wanted to study the systems of oppression in place in part to learn what my role was in those systems and what part I could play in changing the systems."

After graduating with Eliot Honors from Washington University, Allison encountered "eye opening" experiences when she worked as an entertainer on a cruise ship for six months. "The ship drew distinct class lines based on job descriptions," she explains. "The longer I spent on the ship, the clearer the lines of segregation became."

The access and equity issues at play on the cruise ship had a profound affect on her and were partly responsible for her decision to study law. This fall, she will begin her final year at California Western School of Law in San Diego. As a member of the editorial staff of the law review, she wrote an article that discusses whether a settlement agreement is an appropriate resolution for a court-ordered desegregation program. "It is based on the St. Louis situation and it focuses on the procedure of the Liddell case," she says.

Allison will serve as editor-in-chief of the law review next school year, but before then, she will spend the summer as an associate in the Chicago office of the national law firm Sonnenschein, Nath and Rosenthal.

As she looks ahead to her work as an attorney, perhaps in the area of employment law, Allison says she is grateful for the experiences that prompted her to observe, question and evaluate social justice and race relations issues in our society. She hopes to use the beliefs she has formed to make a difference in the practice of law.

As a Bayless High School member of Students Teaching Teachers, Allison Willis, far right, appeared with then-VICC Executive Director Susan Uchitelle and two other students on KSDK News Channel 5's "St. Louis Sunday" show. They talked with reporter/anchor Jennifer Blome about how the student transfer program has enriched the lives of both transfer and resident students. *Photo by Peggy Magee*



1964



1965 In March, a four day march by protestors from Selma to Montgomery to petition Governor George Wallace for black voting rights erupts in violence.

In August, President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Congress passes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in September, which gives the federal government the ability to enforce compliance with court desegregation orders by threatening to withhold federal funding.

1966 In *United States v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, the New Orleans school districts are ordered to abandon "freedom of choice" plans that consistently failed to desegregate schools.

1967 President Johnson nominates Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court. He takes his seat in October, becoming the first African-American Justice on the Supreme Court.

The Kerner Commission which was charged with investigating race riots across the country, warns in its report that the nation is rapidly moving toward two separate societies, one black and poor; the other affluent and white. The Commission calls for major anti-poverty efforts and strengthened civil rights enforcement.

1968 In *Green v. New Kent County School Board*, the Supreme Court holds that segregation must be dismantled "root and branch." It rejects a freedom-of-choice plan that allowed black students to transfer to white schools because it placed the burden of desegregation on black students and preserved white and black identified institutions.

1969 In *Alexander v. Holmes*, the Supreme Court unanimously declares that Brown II's "all deliberate speed" time frame has expired and that desegregated schools must be achieved "at once."

1971 The Supreme Court specifically endorses busing as a remedy for school desegregation in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education*.

The Dream

"Everyone wants to know whether integration works. Well, I can tell you what doesn't work. Segregated education didn't work. It didn't work for me, and it didn't work for a lot of black people. You owe it to the children of St. Louis to provide them some choices and a quality education. And if you don't see that it happens, all of us are going to pay for it. Each and everyone of us is going to pay for it."

Minnie Liddell, 1997, speaking at a state legislative hearing debating the future of the transfer program



1972 Frustrated because their children were being bused to schools some distance away from their neighborhood, a group of five black north St. Louis parents, led by Minnie Liddell, file a complaint in the U.S. District Court. The parents claimed that certain practices by the city's school board and the state of Missouri were responsible for segregation in the St. Louis school system.

1973 The Supreme Court, in *Keys v. Denver School District*, considers for the first time the problems of northern metropolitan segregation, which is often the result of demographic shifts and residential segregation rather than deliberate segregation. Justice Lewis F. Powell argues that the harm of segregation is the same whether school segregation is mandated by law (*de jure* segregation) or produced by other factors (*de facto* segregation).

1974 In *Miliken v. Bradley*, the Supreme court rules that courts may not order remedies among different districts unless it shows discriminatory intention in each district or a discriminatory policy in one district that has segregative effects in other districts. This decision ends most judicial remedies linking white suburbs with black inner city schools.

1975 Judge Arthur Garrity issues an elaborate plan to desegregate Boston's public schools, ordering the busing of 21,000 students. In response, riots break out at numerous high schools. The reaction in Boston exemplifies the height of national tension over busing.

In the Liddell case, Chief Judge James Meredith approves a consent decree drawn up by attorneys for both sides whereby the school board agrees to increase its numbers of minority teachers and attempts to relieve residence-based racial imbalances.

1976 In the Liddell case, the NAACP objects to the settlement and seeks to intervene in the case. Although Judge Meredith refuses their request, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals grants them permission to intervene.

Over the next several years, more parties are added to the case, including the State Board of Education and the State Commissioner of Education as defendants with the school board and as plaintiffs, the City of St. Louis and two groups of white parents.

The St. Louis Public Schools begin Magnet Schools as a segregation remedy.

1979 In the Liddell case, Judge Meredith rules that the city school board had not intentionally segregated black students.

In Topeka, the ACLU and a group of black parents re-opens the original Brown case, arguing that 25 years after the historic decision the city's schools still remain racially segregated.

1980 In St. Louis, the Court of Appeals reverses earlier decisions and said that the city board and state were responsible for maintaining a segregated school system. In its ruling, the Court notes that until 1976, long after the separate but equal doctrine was ruled unconstitutional, the Missouri Constitution contained an article calling for separate schools. The Court suggests the development of an exchange program between the city and the county and returns the case to Meredith.

St. Louis school officials submit plans for an intradistrict (within the district) desegregation plan which is approved by the Court for implementation that September, with the transfer of 7,500 students.

Judge Meredith steps down from the case and hands it over to U.S. District Judge William Hungate.

1981 Judge Hungate proposes a regional voluntary desegregation plan, and calls for responses from 39 schools districts. On August 6, the deadline for response to the plan, only four districts – Clayton, Kirkwood, Ritenour and University City – had approved the plan. In less than three weeks, the Judge adds the remaining 17 St. Louis County school districts as defendants. (Excluded was the Ferguson-Florissant district which was part of an earlier desegregation case.) The Pattonville district immediately asks to join the voluntary plan and other districts consider it.

That September, 125 transfer students choose to be enrolled in the new voluntary program.

1982 In St. Louis, Judge Hungate announces that he will consider calling for mandatory desegregation of schools by merging the city and county school districts into four sub-districts governed by a single board, if a suitable voluntary plan, agreed to by city and county districts cannot be developed, and if the county districts are found liable for the segregation that existed in the city schools.

1983 In February, an agreement on a voluntary plan in the St. Louis case is announced and endorsed by officials in twenty of the 23 county districts. By March 30, a final settlement plan, approved by all 23 districts, is given to Judge Hungate, who approves the plan after two months of fairness hearings.

By September, the St. Louis plan is fully underway, with over 2,000 city transfer students enrolled, and implemented by the Voluntary Interdistrict Coordinating Council (VICC.)

The State of Missouri, which had been found to be the "primary constitutional wrong-doer," was ordered to pay the costs of the voluntary interdistrict plan and also pay one-half of the cost of improvements in the city schools. The State appealed the settlement, saying it could not bear the burden of paying for the plan.



1984 The Court of Appeals upheld Judge Hungate's decision in the St. Louis school desegregation case.

By fall, more than 5,500 St. Louis area students were participating in the voluntary St. Louis Student Transfer program. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the state's appeal in the case.

1993 The State of Missouri renewed its request for unitary status of the school case and final settlement of the entire lawsuit.

1996 A three-week hearing in Federal District Court in St. Louis is held on the state of Missouri's request for unitary status. Following the hearing Federal Judge George F. Gunn appointed retired Washington University Chancellor William H. Danforth to negotiate a settlement among the major parties to the lawsuit.

1999 All parties to the Liddell lawsuit announce that an agreement has been reached, which would provide for continuation of the most successful components of the 1983 Settlement Agreement – specifically, the voluntary transfer program and the St. Louis Magnet Schools. New students would be allowed to enroll through the 2008-2009 school year.

With approval of a 2/3rds of a cent sales tax increase by St. Louis city voters on February 2, and court approval of the 1999 Settlement Agreement on March 15, the Voluntary Interdistrict Coordinating Council (VICC) became a non-profit corporation, re-named the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC), responsible for running all aspects of the voluntary student transfer program. No longer funded by incremental court-ordered state payments, the voluntary transfer program continues, now governed by superintendents of the participating districts and funded through the same state funding mechanisms as all other public schools in Missouri.

Along with the organizational changes, the major programmatic change was the establishment of four attendance areas in the city linked with specific suburban school districts.

2004 The voluntary transfer program continues as a major part of public education in the St. Louis area with over 10,000 students still participating in the program.

The face of metropolitan area classrooms has changed significantly since the voluntary transfer program began in the early 1980's when some districts had less than 1% minority enrollment. Today, that population ranges from 10% to over 50%. Children educated in diverse environments are reaping the benefits of enhanced racial understanding and cooperation.

Growth of Minority Representation in Suburban Districts Since 1982

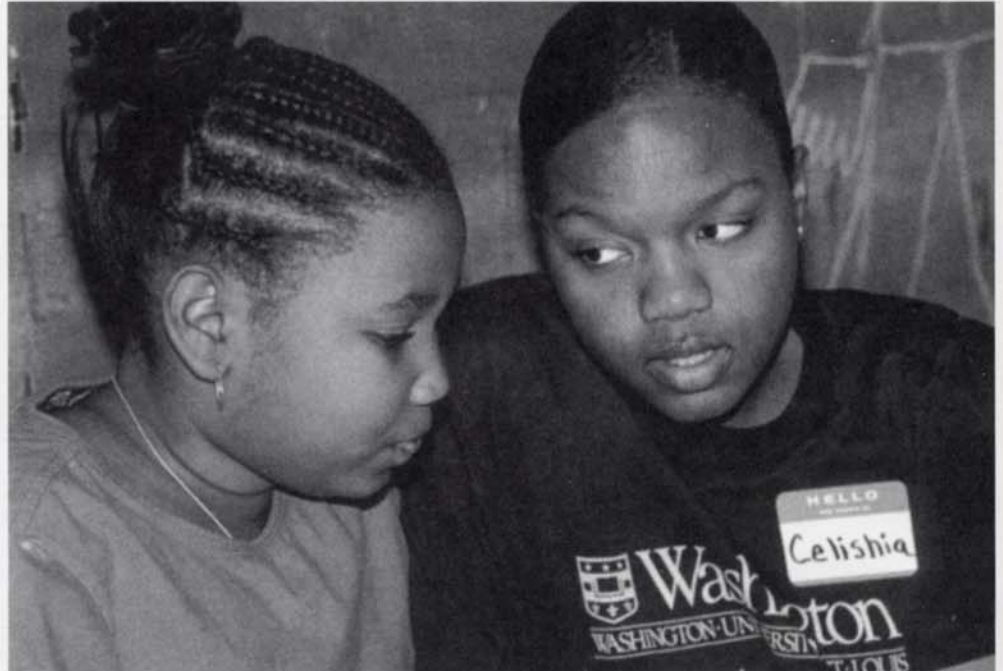
School District	First Year in Transfer Program	First Year Transfer Student Enrollment	Student Population Percent Black 1982-83	Transfer Student Enrollment 6/30/03	Total Minority Enrollment 6/30/03	Student Population Percent Black 6/30/03	Total Student Enrollment 6/30/03
Affton	1982	48	1.60%	244	295	11.80%	2,499
Bayless	1983	53	0.10%	136	159	10.69%	1,488
Brentwood	1982	45	23.90%	195	235	27.61%	851
Clayton	1981	30	6.00%	509	571	22.57%	2,530
Hancock Place	1982	38	3.00%	278	328	19.07%	1,720
Hazelwood	1983	24	17.40%	0	10,513	54.57%	19,266
Kirkwood	1981	21	19.30%	596	1,174	23.23%	5,053
Ladue	1982	85	15.60%	143	574	17.70%	3,243
Lindbergh	1982	50	1.60%	586	644	12.39%	5,199
Mehlville	1983	155	0.03%	1,256	1,401	12.17%	11,512
Parkway	1982	110	2.50%	2,464	3,287	16.69%	19,698
Pattonville	1981	23	5.30%	420	1,432	23.97%	5,973
Ritenour	1981	50	14.50%	28	1,909	32.67%	5,843
Rockwood	1983	102	0.90%	2,079	2,396	11.51%	20,810
Special	1983	NA	NA	53	655	54.58%	1,200
Valley Park	1983	33	0.40%	202	287	29.53%	972
Webster Groves	1983	165	19.90%	382	1,015	25.01%	4,058
Total/Average		1,032	8.25%	9,571	26,875	24.01%	111,915

NOTE: Data for Hazelwood in the last three columns of this chart are from 12/1/03, rather than 6/30/03.

University City was one of the original five districts to participate even though they could not accept students from St. Louis.

VICC
Counselors
Partner
with Schools

Help Students, Staff and Parents



with Issues They Face

Since the inception of the voluntary transfer program in 1983, a group of counselors has focused on ensuring positive school experiences for not only the 50,000-plus participating students and their families, but resident students, faculty and staff as well.

"We want everyone involved to learn and grow and therefore we wear many hats," reports counselor Laverne Mitchom, one of the five full-time counselors currently employed by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC).

One area of responsibility is to help parents, students, school staff and central office personnel with issues that may interfere with a transfer student's success, including attendance, discipline, curriculum, achievement or transportation. This can range from answering questions or providing advice by phone to facilitating face-to-face meetings between the student, parents and school staff.

"Every situation is different and so we respond based on the unique circumstances," explains counselor Mildred Scott, adding that each counselor handles the same broad set of responsibilities. A student or family is assigned to a counselor based on the first letter of the student's last name.

In addition to individual and small group counseling or mediation, the VICC counselors present workshops for school staffs to help them better understand their roles within a diverse classroom setting. Too, the counselors make available to schools a myriad of leadership training programs for students.

Three of these programs are "Enriching Race Relations through Education," "Girls Within Reach" and "Survival Kit for Young Men." Here, the VICC counselors work directly with the students, assisted by school staff. They tailor the self-designed curriculum to the participating group.

In another counselor-designed program for students, "I Choose Success," a school staffer facilitates the program after being trained by the VICC counselors. This program, in particular, has been widely embraced by county educators, enlisting nearly 225 school groups since it was piloted three years ago. It targets transfer students in the sixth and ninth grades and "helps them in their transition to the middle and high school years," says VICC counselor Mary Meehan.

Schools can opt to offer the semester-long curriculum either during school hours or after school. Students focus on developing skills for success – including everything from time management,

The VICC counselors have a hands-on role in the Academic Support Center, a free tutoring service for St. Louis area schoolchildren that is sponsored jointly by the VICC and St. Louis Public Schools. They give advice to parents on issues affecting their children, both on a one-on-one basis and in the parent workshops they lead. Here, Parkway student Jasmine Smith, at left, receives homework help from Washington University tutor Celishia Bussey.

Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

responsibility and communication to decision-making, study habits and test taking. Also covered are relationships with teachers and other adults and connecting with peers.

Although "I Choose Success" was designed for voluntary transfer students, schools can adapt it to any group of students. Lindbergh administrator Sonya Ptah attributes the high interest in "I Choose Success" to its being "right on target with what students need."

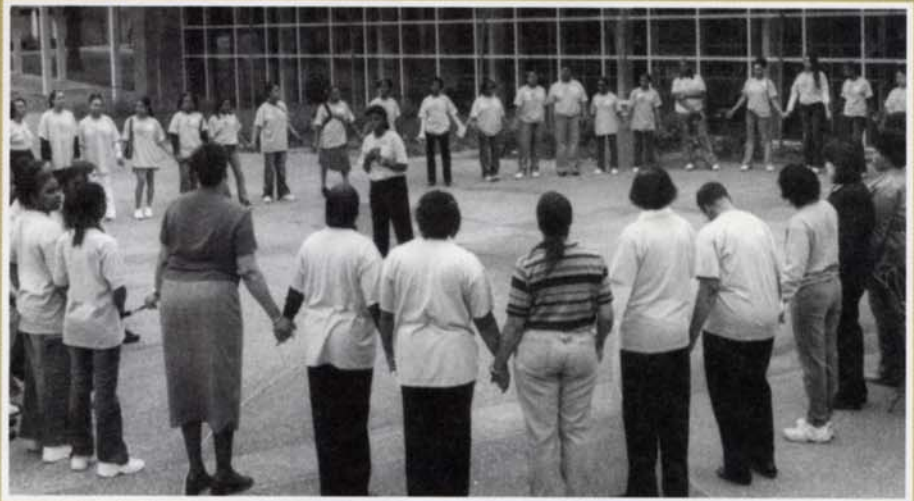
Parents, too, glean valuable information from VICC counselors via the many workshops they conduct on strategies for school success. Often, these are formal presentations on specific topics; other times, the counselors impart advice during the parent discussion groups they lead.

Many of these information-sharing sessions have been sponsored in conjunction with the Academic Support Center, a free tutoring service for students at Stevens Community Education Center in north St. Louis. The VICC counselors oversee the center, which is sponsored jointly by the VICC and St. Louis Public Schools. Washington University students serve as the tutors and a VICC counselor is available every Thursday to confer with parents on issues affecting their children.

In their work with parents, the counselors continuously stress to them that they should be informed and involved and give them specific how-to suggestions. One transfer parent came away from a counselor-led workshop saying, "I learned ways to keep the lines of communication open between home and school and I picked up helpful parenting information. It was a good opportunity to discuss issues and share ideas with other parents."

As the VICC counselors switch from one hat to another in their broad range of responsibilities for the voluntary transfer program, their overall goal remains constant, notes counselor Laverne Mitchom. "We strive to make the experiences of all those involved more successful."

VICC's "I Choose Success" Serves as Prototype for Other Programs Schools Launch



The conviction in their voices was unmistakable. Seventy young female students rocked the Busch Center at St. Louis University as they chanted in unison: "I am important. I can be whatever I want to be."

It was an empowerment workshop presented just for them, the culminating activity of Sperreng Middle School's ABC club (attitude, behavior, character). The club, which meets weekly, is open to any female in the Lindbergh district school. It is run by counselor Ida Grider, who also facilitates the school's "I Choose Success" program in separate sessions for male and female African-American sixth graders.

Grider calls the ABC club a "spin-off" of "I Choose Success" that reaches a broader group of students. Sperreng is among many schools who have extracted principles covered in "I Choose Success" and incorporated them into other student development programs they offer.

In the ABC club, the emphasis is on character traits — respect, responsibility, cooperation and others — that, "collectively, lead to positive attitudes which fuel a student's success," explains Grider. "Some of my older students who serve as leaders in the ABC club are eighth graders who participated in "I Choose Success" as sixth graders. The younger students can draw on the experiences of the older ones and learn from them."

Peer mentoring is an important part of the ABC club and the workshop even drew some high schoolers who are graduates of Sperreng. Parents were also in attendance in support of the young ladies. With the theme of self-esteem, the half-day program featured self-evaluation exercises and small group discussions along with a fashion and talent show presented by some of the girls. Volunteer facilitators and helpers included several Sperreng faculty members, plus other local educators.

Eighth-grader Brittney Brown, a regular at the ABC club meetings, feels qualified to offer insight and advice to fellow members, having learned some things in the "I Choose Success" program. "It helped me get on track about my future," she reports. "It was an opportunity to open up and share thoughts about issues students our age face."

Jasmine Mitchell also serves as a discussion leader at the ABC meetings, helping "to get the main ideas across," she says. A past participant of "I Choose Success," she describes the program as, "a great experience that helped me learn how to deal with different situations and problems." One piece of advice she passes on to younger students is: "You have control over what you say, how you act and how you dress."

In her opening remarks at the workshop, Ida Grider reiterated the philosophy of the ABC club: "Character determines attitude. Attitude determines altitude. Altitude determines how successful you can be. The sky is the limit for you." The room burst into cheers.

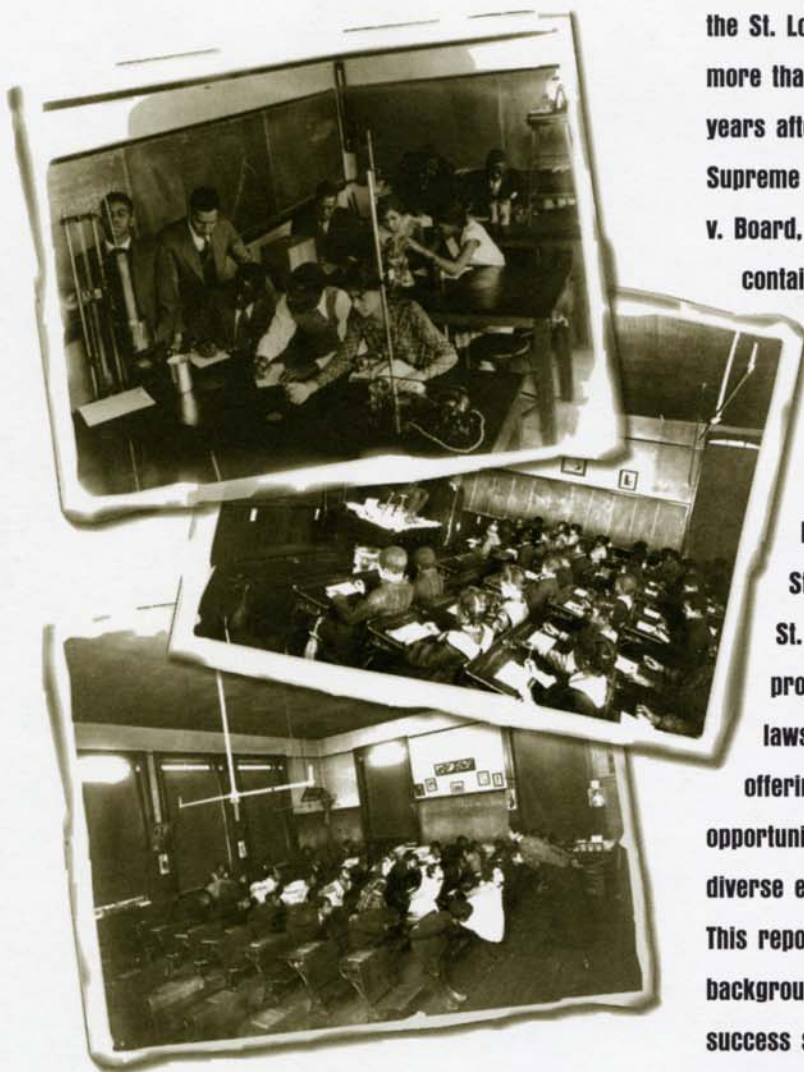
Members of Sperreng Middle School's ABC club (attitude, behavior, character) and other female students link up in a circle to show their unity. This activity was part of an empowerment workshop presented by Sperreng counselor Ida Grider, in middle of circle. Grider runs the weekly ABC club, a "spin-off" of the popular VICC program "I Choose Success" which she also facilitates for Sperreng students. "You are all part of a big puzzle," she told the girls, "and everyone has a part to play in it."

Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

Segregated schools persisted in the St. Louis metropolitan area for more than 100 years. And for 28 years after the historic 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board*, the Missouri Constitution contained an article calling for separate schools.

This situation began to be addressed in 1972 with the filing of a lawsuit by a group of St. Louis parents. The St. Louis Student Transfer program developed from the lawsuit and continues today, offering students the opportunity to learn and grow in a diverse educational environment.

This report offers historical background as well as real life success stories of students who have participated in this voluntary program.



Group work in physics,
Stowe Teachers College, early 1900s
St. Louis Public Schools Archives

Drawing class L'Ouverture School, early 1900s
St. Louis Public Schools Archives

Calisthenics, L'Ouverture School, early 1900s
St. Louis Public Schools Archives

Background photo front cover
In 1866, this building at 12th and Brooklyn,
served black students and was know
as Colored School #2
St. Louis Public Schools Archives

Still Fulfilling the Dream
St. Louis Student Transfer Program
Report to the Community
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