DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 218 377 UD 022 301

AUTHOR Racine, Marie M.B.
TITLE Infuences on Curriculum Development in the Public Schools of Washington, D.C., 1804-1982. Studies in D.C. History and Public Policy Paper No. 4.
INSTITUTION District of Columbia Univ., Washington, DC. Dept. of Urban Studies.; District of Columbia Univ., Washington, DC. Inst. for District Affairs.
SPONS AGENCY National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE May 82
NOTE 96p.; For related documents, see UD 022 298-300.
AVAILABLE FROM University of the District of Columbia, Department of Urban Studies, 4200 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20008 ($1.00; make checks payable to UDC Fund/History-Policy Project).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Ability Grouping; Academic Achievement; Administrator Role; *Curriculum; *Curriculum Development; Disadvantaged Youth; Economic Factors; *Educational Improvement; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; *Political Influences; School Organization; *Social Influences; Special Education; Track System (Education); Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *District of Columbia Public Schools

ABSTRACT

This report provides a historical overview of curriculum development in the public schools of Washington, D.C. Investigation of the pre-emancipation period (1804-1864) shows that curriculum focused on the development of basic skills, moral values, and employment skills. During the period of the dual school system (1864-1954), when public education was provided separately for blacks and whites, developments in curriculum included an increase in the number and variety of subjects and courses at elementary and secondary levels; the rise of junior high schools, vocational education, and special education; and shifts in responsibility for curriculum development from the Board of Education to teachers and administrators. In the post-desegregation period (1954-1982), racial integration and the increase in the number of black students led to the development of the track system and a curriculum for a predominantly urban and black student body. After 1954, curriculum aimed primarily to educate students of low socioeconomic backgrounds and several curriculum plans to improve academic achievement were implemented. The report identifies historical, sociopolitical, educational, and other factors to explain curriculum changes at given periods, suggests that employment has been the fundamental purpose of the school system over the years, and discusses elements that should be considered in proposing curriculum reforms. (Author/MJL)

INFLUENCES ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF WASHINGTON D.C. 1804 – 1982

BY

MARIE M.B. RACINE
PROFESSOR OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE
AND
ASSOCIATE DEAN
UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

STUDIES IN D.C. HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY

PAPER No. 4

THE D.C. HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY PROJECT

THE D.C. HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY PROJECT seeks to provide historical research on critical public policy issues in the District of Columbia in a form useful to policymakers in this city and the general public concerned with policy issues. During the 1981-82 academic year, the project has examined Public Education. In addition to preparing these papers, the project conducts seminars for the Mayor, the City Council, the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education based on its research, and also holds a public conference.

The project is an undertaking of the Department of Urban Studies (College of Liberal and Fine Arts) and the Institute for District Affairs of the UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. It is funded by a grant from the NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES.

For copies of this paper or others in this series, send $1.00 for each paper to Department of Urban Studies, University of the District of Columbia, 4200 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Room 402-08, Washington, D.C. 20008. Make checks payable to UDC Fund/History-Policy Project.

INFLUENCES ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF WASHINGTON, D. C. 1804 - 1982

by

Marie M. B. Racine

Professor of Foreign Languages
and Associate Dean,
College of Liberal and Fine Arts
University of the District of Columbia

Studies in D.C. History and Public Policy
Paper No. 4

May, 1982

This paper is part of a series of historical studies on the public schools of the District of Columbia prepared by the staff of the D. C. HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY PROJECT, an undertaking of the Department of Urban Studies (College of Liberal and Fine Arts) and the Institute for District Affairs of the UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, funded by a grant from the NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Public education in the Pre-Emancipation Period was considered important; however, reflecting the political conditions of the period, it was only offered for the benefit of white children. Curriculum was used to promote both moral and practical purposes: the development of basic skills, the acquisition of knowledge, the enrichment of the individual, and the moral development of pupils. These basic purposes remained, with variations, throughout the period. A major concern then was, as it is now, the development of employment skills.

During the period 1864-1954, the major institutional change was the establishment of public education for colored children within a dual school system. The curricula of the period were characterized by an increase in the number and variety of subjects provided and by the differentiation of courses of study. College preparatory, career-oriented, and practical (life skills) curricula were developed. The types of courses generally offered were classified under the headings Academic or Scientific, Commercial or Technical, and Practical. The curriculum of the secondary school was mainly of two types: differentiated, and "constants and electives." Innovations in the elementary school included establishment of the kindergarten and its articulation with the primary grades, the Child Development Program, a shift from subject-oriented to a child-centered curriculum, and character education. To meet the special needs of the young adolescent, junior high schools were established. The period also witnessed the rise and development of vocational education and the slow and difficult beginning of special education. Curriculum development became the responsibility of committees of teachers and administrators, a major change from the prescription of the curriculum by the Board or the Superintendent.

In the Post-Desegregation Period, two factors stand out with regard to the development of curriculum. One factor was the racial integration of students; the second factor was the growth in the number of black students and the increase in the number of pupils from lower socio-economic strata. A response to integration was the development of the track system, the flight of whites from the D.C. public schools, and the development of a curriculum for an urban and predominantly black student body.

After 1954 the primary aim of curriculum was to educate students who were mainly of a lower socio-economic background. As indicated by test results, this group had severe academic weaknesses. The challenge to the system became one of trying to address those academic weaknesses. With the abolition of tracking, the school system proposed, adopted or implemented several curriculum plans: the Academic Achievement Plan in 1970, Superintendent Sizemore's program in 1973, and the Competency Based Curriculum in 1976.

The history of curriculum development shows that over the years the goal of employment has reigned as the fundamental purpose of the school system. Contemporary educators make it clear that this purpose continues to dominate. Design of the curriculum has for the most part been directed at enabling students to acquire jobs.

Historically, the public has expected a positive correlation between the level of public school education acquired and the job benefits secured. Public discontent with the schools has been highest when students graduating from high school have been inadequately prepared to compete for supervisory jobs and openings in emerging job markets. The major curriculum reforms in the history of the school system, including the back-to-basics movements, CBC, and academic high schools, have had as their ultimate objective preparing students for high status jobs upon graduation from the schools or success in higher educational programs leading to professional employment.

Since we note that job acquisition has received virtually all of the attention, it is not surprising to find that remedies for failures of the school system have been sought in curriculum reform designed to prepare students better for jobs.

In an attempt to adapt the curriculum to meet concerns in the post-1954 period, the schools experimented with several system-wide curriculum designs. These experiments have been viewed as disruptive. However, they were a part of a process that has led to a curriculum which is geared to an urban population and which offers basic skills as well as a variety of educational experiences

which lead to jobs, college or professional training. The curriculum in the D.C. public schools is likely to be more stable in the future than it has been in the recent past because the Board has established CBC as the official policy of the schools. In the recent search for a Superintendent, the Board insisted that all candidates be willing to continue the implementation of CBC. While stability in the curriculum appears to be evident, CBC, like all other curriculum designs, will be measured by its ability to achieve the overall educational goals of the school system and thereby meet the needs of its students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The D.C. HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY PROJECT gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following persons, who met with the project staff in its early stages and assisted us in planning the research:

Eugene Kinlow
Charles Mason
Hilda Mason
Floretta D. McKenzie
Patricia Miner
Rolin Sidwell
William Simons

The staff is especially indebted to Dick Hurlbut, who has assisted us in every stage, and has been extremely generous with his time and knowledge.

The writer wishes to thank the following persons who took time to talk with her and her research assistant about the D.C. schools, made sources available, or read drafts of the manuscript:

Antoinette Corprew
Roxanna Dean
Steven J. Diner
Joseph Drew
James T. Guines
Charles Hicks
James E. Joseph
Luce deVitry Maubrey
The UDC Word Processing Center
Cecile R. Middleton
Mona Moon
Louis Nero
Julia Parks
Jerome S. Paige
Erika Robinson
Helen Young and
The Staff of the Washingtoniana Collection

Finally, I wish to extend special thanks to my research assistant, Tony Durrah, for his faithful work and his continuous and efficient help throughout the development of the project.

- M.M.B.R.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Critical issues are being raised today about education. Confidence in public education has been eroding at an alarming rate nationally as well as in Washington, D.C. John Egerton, a writer on education, setting forth his concern about dwindling support for the public schools in a recent article, stated: "Anyone who doubts that public education is in deep trouble has not been paying attention." In summarizing the difficulties facing public education, he indicated that:

> The woes of the schools have to do with quality and effectiveness, with student achievement and teacher competence, with administration and governing-board leadership, with basic skills and comprehensive curricula, with standards and values, with the increase in private and parochial school enrollments, and the decline in the birth rate, with the weakening of authority and the worsening of violence and disorder, with the pervasive strains of race and class and sex bias, with the acute needs of the poor, the handicapped, the non-English speaking. 1/

In Washington, D.C., complaints like these abound, and in recent years such complaints have been heralded with great fervor in the media. Students coming out of public schools cannot read signs or application forms. They cannot write complete sentences. They cannot spell correctly. They cannot do simple arithmetic, let alone compute percentages. Schools fail to prepare students either for jobs or entrance into college. Tests scores are declining. Promotion, graduation and other academic standards are weakened. Not surprisingly, a comparison of various polls conducted over a period of years shows a dramatic decline of public confidence in the effectiveness of public schools. 2/

The discontent is expressed through the flight of middle class families from the public schools and in proposals for tuition tax credits and government

---

1/ John Egerton, "Can we Save the Schools?" The Progressive, 46, 3 (March 1982), p. 26.

2/ See Steven J. Diner, "Crisis of Confidence: The Reputation of Washington's Public Schools in the Twentieth Century," Paper No. 1 in this series, 1982, pp. 1-3.

vouchers to offset the costs of attending private and parochial schools. Calls for educational reforms, such as "back-to-basics" movements, minimum competency testing, academic high schools, and career-oriented curricula, are increasing in number and intensity as the discontent with public education spreads.

One major concern is the substance of education. What should the schools teach? "In the eyes of some, what the schools should teach must be marketable in the labor force. In the eyes of others, what the schools should teach must be marketable in the college admissions office." 3/ Still others take a different view:

> Education must find a way to address not just vocation, but the centrality of values. Specifically, it is our job to help students see themselves in relation to other people, other times, and other forms of life. We confront a world where all actions are inextricably interlocked, yet many students do not see the connections.... It is essential to put the concept of relatedness at the core of education if we are going to teach our young people to behave in a way that is responsible and civil in a world where resources are limited. 4/

Such comments reflect a continuing debate in every school district in the nation over the purposes of education in general and of public education in particular.

What schools teach is embodied in their curriculum. For the purpose of this study, the author defines curriculum as Barbara Sizemore, former Superintendent of District of Columbia Public Schools, did in 1973 -- "Everything that happens in the educational institution: content (what is taught), methodology (how it is taught), and administration (how services are managed and directed to achieve the former)." 5/ Thus, curriculum becomes the most important means through which the schools address their educational goals.

3/ Robert J. Babcock, "What Should the Schools Teach?" Human Ecology Forum, 12, 2 (Fall 1981), p. 5.

4/ Ernest L. Boyer, "Education Issues: Public and Private," New York University Education Quarterly, 12, 4 (Summer 1981), p. 4.

5/ Barbara A. Sizemore, The Superintendent's 120 Day Report (Washington: District of Columbia Public Schools), 1974, p. 28.

Historically, decisions about what is to be taught, how it is taught and how resources are allocated to attain educational goals have been shaped by social conditions. Education officials in the past responded to changes in social conditions by altering the curriculum. This study examines the historical development of the curriculum in the District of Columbia Public Schools and the way in which the curriculum has been influenced by the following factors:

- o Political and economic environment;
- o Educational leadership and administrative structure;
- o Socio-economic characteristics of student population;
- o Individual differences among students;
- o Surveys and evaluation; and
- o Public perception of the effectiveness of public education.

Public education today includes everything from classes on the pre-school level through graduate and professional training in public universities. In Washington, D.C., the first public schools were primary schools. Public education was later expanded to include kindergarten, elementary, secondary, technical, teacher, college and university training. The primary focus of this study, however, is curriculum development in the elementary and secondary schools, that is, in grades K through 12.

Because of the dramatic effect on public education of two events, the emancipation of the slaves in 1862 and 1863 and the desegregation of the schools in 1954, the historical overview of curriculum development is separated into the Pre-Emancipation Period (1804-1864); Pre-Desegregation Period I (1864-1919) and Pre-Desegregation Period II (1919-1954); and the Post-Desegregation Period (1954-Present). The study also discusses the historical impact of several key factors on curriculum development and examines the extent to which an analysis of this history can assist us in looking ahead.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PRE-EMANCIPATION PERIOD 1804-1864

When on February 24, 1804, Congress, "impressed with a sense of the inseparable connection between the education of the youth and the prevalence of pure morality," [6] provided for the establishment and superintendency of schools under the authority of the Council of the City of Washington, D.C., it also clearly articulated the view that there was a moral aim of public education in the nation's capital. When on September 19, 1804, a select committee of the first Board of School Trustees set forth plans for an entire educational system from primary schools to a university, not only did they prescribe the subjects children should be taught, but they also indicated that these should "qualify them for the professions they are intended to follow." [7] The professional or utilitarian purpose of schooling was thus quickly added to the moral aim of public education.

In 1806, public schools for white children were established in Washington, D.C., with the opening of two schools: the Western School, located within a half mile of the White House, and the Eastern School, located half a mile east of the Capitol. These schools offered a very limited education to their pupils, who were divided into two groups: "pauper" pupils and "pay" pupils. Poor children were taught reading, writing, grammar, and arithmetic; pay pupils were instructed in these subjects and also in geography and Latin. Some pauper pupils were only permitted to attend for two years. Instruction was provided by a single teacher in a single classroom which was known as a "school." [8]

6/ Compilation of Laws Affecting the Public Schools of the District of Columbia 1804-1929 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1929), p.1.

7/ Samuel Yorke At Lee, History of the Public Schools of Washington City, D.C. Extracted and printed separately, by permission, from the Twenty-Eighth Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public School 1876, p.004.

8/ J. Ormond Wilson, "Eighty Years of the Public Schools of Washington, 1805 to 1885," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. I (October, 1890), pp. 123, 142.

In 1812, the two original schools were supplemented by the creation of a Lancasterian school, modeled after a similar one founded in the city of Georgetown a year earlier. 9/ The Lancasterian system, imported from England and first introduced in the United States in 1806, permitted economy in teaching because a large number of pupils could be instructed by one teacher, assisted by the more advanced students who served as "monitors."

In 1813, Mr. Henry Ould, the first teacher of the Lancasterian school of Washington, D.C., presented his report to the Board of Trustees. From this report we learn that:

> One hundred and thirty scholars have been admitted since February 10, 1812, 82 males and 48 females; out of which number 2 have died, and 37 have left the school for various employments, after passing through several grades of studies; leaving 91 on the list.
>
> Fifty-five have learned to read in the Old and New Testaments, 26 are now learning to read Dr. Watts's Hymns, and 10 are learning words of four or five letters. Out of 59 of the whole number admitted who did not know a single letter, 20 read in the Bible, 29 in Watts's Hymns, and 10 spell words of four and five letters. Fifty-five scholars are able to write on paper, many of them, also, in German text, who never attempted to form such characters before entering the school; 26 write words of two or three syllables on slates, and 10 are writing words of two or five letters. All of the scholars who left the school could write a tolerable and many of them a capital hand. Twenty-six scholars are in Reduction, Single and Double Rule of Three, direct and practice, and 23 are rapidly progressing through the first four rules of Arithmetic, both simple and compound. 10/

Thus, the first recorded report of a Washington public school introduces us to the curriculum of the early school of the nineteenth century. The curriculum included reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic and the Bible. It must have been prescribed by the Board of Trustees, who followed the practices of similar schools of the period. On August 4, 1813, a committee of the Board of Trustees was instructed to report a plan for the moral instruction and care of the poor

---

9/ Harry Oram Hine, "Public Education in the District of Columbia - 1805 to 1928," in John Clagett Proctor, ed., Washington Past and Present, A History, Vol. I, Chapter XXXIX (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1930), pp. 418-419.

10/ At Lee, History of the Public Schools, pp. 011-012.

children of the city, and for putting them out as apprentices. 11/ This is again an example of how the school combined the utilitarian and moral purposes of public education.

The curriculum of the early schools is also highlighted by the discussions of book adoptions and fee schedules for books and learning aids that occurred at that time. In 1816-1817, "the following school books were adopted by the Board: Picket's Spelling Book and Juvenile Introduction, New York stereotyped edition; Murray's Sequel, Reader, Grammar, Exercises and Grammar, Exercises and Grammar, abridged; Walker's Dictionary, abridged; and Walsh's Arithmetic: all to be purchased by the Principal Teacher, at retail prices, and to be paid for with the tuition fees." 12/ The following year, in the Western School, quarterly prices were prescribed for tuition in the Classical Department with courses in "Latin and Greek, Arithmetic, Mathematics and Geography with the use of globes ($12.00) and in the English Department with courses in Reading, Writing and Grammar ($6.00) or Reading, Writing, Grammar, Arithmetic and the first principles of Geography ($8.00)." 13/

When on July 30, 1821, the Lancasterian school moved to its new quarters in a procession of some 140 girls and boys, preceded by their teachers and followed by the Trustees, the president of the Board "congratulated the assembly on the improvements in the system of learning, and on the immense benefits promised, 'particularly to the poorer classes of society.'" He also expressed the hope that this institution "would be the means of rescuing their fellow-creatures from the doom of ignorance and obscurity." 14/

The Lancasterian system remained in operation until 1844 when the city Council reorganized the school system. The reorganization of the city into four

---

11/ Ibid., p. 012.

12/ Ibid., p. 015.

13/ Ibid., p. 016.

14/ Wilson, "Eighty Years," pp. 128-129.

school districts imparted new vigor to the system. 15/ The Organic Law of 1844 prescribed annual examinations in the Schools which were administered by the Board. According to the Rules of the Board each school could be divided into six classes. Subjects and books were prescribed for each class. (See Table I.)

In 1845 a new subject, music, was added to the list of subjects to be studied when the first special teacher of vocal music, Professor J. H. Hewitt was hired. This subject was not supposed to interfere with the regular studies of the pupils, but the Trustees believed that "two or three hours a week might be profitably employed in communicating to the children the principles of harmony." 16/ The president of the Board, Mayor W.W. Seaton, noted that "music will open to the children a new, innocent, and attractive source of employment, will greatly tend to refine their feelings and soften their manners, and impart to them a taste for amusements within the bosom of their families, which may become the means of saving them from many of the evil consequences of idling away their vacant hours in the streets." 17/ Once again, the curriculum was justified by its moral and vocational value.

In 1848, the school system was divided into two schools designated "primary" and "district." The primary schools offered studies for the younger and less advanced pupils. The district schools provided a higher grade of instruction. 18/ According to the rules of the Board, studies in primary schools could include reading, spelling, arithmetic, geography, writing, drawing, vocal music, and object lessons. Studies in the district schools could comprise orthography, reading, penmanship, geography, English grammar and composition, history, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, bookkeeping, human physiology, Constitution of the United States, astronomy, natural

---

15/ At Lee, History of the Public Schools, p. 017.

16/ Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public Schools, 1845, p. 9.

17/ Ibid.

18/ Annual Report to the Board, 1848, p. 4.

TABLE I

CLASSES, SUBJECTS, BOOKS, 1845

CLASSES	SUBJECTS	BOOKS
SIXTH	ALPHABET NUMERATION DRAWING OF FIGURES & LETTERS ON SLATES	KAY'S READER, NO. 1
FIFTH	COMBINATION OF LETTERS INTO WORDS SPELLING NUMERATION NOTATION DRAWING ON SLATE & BLACKBOARD	KAY'S READER, NO. 2 FOWLE'S SPELLING BOOK EMERSON'S ARITHMETIC, 1ST PART
FOURTH	READING SPELLING ARITHMETIC WRITING, ON SLATES & BLACKBOARDS	KAY'S READER, NO. 3 FOWLE'S SPELLING BOOK DAVIES' FIRST LESSON IN ARITHMETIC
THIRD	READING SPELLING WRITING ARITHMETIC GEOGRAPHY (U.S.) HISTORY	EMERSON'S THIRD CLASS READER DAVIES' FIRST LESSON IN ARITHMETIC MITCHELL'S PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY DAVENPORT'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES
SECOND	READING SPELLING WRITING ARITHMETIC GEOGRAPHY (U.S.) HISTORY	MT. VERNON READER
FIRST	READING WRITING SPELLING GEOGRAPHY HISTORY HISTORY OF ENGLAND	SMITH'S GRAMMAR PARLEYS COMMON SCHOOL HISTORY PIERCE'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND

SOURCE: Annual Report of The Trustees of Public Schools, 1845, pp. 11-12.

philosophy, and chemistry. [19] In 1851 four new primary schools for males only were added in each of the four city school districts. These were intended as a kind of intermediate school between the existing primary schools already established and the District schools. [20]

In the Organic Law of 1858 the city Council prescribed and enlarged the duties of the appointed school Board and generally outlined a "more comprehensive and liberal school system." In Section 3 of the law the Board was charged with establishing courses of study, and the provision was made that no textbook should be changed unless by vote of two-thirds of the entire Board of Trustees. [21]

In 1862 the Trustees further subdivided the educational program of the schools. The pupils were classified into primary, secondary, intermediate and grammar schools. Each of these levels represented a two years' course of study. [22] The schools were also provided with additional teaching materials such as globes, maps, charts, reference books and other useful appliances. "Textbooks, courses of study and methods of teaching were reported to be in the line of progress." The teachers were to improve their skills by observing more competent and experienced teachers, by studying their methods, and by attending lectures by prominent educators well grounded in the fundamental principles of pedagogy. [23]

Public education in the Pre-Emancipation Period was offered only for white children. Curriculum was used to promote practical and moral purposes: the development of basic skills (the "3 Rs"), the acquisition of knowledge (history, geography, philosophy and others), the enrichment of the individual (music and drawing), and the moral development of pupils (Bible study). The curriculum and courses of study were accompanied by specific texts mandated and prescribed by

---

19/ Annual Report of the Board, 1850, "Rules for the Government of the Public Schools in the City of Washington," pp. 6-7.

20/ Annual Report of the Board, 1851, p. 5.

21/ Compilation of Laws, p. 4.

22/ Annual Report of the Board, 1862, pp. 1, 41.

23/ Wilson, "Eighty Years," pp. 21, 29-30.

the governing board itself. Board members visited the schools regularly and administered the annual examinations to pupils. First, the principal teacher of each school, then the sub-boards in charge of each district, submitted progress reports on the curriculum and school activities (awarding of prizes, contests and exhibits).

Methods of instruction and learning over the period included individual tutoring and group instruction, oral recitation and memorization. Instruction differed for pay pupils and pauper pupils. Placement into different levels was determined by age, length of previous schooling and performance on examinations. Although there were progressive levels within the schools, the system did not go above the elementary grades. While there were long lists of authorized subjects, their content was rudimentary.

The concerns most commonly discussed by those involved with these schools were the quality of teachers, the inadequacy of facilities (overcrowding and poor accommodations) and the mixing of boys and girls. Two lesser concerns were the differentiation between pay and poor children and the exclusion of free colored children from the benefits of public education.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE DUAL SYSTEM
1864 - 1954

Pre-Desegregation Period I (1864-1919)

With the emancipation of the slaves, the United States Congress on May 20 and 21, 1862, enacted legislation which gave Negroes legal citizenship in the District of Columbia and made it mandatory for the municipal authorities of Washington and Georgetown to establish a system of primary schools for colored children. Also on May 20, 1862, the Levy Court gave power to the County of Washington to establish a separate system of public schools for colored children in the rural area beyond the boundaries of Washington City and Georgetown. 24/ In July of the same year, a Board of Trustees for the schools for colored pupils was established. 25/

Over the period of the dual school system there were concomitant changes in the organization of the school system, an expansion of what was taught and how it was taught, and an expansion of the purposes of education. The major institutional change was the establishment of public education for colored children within a dual system. Other organizational changes included the extension of the years of elementary education and the development of high schools, teacher training schools, junior high schools, and vocational and special education programs. Curriculum changes included an increase in the number and variety of subjects taught, a change from a subject-oriented to a child-centered curriculum, a differentiation of courses of study to serve the varied interests and needs of students, the development of college and career-oriented curricula, and the development of a "life skills" curriculum. The purposes of education were extended to focus more on acquisition of knowledge, citizenship, and job-training.

24/ 12 U.S. Statutes at Large 407 (1862) and 12 U.S. Statutes at Large 394-403 (1862) cited by Lillian G. Dabney, History of Schools for Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1807-1947 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1949), p.2.

25/ Compilation of Laws, p. 148.

Elementary Education

Between 1806 and 1864, public schools in the District of Columbia offered instruction to white children exclusively. In March of 1864, the first public school for colored children opened in the city of Washington. As early as 1807 the children of free colored people attended private schools established by private citizens, colored and white, and religious and philanthropic organizations. Consistent with the practice under American slavery, no consideration was given to the formal education of the children of slaves.

By creating a separate Board of Trustees for the colored schools, Congress also established a separate education system for colored children. Thus, the opening of the first colored public elementary school in 1864 marked the beginning of a legally sanctioned dual system of public education in the District of Columbia, a structure which lasted until 1954. The two school systems -- one white, one colored -- developed side by side, first under separate Boards and separate Superintendents and later under a single Board and one Superintendent. In 1867, the Trustees of the colored schools appointed a Superintendent. The Act of Congress of December 5, 1804 placed the superintendency of public schools of the city of Washington under the direction of the Board of Trustees, and it was not until 1869 that the city Council provided for a Superintendent for the white schools. The Superintendent's duties included the direction of all matters relating to the course of instruction, prescription of books and enforcement of discipline and good conduct in the schools. It was the Superintendent's duty also to assist the Trustees in establishing a uniform system of instruction. 26/

When the first colored public school opened, it grouped its pupils into two departments, primary and advanced. By the year 1865-66, pupils were classified into three levels: primary, intermediate, and advanced or grammar. 27/ By

---

26/ Compilation of Laws, p. 6.

27/ Dabney, History of Schools for Negroes, p. 122.

1867-68 this classification pattern was extended to all colored pupils in the elementary schools, which then began to function as an organized system. 28/ By 1870-71, four levels were established in the colored schools: primary, secondary, intermediate and grammar. Semi-annual promotions took place in January and September, allowing students to progress from the primary through the grammar school in a period of seven years. Two and one-half years were required to complete the primary level, one and one-half years each for the secondary, intermediate and grammar levels. 29/

When, in 1874, the three local Boards of Trustees for the white schools of the cities of Washington, Georgetown and the County of Washington, and the Board for the colored schools of the cities of Washington and Georgetown were consolidated under a single Board of Trustees comprising white and colored members, the two Superintendents were, however, retained. 30/ The new Board gradually brought the four systems under a common educational system with uniform courses of study and one code of rules. The Board abolished the designation of primary, secondary, intermediate and grammar levels, and changed the organization of the elementary schools into eight grades, each grade representing one year of study. The lowest class was designated the first grade and the highest one, the eighth grade. Special provision was made for pupils to continue in the eighth grade for two years, if this was found necessary, in order to complete the elementary course of study, which would give to a majority of pupils all the scholastic education generally thought needed for good citizenship and useful lives. 31/

28/ First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Colored Schools for Washington and Georgetown, 1868, p. 42.

29/ Annual Report of the Superintendent of Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown, 1871-72, pp. 138, 102-114.

30/ Ibid., p. 46; Report on Survey of the Public School System of the District of Columbia by the Bureau of Efficiency, 1928, Appendix A, p. 180.

31/ Wilson, "Eighty Years," p. 44.

In 1875-76 the white elementary schools adopted this new organization and the colored schools did so in 1876-77. 32/ The colored schools for a while designated the lowest grade as the eighth and the highest as the first, but they soon switched to the reverse designations. Each grade represented one-half of the year of study. 33/ Later, the first four years of schooling were named the primary grades, and the last four, the grammar grades. 34/ This system of organization remained in effect until 1919.

The program of studies which existed in the 1860s continued in the white schools until the 1870s. In 1868, the course of study in the colored schools comprised the "3 Rs," social studies and music. By 1871-72, it included the language arts, penmanship, grammar, arithmetic, algebra, geography, history, physiology, physical science, nature study, physical exercise, music and moral training. 35/

In 1873, the appointment of Mrs. Susan E. Fuller as director of drawing in the white schools was the first step toward the adoption of a system of industrial drawing which was to produce "satisfactory and practical results" in the Washington school system. By adopting a series of textbooks and manuals prepared by Professor Walter Smith, an outstanding English art master, the District of Columbia schools joined the national movement in industrial and technical art education of the 19th century. By 1874-75, the courses of

---

32/ Second Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1875-76, p. 27; Third Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1876-77, p. 245.

33/ Annual Report of the Superintendent of Colored Schools, 1874-75, pp. 332-339; Third Report of the Board of Trustees, 1876-77, p. 91.

34/ Report of the Board of Education to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1913-17, p. 37.

35/ First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Colored Schools, 1868, pp. 23-27, 33; Annual Report of the Superintendent of Colored Schools, 1871-72, pp. 104-114.

instruction in the white and colored elementary schools were uniform. 36/ Subsequently, manual training and shopwork were added.

In 1900, the course of study prescribed by the elementary public schools seems to have been a concern of many, including federal government officials. The Senate committee on the District of Columbia undertook an investigation, and on March 22 of that year, it reported overwhelming evidence of a want of necessary drill in spelling, penmanship, arithmetic, grammar and geography. The committee concluded that the "disuse of textbooks" had interfered with success in primary training in the schools.

In response to this report, Superintendent A. T. Stuart submitted to the Board the outline of a provisional course of study which "pointed the way to a more thorough drill in the fundamental branches of the elementary schools" and defined the "work which may reasonably be required of the pupils, while materially reducing the amount of time alloted to 'nature work,' drawing, music and the special studies generally." These subjects were not to be denied a place in the curriculum but rather to be "taken at their value as complementing, illuminating, and embellishing every other subject of study." The questions of allotment of time and apportionment of the work to be done in one year in a subject, within a course of study designed to develop "the whole child," were of great importance. They required time, knowledge and teacher experience. Changes suggested had a twofold purpose: "To recover as far as possible lost ground in the training of pupils in the elementary studies and to bring about a more general use of textbooks as an important means to the desired end." A return to the textbooks in such subjects as grammar and spelling was effected through the adoption of grammars in the fourth, sixth, and eighth grades and of spellers in the fourth grade. 37/ This, the first "back-to-basics" movement in the history of Washington's public schools, grew out of the widespread concern that as the schools had expanded to educate more and more children, standards had declined. The theme would be repeated often in later years.

36/ Wilson, "Eighty Years," 37-39; First Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1874-75, pp. 310-317, 332-338.

37/ Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1901, pp. 66-68.

The new curriculum of the elementary schools, which continued through 1919, offered a broad range of subjects: language arts, grammar and penmanship, and algebra. The content subjects included geography and history; the sciences were represented in physiology, physical science and nature study. Special subjects included music and drawing. The curriculum and textbooks were still prescribed by the Board of Trustees through its own Committee on Textbooks which, after examining the course of study prescribed for the schools, was responsible for recommending improvements and changes in the books, materials, equipment and course of study. 38/

High School Education (1870-1919)

Although the establishment of a high school had been authorized by the city Council in 1848 to go into effect in 1851, it was delayed due to the lack of funds and the Trustees' preference for improving existing schools. 39/ In 1870, a Preparatory High School was opened for the benefit of the colored children who were advanced enough to continue their studies beyond the elementary course. 40/ The Preparatory High School opened under the Board of Trustees of the colored schools six years after the first colored public elementary school. 41/ It was established to save money by consolidating students from the smaller upper grade classes into one class under a single teacher. It was also intended to improve instruction for the more advanced students. 42/

In 1875-76, an advanced grammar school for girls, comprising one year of study beyond the elementary level, was organized in the white system. One year

---

38/ First Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1874-75, pp. 303-304.

39/ Annual Report of the Board, 1851, pp. 9-10.

40/ Third Report of the Board, 1876-77, p. 257.

41/ Twenty-Fourth Report of the Board, 1870, pp. 38-41.

42/ Annual Report of the Board, 1876-77, p. 257.

later, a similar school was established for boys. The course of study in these schools was lengthened to two years in 1879, and by 1880 they became commonly known as high schools. In 1882, both white high schools were merged into one school which came to be known as "Washington High School." It offered three courses of study: Academic, Scientific and Business. The Academic and Scientific courses required three years for completion, and the Business course, two years.

The Preparatory High School for Colored Pupils functioned mainly as a grammar school between 1870 and 1877, since most of it pupils had not yet completed the elementary course of study at the time they entered it. In fact, to meet the growing need for teachers in the elementary schools many of its pupils, instead of completing high school, were diverted after taking only two years of the high school course to the one-year teacher training or normal course established in 1875. It was only in 1877 that the first class graduated from the first colored high school. Thereafter, all of its pupils pursued high school studies exclusively. In the Preparatory High School two elective courses of intruction were provided, Classical and General, both planned to require four years. They were reduced to three years by eliminating certain studies and giving special attention to those likely to afford "immediate practical benefit." 43/

By 1892, both the white and the colored high schools offered an identical program with three courses of study outlined: Academic, Scientific and Business. The Academic and Scientific courses of study required four years to complete. The Business course of study required two years. (See Table II for a listing of the courses of study for high schools.)

In the 1900s the high school began to be viewed as the "people's college." The recognition of this fact prompted the reorganization of a broad course of study and instruction, planned to meet the varying needs of a large, heterogenous body of students. In his 1900-1901 report to the D.C. Commissioners, the Superintendent emphasized the multi-purpose nature of the high school. If the

---

43/ Ibid., p. 258.

TABLE II

Courses of Study - High School 1862

	Academic	Scientific		Business
Prescribed Courses:	English (4 years)	English (4 years)	1st year:	Engish
	history (1 year)	history (1 year)		business arithmetic
	algebra (1 year)	algebra (1 year)		bookkeeping
	zoology (1 year)	zoology (1 year)		penmanship
	chemistry (1 year)	chemistry (1 year)		shorthand
	Latin (4 years)	German (4 years)	2nd year:	English
				bookkeeping and business practice
				commercial law
				commercial geometry
				shorthand
				typewriting

	Academic	Scientific	Business
Electives:	German		mechanical drawing
	Greek		
	trigonometry, surveying or history	trigonometry, surveying or history	
	political economy	political economy	
	analytic geometry	analytic geometry	
	college algebra	college algebra	
	botany, minerology or advanced physics	botany, minerology or advanced physics	
	geology		

Notes:

1. A general exercise in drawing was required for all three courses of study; music was optional, as was manual training.
2. Not more than four subjects could be pursued at one time.
3. Candidates for diplomas had to pursue all the prescribed subjects and at least four subjects in the third year. Pupils who had satisfactorily completed the three-year course were entitled to a diploma and those who completed the advanced (or fourth year) course to an additional diploma.

Source: Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1892-93, pp. 71, 165.

high school were to be of the utmost value in the community, it should not have a single or limited purpose; it should not be a "fitting" [college preparatory] school only. Nor should it be an adjunct to the normal school and give only specialized instruction for teachers. Finally, it should not ignore either the large numbers of pupils who desire to enter business life at the earliest opportunity or those who desire an "all round education." The Superintendent noted further that varying conditions, conflicting purposes, and widely different prospects on the part of students called for an elastic and broad curriculum. The curriculum proposed to meet common needs through a large number of prescribed studies in four courses: Academic, Scientific, Technical and Business. A broad choice of electives for the advanced student was supposed to be available; however, the choice was limited in practice because principals used their discretion to determine which electives a student could take. 44/

In 1900, the separate Superintendents for the colored and white schools were abolished, and all the schools came under a single Superintendent. The newly reorganized Board of Education agreed to a request from the staff of the colored high school to modify the curriculum. Instead of an option of physics or chemistry in the second and third years, both became compulsory. A general review of arithmetic was strongly recommended but not required in the second half of the fourth year. The reason given for this change was that graduates of this school who went to teach in the towns and cities of the South needed to know how to do many things and to be able to teach many subjects. The additional arithmetic instruction was included because the candidates needed it for admission to the normal school, and because it was widely regarded as a "practical subject." In addition, principals and teachers in the colored high school indicated that:

> few colored boys and girls of high school grade [had] anyone at home to give them help in making their selection of subjects in a course largely elective. The majority [had to] depend on themselves for this important work. 45/

44/ Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1901, Vol IV, pp. 145-150.

45/ Ibid., pp. 160-161.

The high school curriculum continued to expand in the number and variety of subjects as well as courses of study offered. Since 1894-95 five courses were generally provided, Academic, Scientific, Modern Language or History, Technical, and Business. Often a preparatory course for the normal school was also included. In 1907 Business was enlarged to a four-year course. Also, the semester system was established, thereby allowing semi-annual promotions. All programs continued to provide prescribed and elective courses through 1919. 46/

46/ Report of the Board of Trustees, 1894-95, p. 161; Report of the Board of Education to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1907-1908, pp. 186-193; Report of the Board of Education to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1919-1920, pp. 277-315, 371-382.

Pre-Desegregation Period II (1919-1954)

The period 1919-1954 witnessed many changes in the social, political economic and cultural life of the country. The period witnessed two World Wars and a major Depression. Industrialization and urbanization intensified. Foreign immigration and internal migrations to cities increased. These developments brought with them many social problems. There was a rise of concern for the improvement of the quality of life during the Progressive Era and the New Deal. Compulsory schooling laws and child labor laws helped expand universal education.

This was the period in which scientific educational research, with its emphasis on child psychology and the development of measures of intelligence and of achievement, became accepted into school systems. This resulted in the introduction of formal "ability grouping" of students. The new "progressive education" focused attention on the development of the whole child. This was also a period where new methods of research and evaluation gained popularity and enabled educators to respond to public demands for more practical schooling better suited to the needs of a modern society.

In public education in the District of Columbia there were several changes in school organization and curriculum during the period 1919 to 1954. The major organizational change was the introduction of the junior high school, predicated on the philosophy that the adolescent should be able to explore various courses and activities at an earlier age to help him in making future choices. While the total years of schooling remained the same, there was a shift from the 8-4 plan -- eight years of elementary school and four years of high school -- to the modern 6-3-3 plan -- six years of elementary, three years of junior high and three years of senior high school. This shift reflected a national trend of the period.

Other changes included the reorganization of the kindergarten, the extension of vocational education, and the expansion of "special" education classes. Formal teacher training became more extensive also. While the content of studies remained basically the same, the focus and approach at the elementary level shifted from a subject-centered to a child-centered curriculum built

around activities and experiences. At the secondary level, the curriculum remained essentially subject-oriented. The curriculum emphasized the total development of the child, and sought to accommodate individual differences and prepare students for modern life and for gainful employment.

Another major characteristic of the period was the stability of the administrative structure. In 1920, Frank W. Ballou became Superintendent. He remained in the position until his retirement in 1943. A seasoned educator and skillful administrator, Dr. Ballou immediately realized the numerous problems facing the school system and sought to address them systematically. He undertook a reorganization of the school administrative structure which was to have great impact on what was taught and how it was taught.

The Introduction and Impact of the Junior High School

In 1917 Superintendent Thurston, reflecting national educational trends, presented to the Board a proposal to establish junior high schools in Washington, D.C., in order to alleviate some of the administrative problems faced by the schools and to offer new educational opportunities to pupils who had completed six years of instruction following the kindergarten year. 47/ Superintendent Thurston cited the report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, appointed by the National Education Association, in support of his proposal:

> Individual differences in pupils and the varied needs of society alike demand that education be so varied as to touch the leading aspects of occupational, civic and leisure life. To this end, curriculums must be organized at appropriate stages and the work of pupils progressively differentiated.
>
> To accomplish this differential most wisely the pupil should be assisted ordinarily at about 12 or 13 years of age to begin a preliminary survey of the activities of adult life and of his own aptitudes in connection therewith, so that he may choose, at least tentatively, some field of human endeavor for special consideration. Following the period of preliminary survey and provisional choice he should acquire a more intimate knowledge of the field chosen, including therewith an appreciation of its social significance.

47/ Report of the Board of Education, 1918-19, pp. 24-29.

The Commission recommended a redivision of the period devoted to elementary and secondary education. They pointed out that the last two years of elementary schooling were not well adapted to the needs of the adolescent since many pupils lost interest and "either drop[ped] out of school altogether or form[ed] habits of dawdling, to the serious injury of subsequent work."

The Commission proposed that the second six years be divided into junior and senior periods:

> In the junior period emphasis should be placed upon the attempt to help the pupil to explore his own aptitudes and to make at least provisional choice of the kinds of work to which he will devote himself. In the senior period emphasis should be given to training in the fields chosen.
>
> In the junior high school there should be the gradual introduction of departmental instruction, some choice of subjects under guidance, promotion by subjects, pre-vocational courses, and a social organization that calls forth initiative and develops the sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of the group.
>
> In the senior high school a definite curriculum organization should be provided by means of which each pupil may take work systematically planned with reference to his needs as an individual and a member of society. The senior high school should be characterized by a rapidly developing social consciousness and by an aptitude of self-reliance based upon clearly perceived objects.

Applying these principles to the situation in the Washington, D.C. public schools, Superintendent Thurston indicated to the Board that the establishment of the junior high school would mean bringing down into the seventh and eighth grades more natural and social science with the purpose of stimulating the natural interest of the child. It meant education in certain foreign languages, probably in the seventh grade. It meant more extensive and diversified shop work, promotion by subject rather than by grade, special emphasis on physical training and health education and a different type of discipline and control.

As indicated, the introduction of the junior high school would affect the grade school organization and would necessitate changes and adjustments at all levels as well as in the teaching force. The Board adopted Superintendent Thurston's recommendations and approved the establishment of two city-wide junior high schools, one for white pupils and one for colored pupils, to begin operation on an experimental basis in the school year 1919-1920.

Elementary Schools

The advent of the junior high school significantly affected the organization of the elementary school, since the seventh and the eighth grades were transferred to the junior high school. There was also an urgent need for closer articulation between the kindergarten and primary grades, as well as between the elementary and the new junior high schools.

The kindergartens had been an established part of the District of Columbia public schools since 1898. They had their own director and a large corps of specially trained teachers grouped under a separate department. In 1920 Superintendent Ballou indicated that "... there should be no greater gap between the kindergarten and the first grade [than between the first grade] and the second grade...." He stated further that as accommodations became available, there would eventually be "a kindergarten class in every school which will reduce the retardation in the primary grades." 48/

The number of kindergartens in the District of Columbia had increased greatly and kindergarten teachers taught only three hours daily. Each kindergarten class had two teachers known as kindergarten principal and kindergarten assistant. In 1920, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board adopted a five-hour teaching day for all kindergarten, first and second grade teachers. In 1927, the Bureau of Efficiency conducted a survey of the public school system of Washington, D.C. which included a systematic and thorough study of kindergarten organization in the city. 49/ The Bureau found that in

---

48/ Minutes of the Board of Education of the District of Columbia, October 2, 1920, cited by William G. Handorf, "An Historical Study of the Superintendency of Dr. Frank W. Ballou in the Public School System of the District of Columbia (doctoral dissertation, the American University, 1962); p. 54.

49/ Report on Survey of the Public School System of the District of Columbia, by the Bureau of Efficiency, 1928, pp.4, 48.

comparison with other cities Washington had a disproportionately large number of kindergartens in relation to the number of children taught. It recommended transfer of some of the kindergarten classrooms teachers to the elementary level. The survey pointed out that for many years the kindergarten was merely an adjunct to the elementary school and that its aims and methods differed sufficiently from those of the grade school to justify a separate organization with independent supervision. But since the kindergarten had become an integral part of the elementary school, with common aims and similar methods, there was no longer any good reason for the separation. The supervision of the instruction in the kindergarten, they argued, should become a logical extension of the function of the Assistant Superintendent in charge of elementary instruction in the white schools and the Director of Primary Instruction in the colored schools. They therefore recommended the abolition of the two positions of directors of kindergartens upon retirement of the incumbents.

Following the report of the Bureau of Efficiency, Congress legalized the transfer of qualified kindergarten teachers to grades one to four of the elementary schools. This reorganization, which became effective with the school year 1930-31, resulted in considerable progress in the unification and articulation of the kindergarten and first grade in the 1930s. Not long thereafter, the Board discontinued the separate training program for kindergarten teachers, and the Teachers Colleges reorganized their instruction program into three levels. The first level comprised kindergarten, first, second and third grades; the intermediate level included grades four, five and six, and the junior high school level, grades seven, eight and nine. 50/

The passage of the Teacher's Salary Act by Congress in June, 1924 made possible the reorganization of the public school system in Washington, D.C. It authorized the appointment of six "Directors of Special Subjects" for the white schools and six for the colored schools. They were not distributed in the same manner. In the white schools there were directors for domestic art, domestic science, manual training, drawing, music, and physical training. In the colored schools they were as follows: household arts (combining domestic art and

---

50/ Report of the Board of Education, 1929-30, pp. 64-69.

domestic science), manual training, drawing, music, physical training and nature study. In the white schools, one of the staff teachers was in charge of nature study. The directors of special subjects were responsible for the supervision of the methods of teaching in their respective subjects and for the interpretation of courses of study to teachers in the elementary and junior high schools.

Instruction by the regular grade teachers in certain subjects was supplemented by periodic visits of itinerant special teachers to the classrooms for art, music, physical training, nature study, visual education and penmanship. Pupils could go to special centers to receive instruction in domestic science (housekeeping and cooking), domestic art (sewing), manual training and shop. Sometimes they were taught in their home classrooms. The grade teacher established her own program, allotting time to the various subjects in the curriculum as required by the official time schedule. Printed courses of study were provided to them for guidance in planning their lessons. 51/

On July 1, 1934, the Board of Education initiated the Washington Experiment in Character Education. This program, supported by Congress, was established upon the strong recommendation of Senator Royal S. Copeland, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Racketeering and Crime, who devoted much time and effort to drawing national attention to the personal, moral and social problems of youth, particularly during those years of the Depression. He urged the school system to "shift its emphasis from purely intellectual achievement to realizing a sense of social obligation and good citizenship." The goal of the experiment in the public schools of Washington, D.C. was to demonstrate "methods of meeting personal and social needs of children to the end that they may live happily and effectively in their group relationships." The program began in elementary and vocational schools and was extended to junior and senior high schools. Ten schools -- five white, five colored -- were selected for the project. One phase of the experiment addressed the problems of children who had difficulty in learning to read. It was assumed by many educators at the time that many students with personality and behavior problems could not read well. Since

---

51/ Bureau of Efficiency Report, 1928, pp. 42-43

there seemed to be a correlation between successful school progress and satisfactory personality adjustment, a remedial reading program was carried out in the selected schools. 52/

The Experiment in Character Education, which concluded in 1936, had a great influence on the teachers' understanding of their responsibility for the adjustment of pupils to their social environment. More and more, the schools thought it necessary to adapt their offering to the demonstrated needs of pupils and to instill in them traits of character and habits of conduct that would "prepare them to live together in harmony and to represent the highest type of citizenship." 53/

The Experiment in Character Education also prepared the road for the establishment of the Child Development Program in 1937. The beginning of the century had seen the development of the field of educational psychology and more specifically its application to a better understanding of the child. The American theorist John Dewey, emphasizing the place of the child at the center of the educational process, promoted the organization of instruction to correspond to the stages of development of the child. His influence and that of others such as Froebel, Pestalozzi and Kilpatrick was felt in American educational circles, and these new ideas were put to practical use around the country.

Child psychology sparked a national movement for curriculum revision. Experimental, laboratory and other schools oriented toward progressive education were experimenting with different approaches to a curriculum centered around the experiences of the child. Public educators in Washington, D.C. accepted the new trend and, recognizing the fact that the course of study played an important role in classroom instruction they devoted much time and effort to the reorganization, revision and publication of the courses of study for the elementary school.

52/ Marion Monroe and Bertie Backus, Remedial Reading - A Monograph in Character Education, pp. vi-xi.

53/ School Achievements in Twenty Years, Board of Education of the District of Columbia, 1941, p. 40.

Before the adoption of the child development point of view, the curriculum of elementary schools was subject-oriented. Reading, writing, spelling, English, arithmetic, geography, history, science, music, art, and health and physical education were taught as separate subjects. The aims of the program were to develop a mastery of the subject matter and appropriate patterns of conduct generally accepted by society. The new child development program called for the development of a new educational objective and of a new curriculum, both of which focused on providing experiences for the child. Columbia University Professor George D. Strayer, in his monumental study of the D. C. Public Schools, observed that:

> This type of curriculum [was] based upon the principle that learning takes place when experiences are rich in meaning for children. It demanded that the new curriculum must be based upon the interests and needs of children and must be organized in such a manner that there was a large emphasis upon learning through direct contact with people and institutions and rich participation in the basic activities of human life, home citizenship, economic activities, recreation, health, character development, personality, and experience in the use of the fundamental processes of communication. Older courses of study, the following of textbooks, and the mastery of set bodies of facts must give way to a new curriculum which would lay a large emphasis upon the whole child, pupil - and teacher - planning, learning through purposeful activity, the development of the pupils' personalities, all leading to the ultimate goal of producing balanced, informed, alert and socially minded citizens of the future. 54/

Consistent with the movement to revise curriculum, Superintendent Ballou, in October of 1938, announced "a long range plan for revising studies and activities from elementary classes to teachers' colleges." According to one report, Ballou announced that "District Schools [were] slated for sweeping changes that [would] emphasize current world problems and rid the textbooks of propaganda and fiction." The aim of the program was to make good citizens out of the students and to train them to face the realities of life with good chances of success. These changes emphasized current history over ancient history, practical subjects over academic subjects, and learning by doing and though organized cooperative activities over learning through traditional methods and subjects. 55/

54/ George D. Strayer, The Report of a Survey of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), pp. 428-429

55/ Washington Post, October 15, 1938.

Two organizational changes followed the adoption of the new explicit philosophy of education. In 1941, a new position of Assistant Superintendent in Charge of Curriculum Development was created, and a Department of Curriculum was formed. By 1943, that department had developed functional guidelines for an experience-based curriculum. The Department was responsible for the editing, publishing and distribution of courses of study prepared by committees composed of teachers and a member of the Curriculum Department. 56/

According to Strayer, the revision in the elementary school curriculum from the late 1930s through the 1940s did not meet the anticipated goals because of the lack of funds and time to adequately pursue the work of curriculum development, the slowness of the process established and the difficulty of retraining teachers to using new methods and approaches. Consequently, by the end of the 1940s, the number of courses of study for the experience-based curriculum was few. A course of study in mathematics had been completed. The general outline of a course of study in social studies had emerged. Courses of study in many important areas were still lacking. 57/

The Junior High School

As stated earlier, the junior high school was introduced in the public school system of Washington, D.C. on an experimental basis in 1919. 58/ In 1921-22, after reviewing the operation of the two experimental junior high schools established in the white and colored systems, Superintendent Ballou presented to the Board of Education his plan for the organization and extension of junior high schools. The Board adopted his plan that year and proceeded to establish junior high schools on a regional basis throughout the city. In 1924, an Act of Congress gave the junior high schools official sanction. The school system of Washington, D.C. gradually shifted from the 8-4 plan to the 6-3-3 plan of organization and by the late 1940s the entire system operated on that basis. The junior high school represented the intermediate level and provided instruction to pupils in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades.

56/ Strayer, The Report, p. 428.

57/ Ibid., pp. 427-436

58/ Report of the Board of Education, 1919-1920, p. 15

According to Ballou's plan, 59/ the junior high school in Washington, D.C. would be a centralized school, organized on a departmental basis. It would receive pupils from the adjacent elementary schools who were ready to enter grades seven and eight and it would continue their education through the first year of high school. The junior high school would develop a differentiated curriculum which would allow the adaptation of a program of instruction to the varying needs and aptitudes of boys and girls. It would be a period of exploration for pupils. It would provide better instruction for the age group it had to serve than did the upper level grammar grades and the first level of the former high school, and thus its holding power would be greater. For the pupils who dropped out of school before completing their education, the junior high school would offer a program which continued the work of the elementary and vocational schools.

The junior high school would also provide differentiated courses of study for those pupils who planned to continue their education through the senior high school and those who were unlikely to do so. Its differentiated program would also allow pupils to plan for varied options in the future by making them proficient in pre-vocational work, pre-commercial work, household arts, and in languages in order to gain entrance into a college preparatory curriculum in the senior high school. The junior high school would provide for promotion by subject rather than by grade. It would provide educational and vocational guidance, limited choice of curriculum subjects in the seventh grade, and gradually increasing choice of subjects in the eighth and the ninth grades.

In 1928, the Bureau of Efficiency reported 60/ that there were ten junior high schools -- seven white and three colored. Three courses of study were offered by the junior high schools: Academic, Commercial and Practical Arts. Most junior high schools offered all three courses, but according to the report, since the junior high schools were community schools, the character of a school

---

59/ William George Handorf, "An Historical Study," pp. 109-112.

60/ Bureau of Efficiency Report, pp. 49-45.

would vary to some extent according to the nature of the community which it served. Some of the junior high schools were therefore predominantly academic and emphasized preparation for professional careers, while others were predominantly vocational and emphasized training for careers in the trades and in business.

The junior high schools, the report further indicated, were organized on the basis of limited departmentalization in grade seven, with a gradual increase in the amount of departmentalization through the eighth and the ninth grades, where the departmental work was similar to that of the senior high school. Limited departmentalization in grade seven was achieved by requiring teachers to teach two subjects to the same class of pupils, so that no pupil had more than three teachers in academic subjects. Moreover, the homeroom teacher of each class was usually one of these teachers and she was also in charge of her pupil's extracurricular activities which included club meetings and educational and vocational guidance.

In 1924, some problems in articulation between the junior and the senior high schools were registered. Some junior high school courses, such as the unified mathematics, course could not be easily evaluated by the senior high schools, particularly for college-preparatory students. A similar problem existed with the military training course which became a combined course of physical and military training in the junior high school. 61/

In 1937, articulation between the junior high school and the elementary school was strengthened by the promotion of the directors of special subjects to the positions of heads of departments. They were responsible for the supervision of curriculum and instruction of their respective subjects in both the elementary and the junior high school courses in grades seven and eight. 62/

In 1940-41, enrollment in the ninth grade of the junior high schools indicated how the pupils had selected the options provided to them by the differentiated curriculum and programs of study. In Divisions 1 through 9 --

---

61/ Report of the Board of Education, 1924-25, p. 81

62/ School Achievements, p.42-43.

the white division -- forty-seven percent of the pupils had selected academic or college preparatory courses; in Divisions 10 through 13 -- the colored division -- forty-one percent had chosen this option. Forty-five percent of the pupils in Divisions 1 through 9 had opted for introductory courses leading to business practice in the senior high school and compared with thirty-one percent in Divisions 10 through 13. Eight percent of the pupils in Divisions 1 through 13 chose the intensive industrial arts programs. 63/

By the late 1940s, the programs of study in the junior high schools were uniform and stable, and similar to other junior high school programs in the country. They provided prescribed and elective courses and offered the pupils an opportunity to explore courses in academic, commercial and practical arts in the seventh and eighth grades. In the ninth grade, they began concentrating in one of these three areas which they could pursue in the senior high school, in business or industry, and in practical life.

In the seventh grade, all subjects were required. They were: English, mathematics, social studies (history and geography), art and music, physical education, science and hygiene, shop or home economics. In the eighth grade, the same subjects continued, and, in addition, pupils had one elective which could be chosen from the following: fundamentals of business, Latin, French or Spanish. In the ninth grade, the three separate curricula were as follows:

Academic: English; Mathematics; Foreign Language: Latin, French or Spanish; Music and Art; Physical Education; History of Civics and Science; Shop or Home Economics.

Commercial: English; Mathematics; Foreign Language: Latin, French or Spanish; Music and Art; Physical Education; History of Civics or Science; Commerical Arithmetic; General Business; Typewriting.

63/ A Look at Our Schools (a handbook of information about the District of Columbia schools)(Washington: Voteless District of Columbia League of Women Voters, 1942), p. 7. Cited in Handorf, "An Historical Study," p. 117.

Practical Arts: English; Mathematics; Foreign Language: Latin, French or Spanish; Music and Art; Physical Education; History of Civics or Science; Shop or Home Economics.

In these curricula the constants [were]: English, Music and Art, and Physical Education. 64/

The evaluation of the curriculum of the junior high school in 1948-49 by George Strayer noted that "the practice of providing differentiated programs on the junior high school level, such as the academic, commercial, and practical arts, [was] of questionable value," although such a practice was very common, particularly in most of the early junior high schools. The major purpose of the differentiated program was to provide opportunities for some specialization before leaving school. Since most junior high school pupils were too immature to make definitive decisions on their vocational objectives and since the holding power of the secondary schools had improved, it was no longer necessary to maintain such differentiation. Accordingly, the report indicated, there was a growing trend toward a "constants and electives" plan, which provided greater flexibility and could be adjusted more readily to meet the needs of individual pupils. 65/ The committee suggested such a curriculum for the junior high schools in Washington, D.C.

Another problem was that of articulation between the philosophy and approach of the Child Development Program and those of the junior high school. There was a need for adjustment on the part of the elementary school pupils trained under an experience-and activity-based program to a subject-oriented curriculum.

The Senior High School

With the introduction of the junior high school in 1919, the senior high school was reorganized by reducing the number of years of study from four to three. The three-year senior high school offered instruction to pupils in

---

64/ Strayer Report, pp. 57C-71.

65/ Ibid., pp. 571-572.

grades ten, eleven and twelve. Because of this change, it was necessary to provide a smooth transition from the ninth year of the junior high school to the tenth year, located in the senior high school. The shift was accomplished gradually. By 1927, the number of ninth grade pupils in the senior high schools had been reduced to seventy percent, the other thirty percent being instructed in the junior high schools. The Bureau of Efficiency Report indicated that it would take another three or four years for most of the ninth grade pupils to be accommodated in junior high schools and for both junior and senior high schools to be organized on a three-year basis. 66/

By 1927, there were seven senior high schools in Washington, D. C., five white and two colored. The five white senior high schools were organized as general high schools. They served particular sections of the city with two of them, Business and McKinley Technical, also serving the entire city in their specialized fields. The two colored senior high schools, Dunbar and Armstrong, specializing in academic and business courses, and in technical courses respectively, served the entire colored high school population of the city.

The senior high schools of Washington, D.C. were organized on the departmental basis, and the majority of teachers taught only one subject. There were 16 departments, nine white and seven colored, and each department head taught one class and was also responsible for the unification, standardization and supervision of classroom instruction in his particular discipline. The white department heads were in charge of the following departments: business practice, chemistry and biology, English, history, Latin, mathematics, modern languages, physical training and physics. The colored departments heads were in charge of the following departments: business practice, English and history, languages, mathematics, applied science, physical training and general science. 67/ Department heads were also instrumental in insuring the close articulation of subject matter taught, adjustment in methods of teaching and

---

66/ Bureau of Efficienty Report, p. 45.

67/ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

similarity in administrative procedures within the schools. All of those received systematic consideration in the readjustment of the senior high schools. 68/

As indicated earlier, some problems of articulation emerged occasionally with regards to credits earned in the ninth grade toward high school graduation, particularly for those pupils seeking college entrance. Consequently, college entrance requirements had a marked effect on the curriculum of the last year of the junior high school and, therefore, of the senior high schools. These schools adapted their curricula to fit college entrance requirements. According to one source, the senior high schools were forced to adopt a college preparatory curriculum in order for their students to gain entrance into college. 69/

The curriculum of the senior high schools offered differentiated programs which provided basic education, vocational courses as well as college preparatory and other specialized programs.

In 1949, Strayer reported that a basic program of general education designed to meet the common needs of all pupils, was offered in health, citizenship, communication, science, mathematics, and the arts. In order to graduate from high school every student had to meet the following requirements: 70/

Subject	Years	Credit
English	4	8
United States History and Constitution	1	2
Mathematics (including business arithmetic)	1	2
Science (biology, chemistry, or physics)		2
Health and Physical Education*	3	3

*To be taken in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades.

68/ Report of the Board of Education, 1929-30, p.68

69/ Handorf, "An Historical Study," p. 124.

70/ Ibid., pp 567-582.

By 1949-50, the Board of Education had added an additional semester of United States Government and Constitution to the above requirements. Including this new requirement, students were expected to complete more than half (eighteen credits) of the minimum number of credits for graduation (thirty-five) in these areas of general education.

Vocational courses were offered in the senior high schools to prepare students for gainful occupations in the future. Courses offered for girls included stenography, bookkeeping, tailoring, millinery, costume designing, cafeteria and tea-room management. Boys could elect courses in stenography, bookkeeping, agriculture, woodwork, machine shop practice, forging, welding, sheet metal, printing, auto mechanics and repair, electrical construction, mechanical drawing, architectural design, art metal work, shoe repairing, stationary engineering, brick masonry, and auto and sign painting. 71/

All of the senior high schools provided basic education in the areas of English, mathematics, social studies, science, foreign languages, music, health and physical education. Most of them offered home economics. Several offered extensive programs in business and/or industrial arts, others offered only one or two subjects in those areas. [redacted] of the senior high schools provided college preparatory curricula.

The senior high schools offered mainly two types of curricula: (1) the constants and electives and (2) the differentiated curriculum. In the constants and electives curriculum, students took required courses within certain areas as prescribed for graduation and, in addition, they selected electives from subjects available in their programs at different grade levels. In the differentiated curriculum, students elected programs according to their life objectives, such as pre-engineering or college preparatory.

Table III presents the types of curricula which were available in the eleven senior high schools of Washington, D.C. during the late 1940s:

71/ Report of the Board of Education, 1927-28, p. 63; Handorf, ibid., pp. 124-125.

TABLE III

TYPES OF CURRICULA IN THE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN WASHINGTON, D. C. (1949)

In the white division (eight senior high schools):	In the colored division (3 senior high schools):
o General	o College preparatory
o College preparatory	o Social business
o Pre-engineering	o Major music
o Academic	o Academic program with required and elective subjects
o Business	o College preparatory in (1) architecture, (2) engineering, (3) home economics, (4) music, (5) art
o Commerical	
o Academic (comprehensive type)	
o College preparatory differentiated for (a) academic, and (b) scientific	o Commercial differentiated for (a) bookkeeping and accounting, (b) commercial art, (c) salesmanship, (d) secretarial, (e) multigraph and mimeograph printing and duplicating
o Business differentiated for (a) bookkeeping, (b) clerical (c) secretarial (d) retailing	
o College preparatory differentiated for (a) language major, (b) science and mathematics major	o Technical in (1) automotive, (2) building design and construction, (3) commercial art, (4) electrical, (5) graphic arts, (6) industrial chemistry, (7) mechanical, (8) clothing and dress design, (9) foods and nutrition, (10) music, (11) shoemaking and leathercraft
o Shop differentiated for (a) boys, (b) girls	
o Commercial differentiated for (a) bookkeeping, (b) clerical, (c) secretarial, (d) retailing	
o Constants and electives program including course work in business, home economics, and manual arts.	

Source: George D. Strayer, The Report of a Survey of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia, (Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 1949), p. 566.

In summary there was a growing trend in secondary education to "select subject matter and materials of instruction on the basis of their usefulness in meeting the practical everyday problems and needs of youth." 72/

A planned program of electives supplemented the required courses in general education. The number of electives increased gradually from the lower to the higher grades. Electives were provided for two major reasons: 1) to allow the students to pursue more intensive study of certain aspects of the basic education program and 2) to provide pre-vocational and vocational training.

The variety of the curricula offered in the senior high schools showed a response to the increasing demand for vocational education and a tendency toward the comprehensive type of curriculum with differentiations to meet the individual needs of students. After its review of the public schools of the District of Columbia, the Strayer survey staff recommended that "all secondary schools, with the possible exceptions of vocational high schools, move in the direction of becoming comprehensive type high schools." 73/

The Process of Curriculum Development

Over a thirty-year period there were several significant changes: 1) a movement to improve curriculum, 2) a broadening of the concept of curriculum, and 3) the decentralization of the process by which curriculum was developed.

The area of curriculum improvement received major attention in the Washington, D.C. public schools. Significant developments occurred and were evidenced in the gradual broadening of the concept of curriculum beyond the simple revision of courses of study, the participation and cooperation of administrative officers and teachers at all levels in the design and development of curriculum, and the gradual acceptance of progressive educational ideas.

72/ Strayer Report, p. 566

73/ Ibid., p. 575.

As indicated earlier, the curriculum in previous years consisted of courses of study and lists of textbooks which were prescribed by the Board's policies and rules, developed by committees of the Board or later by the Superintendent and other school officials, and distributed to teachers to be faithfully implemented. Superintendent Ballou proposed a different approach through the work of committees which involved the broad participation of central staff administrators and teachers from both white and colored school systems throughout the city, thus shifting from the traditional autocratic development of courses of study by the Board and school administrators to the more democratic process involving teacher participation. Between 1920 and 1930, curriculum revision was concentrated at the elementary level. In cooperation with the Commission on Curriculum of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association, the first committee administrators and teachers began the elaboration of the principles that should control the curriculum revision in specific subjects and proceeded with the development of courses of study based on these principles. Revised courses of study were prepared in English, reading, literature, history, geography and arithmetic. Courses of study for the junior high schools were developed along the same lines. In the senior high schools, however, revision or introduction of new courses remained mostly the work of heads of departments or school principals.

Between 1930 and 1940, the program to revise the course of study accelerated. Seven courses of study in the elementary schools, nineteen in the junior high schools, four in the vocational schools, twenty-one in the senior high schools and eight in the teachers colleges were developed, published and distributed. They reflected the new developments in the field of child psychology and educational research. The child, not the subject, was considered the center of the educational enterprise. The course of study, a "vital factor" in classroom instruction, was to be reorganized according to principles of child development and pupil needs. Most importantly, the concept of curriculum reorganization had developed and expanded significantly between the 1920s and 1940s" from a restricted concept of fragmentary revision and compartmentalization of subject-matter into an articulated development of school organization and curriculum content and method from kindergarten through all levels of the school system." 74/

74/ School Achievements, p. 105.

Another significant accomplishment of the cooperative work of the faculty and school administrators in this period was the development of separate statements of philosophy of education for each school level. The Committee on Articulation, established in 1928, was charged with the responsibility of synthesizing the various statements of philosophy into one statement. The statement that was developed was overwhelmingly approved in June of 1940, by teachers and administrators alike as the Philosophy of Education for the Public Schools of the District of Columbia. The approved statement became the basis for the program of curriculum revision.

In order to carry out this philosophy, five new committees were formed to insure:

1. The establishment of a unified curriculum, from Kindergarten through grade XII, composed of activities, experiences and subject matter in integrated wholes which would provide for the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and give constant attention to immediate and ultimate goals.

2. The adoption of classroom techniques, subject-matter content, textbooks and instructional material dependent upon differentiated groupings of pupils according to ability, achievement and social maturity.

3. The accumulation and use of informational background for each child including cumulative records and utilization of research department findings.

4. The provision of guidance by teachers and specialists, such as counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, nurses and others.

5. The establishment of standards of promotion and retention of pupils on the basis of achievement, social maturity, and chronological age, and reports of progress, and by issuing differentiated diplomas and certificates. 75/

The basic areas which the curriculum was to address were: personal living; social environment, natural environment, and expression and communication. The development of these areas and of specific educational objectives represented a marked change from previous practice.

75/ Ibid., pp. 107-108.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION UNDER THE DUAL SYSTEM

Vocational Schools

Manual and industrial training began in the public schools of the District of Columbia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Earlier, Superintendent Powell had introduced manual training in the Central High School. "The courses were so popular," reported Haycock, "that quarters had to be rented to house the many shops." Powell believed that manual arts would have a liberalizing influence upon intellectual development. Furthermore, technical and engineering schools were inviting high school graduates to specialize in that field.

Superintendent Powell appointed a Director of Manual Training and called upon him to extend manual training to all the schools. Courses were designed for white and colored technical high schools. Benchwork was introduced in the manual training shops for the seventh and eighth grade pupils, and manual training and technical work was offered to colored pupils at Armstrong High School, the counterpart of McKinley.

Superintendent Powell also introduced manual training, domestic art and domestic science into the elementary schools for seventh and eighth grade pupils. It was not his purpose to prepare these young people for industrial placements. Rather, he believed that supplementing academic knowledge with the manipulative skills would broaden and liberalize the child's understanding of the environment in which he lives. 76/

By 1919, three vocational schools offered instruction in trade, industrial and commercial arts; and trade, manual and domestic arts at the elementary level. These occupational classes were designed for pupils who planned to leave school upon reaching the age of fourteen, the age limit for compulsory school attendance as prescribed by the Compulsory Education Law of June 8, 1906. These classes were also intended for pupils who did not function well or were failing

---

76/ Robert L. Haycock, "Sixty Years of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia - 1885 to 1945, Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vols. 48-49 (1946-47), pp. 35-36, 40.

in the regular classes. In these schools, pupils were not taught a trade *per se*; they were provided insight and training for some of the occupations which they might enter when they left school. [77]

Two manual training centers, one white and one colored, offered more technical and more advanced training. They provided courses in machine shops, foundries and woodshops.

In 1923, additional trade courses were introduced in the vocational school for colored girls, and the school for colored boys resumed its pre-war courses in home construction and repairs in wood and brick. In the same year, high schools (other than the manual arts high schools) offered fourteen vocational courses, such as auto mechanics, welding, domestic art, domestic science, sheet metal construction, and drawing. [78] In 1924, an increase in appropriations permitted the hiring of additional special teachers in manual training and home economics courses. Manual training, previously limited to the seventh and eighth grade pupils, were now offered to the sixth grade pupils. Sewing and household art instruction, previously given in grade six, was now extended to grades seven and eight. [79]

In 1925, the Compulsory School Attendance Law raised the required upper age limit from fourteen to sixteen years. The vocational schools adjusted their programs accordingly. Their new aim was to prepare for certain trades children who planned to leave school for work when they completed the elementary course or reached the new compulsory school-age limit. They admitted children who were fourteen years of age and had completed the sixth grade. Most of the full programs took two years. Half of the time was devoted to academic subjects and the other half to shop practice. Printing, plumbing, auto repair, sheet metal,

---

77/ Report of the Board of Education, 1920-21; p. 101.

78/ Handorf, "An Historical Study," p. 89.

79/ Report of the Board of Education, 1924-25, pp. 77-78.

electrical work, carpentry, bricklaying and machine shop were some of the trades provided for boys. Dressmaking, cafeteria management, millinery, and artcraft were offered for girls. 80/

By 1927, fifty percent of the seventh and eighth grade pupils were receiving instruction in the new junior high schools rather than in the traditional eight-year elementary schools. Industrial art courses were included in the regular offerings of the junior high schools. Girls could receive training in domestic arts; domestic science, costume designing, homemaking, and arts and crafts. Vocational training was available to boys in woodwork, pattern-making, printing, sheet metal work, shoe repairing, applied electricity, and mechanical drawing.

The senior high schools also increased the number and variety of their course offerings in vocational training in order to prepare their pupils for gainful occupations after completing their high school studies. Girls were provided instruction in stenography, bookkeeping, tailoring, millinery, costume designing, cafeteria and tearoom management. Boys had a wider choice. Training for them was available in stenography, bookkeeping, agriculture, woodwork, machine shop practice, forging, welding, sheet metal, printing, auto mechanics and repair, electrical construction, mechanical drawing, architectural design, metal work, shop repairing, stationary engineering, brick masonary, auto and sign painting. 81/

In 1929-1930, Superintendent Ballou reported to the Board of Education that "the school authorities, as well as the public, recognize[d] that only a beginning ha[d] been made in the field of vocational education in Washington." 82/ He indicated that more rapid progress could be expected in the immediate future. Indeed, much support for the improvement of public trade and vocational schools in Washington, D.C. had come from trade and labor leaders. This led to the

---

80/ Bureau of Efficiency Report, p. 44.

81/ Report of the Board of Education, 1927-28, pp. 62 - 63.

82/ Board of Education Report, 1929-30, p. 70.

appointment by the Board of Education of an Advisory Committee on Vocational Training. At the suggestion of the Committee and of the Superintendent, the Federal Board of Vocational Education surveyed the trade opportunities in the District of Columbia in 1930, and submitted recommendations to the Board of Education which were approved the following year.

The George-Deen Act of 1936 granted federal funds for vocational education in the District of Columbia. The funds were provided for instruction in trades and industries, home economics, agriculture, teacher- training, and distributive education. Two department heads were appointed to supervise the new educational program this made possible. Congress also passed an act in the Spring of 1936 limiting vocational education to the junior and senior high school levels. These two acts of Congress gave a strong impetus to vocational education in Washington, D. C.

Admission requirements to the vocational high schools were strengthened. The minimum age-limit was set at sixteen years. Recommendations from school principals would be considered in special cases. To be eligible for admission, pupils must have completed the ninth grade. Troublesome and problem students from the elementary, junior and senior high schools could no longer be sent to vocational schools. Students needing disciplinary attention and care were not eligible for admission to the vocational schools. The number of trades offered was expanded greatly, and new schools and facilities were added.

In 1938, the school-day in the vocational high schools was lengthened thirty minutes in order to provide two three-hour sessions for instruction. Each day, three hours were devoted to shop instruction in the trade elected by the student; one and one-half hours daily were devoted to instruction in subjects directly related to the trade, such as trade mathematics and trade science; and one and one-half hours daily were given over to academic subjects such as English, history, civics, music, and physical education. Classes in distributive education were organized in both day and evening schools for the wider community. 83/.

83/ School Achievements, pp. 33-35.

Junior and senior high schools also offered vocational and distributive education classes in 1939. By 1940, these classes were firmly established in day and evening schools.

Pressures from trade and labor personalities, the raising of the compulsory school age, unemployment during the Depression years, and Congressional acts all help account for the extension of vocational education in the District of Columbia during the 1920s and 1930s. With the advent of World War II, vocational education continued to expand greatly. Men needed to be retrained to enter industrial occupations, skilled workers were urgently needed in various fields, and younger people needed to qualify for gainful employment.

In 1944, the school system started to require that students complete the eighth grade before entering the vocational program. By 1949, the five vocational high schools offered a varied program of trades and numerous options:

One white school for boys and men offered training in highly skilled mechanical trades: auto mechanics, machine work, sheet metal, plumbing, building and machine electrical work, painting, plastering, cabinetmaking, upholstery, printing, welding, steamfitting, structural steel work, boilermaking, air-conditioning, carpentry, paperhanging, and cable splicing.

One white school for girls and women offered training in the skilled service trades and in office, distributive, and the professional assisting occupations: cosmetology, dressmaking and designing, assistant cafeteria management, assistant tearoom management, pastry shop operation and catering, secretarial training, clerk typing, office machine operation, assistant dietician work, practical nursing, nursery operation, office work, and retail salesmanship.

One white school for male and female youths and adults offered training in the art and service trades, and in office and distributive occupations: advertising, photography, multilith engraving, radio communication, operator-service, typing, adding-machine repair, baking, cafeteria

operation, cosmetology, barbering, stenography, bookkeeping, watch repair, and architectural and machine draftsmanship.

One school trained colored boys and men in the skilled mechanical trades: aircraft engine mechanics, automobile mechanics, machine work, sheet metal work, plumbing, steamfitting, building electrical work, machine electrical work, radio service work, carpentry, painting, bricklaying, printing, draftsmanship, orthopedic shoe repairing, and shoemaking.

One school trained colored youth and adults, especially girls and women, in the service trades: cafeteria operation, tearoom operation, catering, cooking, household operation, dressmaking, tailoring, power sewing, dry cleaning, cosmetology, office machine operation, costume designing, nursery assistant work and practical nursing. (See Tables IV and V.)

TABLE IV

VOCATIONAL TRAINING COURSES

WHITE SCHOOLS, 1949

Boys and Men	Girls and Women	Male and Female Youths and Adults
Highly Skilled Mechanical Trades	Skilled Service Trades, Office, Distributive, Professional Assisting Occupations	Art and Science Trades Office and Distributive Occupations
auto mechanics	cosmetology	advertising
machine work	dressmaking and designing	photography
sheet metal	assistant cafeteria management	multilith engraving
plumbing	assistant tearoom management	radio communication
building electrical work	pastry shop operation and catering	operator service
machine electrical work	secretarial training	typing
painting	clerk typing	adding machine repair
plastering	office machine operation	baking
cabinet making	assistant dietician work	cafeteria operation
upholstery	practical nursing	cosmetology
printing	nursery operation	barbering
welding	office work	stenography
steamfitting	retail salesmanship	bookkeeping
structural steel work		watch repair
boilermaking		architectural draftsmanship
air-conditioning mechanics		
carpentry		machine draftsmanship
paper hanging		
cable splicing		

Source: George D. Strayer, The Report of a Survey of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia, (Washington, D. C. Government Printing Office, 1949), pp. 687-694.

TABLE V

VOCATIONAL TRAINING COURSES

COLORED SCHOOLS, 1949

Boys and Men	Primarily Girls and Women
Skilled Mechanical Trades	Service Trades
aircraft engine-mechanics	cafeteria operation
automobile mechanics	tearoom operation
machine work	catering
sheet metal work	cooking
plumbing	household operation
steamfitting	dressmaking
building electrical work	tailoring
machine electrical work	power sewing
radio service work	dry cleaning
carpentry	cosmetology
painting	office machine operation
bricklaying	costume designing
printing	nursery assistant work
draftsmanship	practical nursing
orthopedic shoe repairing	
shoemaking	

Source: George D. Strayer, The Report of a Survey of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), pp. 687-694.

Special Classes

Prior to the beginning of the twentieth century no classes or schools existed in the public schools of the District of Columbia for students who could not adjust to regular classes. Educational provisions for handicapped children date back to 1865 with the first official recognition of blind children. On February 23rd of that year, an Act of Congress authorized the instruction of all indigent blind children "in some institutions for the education of the blind, in Maryland, or some other State" at the expense of the Treasury of the United States. In 1868, instruction for indigent deaf and dumb children was authorized. In 1880, instruction was approved for indigent "feeble-minded" children to be conducted outside of the District of Columbia, at the District's expense. In 1901, authorization was granted for the instruction of deaf-mutes. In 1905, colored deaf-mute children of Washington, D.C. were instructed at the Maryland School for Colored Deaf-Mutes at Overlea. 84/

In 1906, the Compulsory Education Law included handicapped children as recipients of public education in the District of Columbia and made the organization of special classes possible. Ungraded classes for incorrigible and truant pupils and for atypical pupils ("backward, morally weak, mentally and physically defective") were first started in 1906-1907. 85/ The supervisor in charge of ungraded schools in the white divisions indicated that:

> Every effort was employed to adapt both work and play to the individual needs and capabilities of the children.... Children of immigrants not speaking or understanding English might join such classes temporarily until they acquire sufficient facility in the use of the language to be graded properly.

The 1909-1910 Report of the Board of Education made reference to the instruction given in these classes:

> ...the industrial work [was] the foundation on which we [built] toward the development of not only the motor powers but also the mental and moral. As the senses are trained through materials used, a conception is given as to quantity, quality, and financial

---

84/ Compilation of Laws, pp. 111-115.

85/ Report of the Board of Education to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1906-1908, pp. 83, 96-97.

values. Defective children learn more with the hand than with the head and should be constantly trained to use their hands in making useful things, wearable and salable. 86/

Pupils in those special classes were transferred to regular classes as soon as it was judged appropriate. In 1917, the first class for anemic and tubercular children was formed and transportation was provided for the pupils enrolled. 87/ In 1919, Americanization classes were offered for foreign pupils in the white division. "The objectives of the Americanization school [were] the teaching of the English language to foreigners, the development of American ideas, the preparation for naturalization, and the supplementing of a neglected school education." 88/

With the introduction of the junior high school in 1919, the need to accommodate individual differences among pupils and to provide differentiated programs for them was strongly emphasized. Special efforts were made to adapt the educational programs to the varying needs and capabilities of the pupils. Between 1923 and 1925, a program of educational testing was put in place by Superintendent Ballou in the white and colored schools on the elementary and junior high school levels. Pupils were classified according to the results of combined general intelligence tests and achievement tests. In 1926, opportunity classes were organized on the basis of an XYZ grouping for exceptional as well as slow and retarded learners. Those pupils with an IQ range of 111 to 140 were assigned to accelerated classes. Those with IQs ranging between 76 and 90 were placed in opportunity classes for slow learners. And those with IQs ranging between 51 and 75 were considered mentally retarded and were placed in atypical

---

86/ Report of the Board of Education, 1909-1910, pp. 226-229.

87/ Report of the Board of Education, 1917-1918, p. 155.

88/ Report of the Government of the District of Columbia for the Year Ended June 30, 1946, p. 44.

classes., Special instruction was provided for those pupils according to their classification. 89/

By 1930, the Annual Report of the Board of Education indicated that the following developments had taken place:

> Atypical classes [were] reorganized through the introduction of a better plan of selecting pupils for such classes; by a modification of the educational program; and by the systematic establishment of such classes in more convenient centers throughout the city. Ungraded classes [were] reorganized by the separation of the subnormal children from the disciplinary children by assigning teachers who [had] a better understanding of the maladjusted child and by the introduction of manual training and typing and other forms of hand work. 90/

Health schools for white and colored children suffering from tuberculosis were constructed or renovated, the Report continued. A site for the erection of a sanitorium in Maryland was acquired. Open-window classes were conducted for anemic children in both divisions. White deaf children received instruction in the Columbia Institution for the Deaf, while colored deaf children were instructed at the Maryland School for the Blind at Overlea, both at public expense. White and colored blind children of Washington, D.C. were also instructed at the latter institution at public expense. Two schools -- one white, one colored -- for crippled children were established in 1929. Lip reading classes for hard-of-hearing children and speech correction were introduced in 1922 and taught by specially trained teachers. 91/

In addition to these special classes, there were night schools on the elementary, high and vocational school levels and vocational schools on the elementary, junior and senior high school levels. 92/

89/ Report of the Board of Education, 1925-26, pp. 68-69.

90/ Report of the Board of Education, 1929-30, p. 66.

91/ Ibid., p. 66-67.

92/ Bureau of Efficiency Report, pp. 43-44.

In 1933, sight conservation classes were established for white and colored pupils. The sight conservation classrooms were equipped with special lighting equipment, furniture, textbooks and instructional materials adapted to the needs and abilities of the pupils. 93/ In 1938, occupational classes were organized for the average pupils with educational handicaps, behavior problems and character or personality disorders. Such pupils were considered "not academically-minded" and therefore [they] were not expected to complete the requirements of the secondary schools and the vocational schools. A special committee was appointed to develop courses of study for them. 94/ Restricted to the elementary level, these classes had a lower enrollment than the regular classes. The curriculum included homemaking, handiwork and maintenance activities. 95/

In 1941-42, classes in Braille were initiated for colored pupils, and in 1942-43, they also began for white pupils. Hearing conservation classes were provided for white pupils in the same year and a year later for colored pupils. In 1941, visiting instruction was provided for shut-ins under the auspices of the public schools for those pupils who were confined to their homes or to hospitals. 96/ No longer did blind and deaf students have to go to special non-public schools.

In 1949, George D. Strayer and his staff conducted a review of Special Education in the District of Columbia as a part of the Survey of the Public School System. They indicated that educational leaders in the city had identified over a period of years the various categories of pupils in the school population who required special teacher attention and had endeavored to provide education "suited to the needs of hundreds of children who suffer from the following

93/ Handorf, "An Historical Study," p. 79.

94/ School Achievements, pp. 31-32, 119-120.

95/ Mamie Holloway Lindo, "A History of Special Education in the District of Columbia Public Schools prior to the Waddy Decree of August 1, 1972" (doctoral dissertation, George Washington University, 1974), p. 31.

96/ Dabney, "History of Schools," p. 227.

handicaps: mental, physical, educational, and personality differences." "Unfortunately," they noted, "much is left to be desired in the program of special classes and special services in operation, at present.... Money has not been available to buy the necessary services, and so the need has not been met." 97/

The report indicated that committees were working to produce new curriculum guides for the instruction of the atypical child. A short manual of suggestions for use in teaching was developed in 1945. In the black schools, there was a combination school which offered mostly a prevocational program of occupational classes and upgraded remedial classes for atypical groups. Pupils in the occupational classes usually stayed two years. They were later transferred to regular classes in the junior high schools. There was no educational opportunity program for the mentally retarded.

All physically handicapped children were placed in special classes for the crippled, or in sight conservation, Braille, or conservation of hearing classes. There were no day classes in the public schools of Washington, D. C. for the education of the totally deaf. Children with defective eyesight studied mathematics, English, and literature with normal children and regular teachers. They returned to the special teacher for reading, study, and written work which was done at their special desks in the sight-saving room.

The report indicated further:

> Visiting instruction was provided in the home or in hospitals for children with acute illness or broken bones, infections or rheumatic fever. In the Health school in the white division, the children did the same things normal children did. Art, music and activities concerned with oral and written communication were evident in all classes. Very little constructive work had been done in the public schools toward caring for children with educational handicaps. More emphasis needed to be given to remedial reading and remedial speech. A true educational clinic which offered educational analysis, diagnosis and treatment as well as advisory services to teachers was lacking. Provision for children with personal maladjustments was extremely inadequate. The Washington schools did not have the necessary clinical service to serve the needs of school children.

97/ Strayer, The Report, 1949, p. 507.

The Survey staff, concluding their report, recommended strengthening and greater coordination of special services to children in the District of Columbia public schools. 98/

98/ Strayer The Report, 1949, pp. 501-536.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DURING THE POST-DESEGREGATION PERIOD 1954-1982

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court, announcing its decision in the case of Bolling v. Sharpe, declared segregation in the public schools of the District of Columbia unconstitutional. Immediately thereafter, the Board of Education adopted a statement of policy on integration and, later, approved a complete plan for the desegregation of the D.C. public schools presented by the Superintendent. This plan took effect on September 1, 1955 and marked the end of the de jure dual system of public education in Washington, D.C. This major organizational change came after years of inequities, particularly in the areas of public expenditures, school accommodations and pupil-teacher ratios, which affected the delivery of educational services in the colored and white schools in the city. 99/ As a result of the organizational change, the relative achievement of colored and white students became a major public policy issue. Furthermore, achievement testing became increasingly important for placement of students, selection of programs of study and adoption of curricula.

The Track System

In 1955, as a result of reports of serious retardation in achievement in the basic skills and low scores on standardized tests taken by tenth grade students, the Board of Education approved a curriculum plan recommended by a committee of high school principals and other school personnel chaired by the then Assistant Superintendent in charge of senior high schools, Carl F. Hansen. The four-track curriculum, as the plan for the senior high schools was designated, was implemented in the tenth grade in 1956-57, and extended to the eleventh and twelfth grades in 1957-58. By 1960, the track system was in operation throughout the school system -- including the elementary and the junior high schools.

99/ Ellis O. Knox, Democracy and the District of Columbia Public Schools - A Study of Recently Integrated Public Schools (Washington, D.C.: Judd and Detweiler, Inc., 1957), pp. 9, 13-14.

The basic assumption behind the track system was that all pupils, regardless of ability, needed the basic subjects and that these basic subjects could be better taught to students grouped homogeneously according to their ability. Therefore, a curriculum was designed to meet the needs and the varied achievement levels of students at all three levels of the school system.

According to Hansen, the objectives of the track system were to provide a total planned curriculum for students of different ability levels and to increase the teachability of classes by reducing the range of differences in academic abilities within them. The track system stressed education in the fundamental subjects systematically organized and taught. It required instruction in the basic academic content for the bright, average and slow learner. The bright student was required to take sequences of the rigorous "hard" subjects rather than allowed to select subjects at random. The slow learner was given a curriculum program which led to completion of high school while offering the opportunity for upgrading achievement. The track curriculum sequences preserved the democracy of the comprehensive high school, argued Superintendent Hansen, while it improved educational achievement at various levels within it. 100/

Summarizing the aims of the track system, Professor A. Harry Passow, author of a major study of the D.C. schools in 1967, stated:

> Tracking...was intended to create a better "match" between the pupil's academic ability and performance and the level of academic work to which he [was] exposed, by means of:
>
> 1. Narrowing the range of abilities in any classroom;
>
> 2. Prescribing the scope and level of difficulty of each pupil's academic program so that he is unable to elect courses which might be either too easy or too difficult for him;
>
> 3. Maintaining each pupil at the level deemed most appropriate for him in all (or almost all) of his academic work;
>
> 4. Setting system-wide standards for admission into each track and prescribing the curriculum appropriate for each level. 101/

100/ Carl F. Hansen, The Four-track Curriculum in Today's High Schools (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964), pp. vii-viii.

101/ Passow, Report, p. 195.

In the senior high schools four curriculum sequences were provided: the Honors, for gifted or exceptionally able students; the College Preparatory, for able students planning to go to college; the General, for students not qualified for or not planning to go to college; and the Basic, for students severely retarded in the areas of reading and arithmetic.

The requirements of these curriculum sequences were as follows:

1. Honors. This track required the completion of eighteen units, of which sixteen and one-half were required. (A unit represented a year of study five days a week with additional homework). These units taken from honors level courses consisted of four years of English; four years of a foreign language, beginning in the eighth grade; three years of mathematics beginning in the eighth grade and including elementary and intermediate algrebra, plane and solid geometry, and trigonometry; three years of science--biology, chemistry, and physics; and two and one-half years of social studies--ancient and medieval history, and United States history and government. The honors student could major in the humanities or in science and mathematics by choosing additional electives in his area of specialization. Other electives provided were art, music, driver education, shop or home economics.

2. College preparatory. This track required the completion of sixteen units, of which eleven and one-half were required. These units taken from the college preparatory level courses included four years of English, two years of mathematics, two years of a foreign language; two years of science; and one and one-half years of social studies. The student could major in the humanities, science or mathematics and select electives in art, music, journalism, shop, home economics and driver education.

3. General. This track required the completion of sixteen units, of which ten and one-half were required. These were: four years of English, one year of mathematics, one year of science, and one and one-half years of social studies. The student could major in

secretarial studies, retailing, clerical studies, bookkeeping, the fine arts and shop..

4. Basic. This track required the completion of sixteen units, of which ten and one-half were required. These were: four years of basic English, one year of basic arithmetic, one year of basic science, two and one-half years of basic social studies, one year of basic business practice, one year of basic shop for boys, and home economics for girls. 102/

There were some modifications over the ten-year period in terms of the number of courses and the number of electives in some of the tracks in the high schools.

At the junior high school level students could be placed in three tracks: Special Academic, Regular and Honors. They continued to pursue the basic courses offered in the elementary level and began some of the high school studies. In the Honors track, foreign languages and algebra were required in the eighth grade, and English, foreign languages, intermediate algebra and biology in the ninth grade. In the general track, students preparing for the regular college preparatory track in high school took English, foreign languages and algebra in the ninth grade. Students in the Special Academic or Basic Track took English, social studies and arithmetic in the ninth grade. 103/ The track system at the elementary school level, commonly known as the Amidon Plan, placed students in three tracks: Special Academic, Regular and Honors. The subjects offered were the same for all tracks, but taught on different levels. The recommended city-wide time allotments were as follows: 104/

Language (including reading, phono-visual, spelling handwriting, writing and grammar, oral language and speech, and literature	45%
Social Studies	10%
Arithmetic	12%
Science	7%

102/ Hansen, The Four Track Curriculum, pp. vi, 59-68; "Ability Grouping in the High Schools;" Atlantic Monthly (November 1960), pp. 1-9.

103/ Hansen, The Four Track Curriculum, pp. 60, 62, 67.

104/ 1965 Handbook of Information for Teachers in the Elementary Schools, cited in Passow Report, pp. 273.

Physical Education	7%
Music	6%
Art	5%
Health, rest, milk	8%

The aims of the Amidon plan were stated in the school system's Curriculum Bulletin of 1961-1962:

> The end product desired is not a spoon-fed, protected individual, but a self-disciplined personality capable of continuing education and intelligent decision making.
>
> Each child will be considered as an individual and given that care and affection which is a notable feature in all good teaching.
>
> Teaching is measured by the interaction between the teacher and pupils, and between pupils and pupils. The children supplement the textbooks with library work, research, and other enriching experiences.
>
> Quality, creativeness, and purposefulness are of greater value than quantity. Differences in ability, interests, and rates of learning are satisfied through activities varying from practicing or doing research, to collecting, interviewing, or experimenting.

Passow indicated that:

> The essence of the Amidon Plan appeared to be the development of a very closely controlled series of learnings, with an emphasis on efficiency, the crucial role of the teacher, and a very heavy emphasis on the development of reading skill and correct usage in speaking and writing. The chief approach to teaching reading and writing was through the Phono-visual system. The curriculum was organized into separate subjects with a textbook for each of the eight basic subjects determing the scope and sequence. 105/

While the content of the curriculum gave increased importance to skills and set programs of study with specific requirements, the instructional process emphasized the authority of the teacher, who maintained tight control, order and discipline in the classroom. The 1967 Passow team found that:

105/ Ibid, pp. 273-274.

> The teachers in Washington have been led to stress reading at the expense of everything else and to place themselves as teachers in a highly directive role. Two thirds of the school day was typically given over to activities intended to develop language skills in each of the class schedules examined. The basic approach to the teaching of reading was to drill on the recognition of words and the factual content of the materials read. The bulk of the child's day seemed to be spent in a "read and recite" mode. Nothing else, not even arithmetic, loomed as large or important. The child spend most of his day paying the closest possible attention to his teacher, following her directions, responding to her questions, and obeying her rules. The children were not encouraged to talk to one another, either formally or informally--indeed, the principal technical criticism the observers had of the language program was that it did not seem to deal with speech. And the sad fact is that in spite of all this, the children don't really learn to read, as the test surveys have repeatedly shown. Doing the same thing, but doing it harder, would scarcely seem promising. 106/

According to Hansen, ability grouping facilitated creative learning, fostered interest in learning and therefore reduced discipline problems. It also assisted in the preparation of youth for earning a living. 107/ The Passow team reported that the supporters of the track system viewed it as "a means of" increasing the teachability of classes. Its opponents viewed it as "a new form of racial, social, and economic discrimination" which resulted in "programmed retardation" for a large number of pupils.

> The question of the track system has been aired not only on the "Hill," in court and at open Board meetings but it has occupied the attention of Board committees and the Board as a whole at many sessions. The Board of Education officially abandoned the name "track system" in 1965. In November 1966, it reaffirmed its desire to institute innovative methods designed to provide the maximum possible individualization of instruction in the District schools. At that session, the Board urged continued experimentation with many variations of classroom organization. In January 1967, the Superintendent of Schools, at the request of

---

106/ Ibid, pp 275-276.

107/ Hansen, The Four Track Curriculum, pp. 94, 112, 126-127.

the President of the Board, presented a statement of Procedures for Eliminating the Variable Curriculum (Track System) and suggested alternatives (January 18, 1967). 108/

At the end of their review of the Washington, D.C. public schools the Passow teams indicated that among other problems they found:

-- A low level of scholastic achievement as measured by performance on standardized tests.

-- Grouping procedures which have been honored in the breach as often as observed in practice.

-- A curriculum which, with certain exceptions, has not been especially developed for or adapted to an urban population.

-- A "holding power" or dropout rate which reflects a large number of youth leaving school before earning a diploma. 109/

The report recommended abandonment of the tracking system and pointed out the need for a complete reorganization of the instructional system. The report summarized this recommendation as follows:

> Redevelopment is needed in almost every way. A comprehensive program of redevelopment will have to include class management, the teaching of the basic skill area, the use of materials of instruction, the development of coherent curriculum episodes, the use of specialties and of specialists both from within the school system and out of it, experimentation with teaching teams and new organizational patterns. The effect of the stress on a limited skill-centered view of knowledge brought about through the Amidon Plan has been to narrow the school's function so as to make it irrelevant. * In a school system devoted almost exclusively to reading, children are not learning to read. 110/

It was not the Passow Report, however, but rather the decree of Judge J. Skelly Wright, handed down a few months before Passow submitted his final document, that killed the tracking system in 1967. Judge Wright, in his decision in the celebrated case of Hobson v. Hansen, found that the track system

---

108/ Passow, Report, p. 193

109/ Ibid., p. 3.

110/ Ibid, p. 278.

discriminated against low income black children and perpetuated de facto segregation, and he ordered its abolition. Hansen wanted the Board of Education to appeal the ruling, and when the Board refused, he resigned. Passow's critique of tracking became an after-the-fact justification.

The Executive Study Group

The Passow Report highlighted several problems that the D.C. Public Schools had to address as the system adjusted to integration and sought to meet the needs of an urban population with a large percentage of black and low income pupils. The Passow Report became the focus of Board of Education discussion. In October 1968, it established an Executive Study Group to develop programs that would address the problems identified in the Passow Report. The Executive Study Group recommended changes in the organization for instruction, curriculum design, planning and innovation, instructional materials, and resources and staff development. The Study Group recommended that the "District schools undergo a series of systematic changes leading toward the eventual goal of complete individualization of instruction." 111/

The Executive Study Group recommended that teachers, students and citizens participate in curriculum development; that the instructional system assume responsibility for the success of students; that the instructional system be organized around the learner; that the curriculum be coordinated to reflect the student's environment; and that curriculum developers consider coordinated rather than traditional subject-by-subject approaches. 112/

The Passow and the Executive Study Group reports identified problems in curriculum development that would be expanded and modified over time. One such problem was the low scores of pupils on achievement tests. One plan to address that problem was the Academic Achievement Plan of the noted psychologist Kenneth Clark.

111/ Reports of the Executive Study Group for a Model Urban School System for the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.: Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1968), p. 43.

112/ Ibid, pp. 47-48.

The Academic Achievement Plan

The Board of Education adopted the Academic Achievement Plan (AAP) in 1970. Superintendent Hugh Scott in his statement on the AAP indicated that "the elimination of deficiencies in the basic skills of reading and mathematics [stands] as the most critical professional obligation facing all school personnel". 113/ According to Clark, in order to "attain academic excellence in the public schools, concentrated emphasis in curriculum development and teaching [had to] be placed upon developing reading skills in the primary grades to the highest level of achievement possible." 114/ According to Clark, it was necessary to establish "systemwide minimum floors of achievement, in content learning and skill mastery, appropriate to the age and grade of normal children ..." 115/

The AAP called for the development of criterion-referenced tests; teacher accountability; pupil promotion at critical grades: three, six, and nine; reading and mathematics mobilization teams for each school; and the promotion of a Reading Mobilization Year.

The Clark Plan was only partially implemented in the D.C. Public Schools. According to James Guines, the Associate Superintendent for Instruction, "the most basic and damaging fault in the implementation of the plan was the failure of Clark Plan leaders to involve the supervisors, administrators, and teachers union representatives who must, of necessity, provide leadership in the implementation of any educational design. In addition, students, parents, and

---

113/ A Summary of the Superintendent Reports to the Board, 1971, p. 1.

114/ Kenneth Clark, A Possible Reality - A Design for the Attainment of High Academic Achievement for the Students of the Public Elementary and Junior High Schools of Washington, D.C., 1970, p 26.

115/ Clark, A Possible Reality, p. 29.

other concerned members of the community were not consulted about or even presented with the goals of the plan." 116/ In June 1973 Hugh Scott resigned as Superintendent and in October of the same year Barbara Sizemore assumed the position.

The Sizemore Program

The 1973-74 school year began under the standards established by the AAP. The D.C. Public Schools had developed, in cooperation with the California Testing Bureau, criterion-referenced tests for grades one to nine in reading and mathematics. Superintendent Sizemore promoted the administration of criterion-reference tests at the instructional level of students rather than at traditional grade levels. 117/ Specifically, she proposed "the grouping of students according to individual needs: by skill mastery or deficiency." She also advocated "a continuum of education approach (kindergarten through grade 12) to allow students to progress at their own individual rates through identified curricula," as well as "a multi-cultural/multi-lingual" curricular overlay which would lend broader dimension to the instructional goals of the system. 118/

The Bilingual Program which started in 1971 was expanded under the Sizemore administration. In 1973, the allocation of federal funds made possible the initiation of a multi-cultural/multi-lingual program which offered instruction in English as a second language, in Spanish and American culture, and in bilingual tutoring in regular secondary courses. Guidance was also made available in Spanish for Spanish-speaking students in the areas of course selection and scheduling, career selection and personal and school-related problems. Infor-

---

116/ James T. Guines, "The District of Columbia Public School System Addresses Accountability through a Competency-Based Curriculum," Journal of Personalized Instruction 3 (Winter 1978), p. 200.

117/ Annual Report, Overview School Years 73-74 & 74-75, District of Columbia Public Schools, 1975, p. 42.

118/ Ibid, p. 42; The Superintendent's 120 Day Report, District of Columbia Public Schools, 1974, p. 29.

mation services for the Spanish community in school regulations and school activities were also a part of the program which was implemented in five secondary schools. The multi-level, multi-modal, multi-cultural program was best implemented in open space schools where the teaching-learning situation could be freer, more informal, highly individualized and child-centered. Proponents of open space schools argued that in addition to learning reading, writing and arithmetic, children in such schools learned to make choices, and to develop a sense of independence, freedom and responsibility. They also developed their understanding and thinking processes and improved their ability to make sound decisions. 119/

Following the Waddy decision in 1972 that no eligible child should be denied the right to a publicly-supported education in the District of Columbia Public Schools, the school system had to re-evaluate its delivery of services to "exceptional children." Superintendent Sizemore, rejecting the isolated approach to "special education," adopted a strategy of "mainstreaming." Through massive staff development, curriculum revision and decentralization of the delivery of special education services the school system began to meet the needs of all students. Educational programs became the responsibility of Regional Superintendents for all students within their designated areas. A Visiting Instruction Corps was established to individualize instruction for the student who, because of physical disability, health impairment or other specified reasons, was unable to attend school. Trainable Mentally Retarded Stations were assigned the task of designing a developmental education program for the severely handicapped at the elementary level. In 1973, the Good Start Program was instituted with the major goal of developing procedures for those pre-school age children who were not progressing in a day care program or did not have available opportunities in the types of educational programs that would allow them to reach their full potential. 120/

119/ Questions and Answers. Superintendent's Testimony before the Senate Sub-committee of the Committee on Approriations, 1974, p. 66

120/ The Superintendent's 120 Day Report, 1974, pp. 37-39; Annual Report, 1975, pp. 60-66.

In her 120 Day Report, Superintendent Sizemore stated that "all education is in some measure career education and our curriculum must become reflective of that position from kindergarten through grade 12." 121/ Recalling the development of vocational schools in the past, which offered a separate and lesser curriculum for the students who could not make it in the academic schools and the later addition of "vocational" functions to high school programs through secretarial and accounting courses, Sizemore went on to say that the concept of career education should be integrated into the total curriculum. 122/

Therefore, the Superintendent reorganized the vocational high schools "from full-time alternative high schools to part-time specialized [career] centers." 123/ These career centers focused upon clusters of occupational training. These clusters were: Manufacturing; Service Industries, Advanced Business and Office, Hospitality, Construction, Transportation, Personal Services, Office and Advanced Office, Health Careers and Communication and Media. These changes from vocational high schools to career cluster centers were to be carefully coordinated with the expansion of introductory and exploratory technical programs in the academic high schools. 124/

The Superintendent felt strongly that education and work had to be integrated, especially for adolescents who "need to serve in order to maintain feelings of work and dignity." Consequently, she vigorously supported career education as an integral part of the pre-kindergarten through high school program for all students. 125/

121/ Ibid., p. 40.

122/ Ibid.

123/ Superintendent's Annual Report, 1975, p. 46.

124/ Ibid.

125/ The Superintendent's 120 Day Report, 1974, p. 41.

The Competency-Based Curriculum

In October 1975, Vincent Reed was appointed Acting Superintendent. According to Guines, "Reed was faced with a basic decision to choose between the testing and measuring of competencies expected of students at various grade levels (competency-based testing) and the curricular approach toward the acquisition of competencies in which the instructional technology necessary to raise levels of tested achievement is emphasized (competency-based curricula)." 126/ Guines indicated that after careful consideration the Board adopted Reed's recommendation and began immediate implementation of a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC).

A Curriculum Advisory Committee was formed in 1976 to design a comprehensive educational program for the school system, pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, including special and vocational education. The committee included representatives of the Washington Teachers Union the Council of School Officers, school supervisory personnel and concerned community members.

CBC, as designed by the Committee, was "a systematic procedure for identifying, developing, implementing, evaluating and revising instructional strategies, materials and support services, coordinated and directed toward identified educational goals." 127/ Five broad skill areas were selected for the overall focus of the curriculum: communication skills, consumer/producer skills, analytical skills, social and political skills, and self-actualization skills.

CBC in the D.C. Public Schools has as its ultimate goal "the establishment of an effective and efficient educational program." It has been designed as an integrated system, as previously proposed by Sizemore, "to permit students to

---

126/ Guines, "The D.C. Public School System Addresses Accountability through a Competency-Based Curriculum," pp. 200-201.

127/ Valerie A. Ford et al, "The Design and Development of the Competency-Based Curriculum," Journal of Personalized Instruction, 3 (Winter 1978), p. 202.

attain their maximum growth potential in the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains." 128/ Specific objectives have been established in the areas of reading, English/language arts, and mathematics and science, arranged in priority order. Each behavioral objective is accompanied by at least two instructional activities which students must perform and assessment tasks which they must also perform as they accomplish a specific objective.

CBS uses standardized criterion and norm-referenced tests, the Prescriptive Reading Tests, the Prescriptive Mathematics Test and the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, the last in the areas of mathematics, science, reading, comprehensive vocabulary and language. One particularly important teaching strategy used in the CBC approach is the grouping of students on a flexible basis: "Flexible grouping of students within the class means that there is variation in grouping patterns according to student needs.... Flexible grouping [entails] the varied use of whole group, small group, and individual instruction according to the needs of individual students." 129/

In conjunction with CBC, a promotional system was developed. The new system, the Student Progress Plan (SPP), was first implementd in the 1980-81 school year in grades one to three, and expanded in September 1981, to include grades four to six. The SPP checklist of specific objectives is a move away from the traditional report card and emphasizes the CBC approach to individualized instruction. Each semester of instruction in the curriculum is defined as a level in the SPP. Student must master seventy percent of the required skills at each grade level in reading and mathematics. If a student has not attained the required mastery level in a given subject, he is placed in a "transitional grade level" where he receives supplementary individualized instruction in that subject area while he continues to function at grade level

128/ Comprehensive Education Plan. School Year 1977-78, Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1977, p. 75.

129/ Ibid, p. 78.

in the other areas. If the students' skills are below the required mastery level in both reading and mathematics, he is retained at his current grade.

While the terms "promoted" and "retained" are used to describe student progress under SPP, Superintendent Floretta D. McKenzie cautioned that these words have a "special meaning because actual grade level promotions occur only at the end of the school year. The mid-year promotion and retention data are used as a means of identifying the students who are successfully acquiring needed reading and math skills and those who need assistance before moving on to more advanced work." 130/

Alternative Programs

In addition to the minimum competency program in basic skills, the D.C. Public Schools now offer a number of alternative programs at the secondary level to respond to varied student needs. Some of these programs are:

- the Ballou Math/Science Program which offers a curriculum of advanced mathematics and science designed for the student who is planning to enter the field of engineering;
- the Duke Ellington School of the Arts which offers special training in the visual and performing arts: art, theatre, music and dance;
- the McKinley Architectural Drawing/Pre-Engineering Program geared toward students who wish to pursue a career in architecture, drafting, civil & mechanical engineering;
- the High School/College Internship Program for seniors planning to enter college the following year; this program allows students to take college courses while in their senior year of high school;
- the School without Walls, which allows students to complement their high school education with experiences gained through the resources of

130/ District Education, 1 (February 1982), p. 1.

the nation's capital; individual students design their own program within guidelines specified by a counselor;

- Dix/Washington Street Academies, which present an alternative form of instruction for the student who cannot adjust to the programs offered in the regular high schools;

- the Spingarn-Phelps STAY Program for students returning to high school after having dropped out of school for varying lengths of time; and

- the Banneker Academic High School, which offers a strictly academic program for students preparing to enter a college or university upon graduation; this program has a structured set of requirements for grades 9 through 12 and requires 25½ Carnegie units for graduation, five more than the regular high school.

Tables VI and VII present the graduation requirements for the regular high schools and the prescribed curriculum for the Academic High School.

TABLE VI

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WASHINGTON D.C.

The following is a summary of current and revised graduation requirements:

Present Graduation Requirements	Carnegie Units	Graduation Requirements As of 1984	Carnegie Units
English	4 C.U.	English	4 C.U.
		Foreign Languages	1 C.U.
		Life Skills Seminar	1 C.U.
U.S. History	1 C.U.	U.S. History	1 C.U.
U.S. Government	½ C.U.	U.S. Government	½ C.U.
		History and Government of the District of Columbia	½ C.U.
Mathematics	1 C.U.	Mathematics (Including one year of Topics in Mathematics)	2 C.U.
Laboratory Science	1 C.U.	Science (Including one year of Laboratory Science)	2 C.U.
Health and Physical Education	1½ C.U.	Health and Physical Education	1½ C.U.
Electives	8½ C.U.	Electives	7 C.U.
TOTAL	17½ C.U.		20½ C.U.

Amended March 4, 1981

Source: Secondary Master Course List and Course Descriptions, District of Columbia Public Schools, 1981.

TABLE VII

Prescribed Curriculum
Banneker Academic High School, Washington, D.C.

The prescribed curriculum, by grade levels, is presented below.

Course Titles	Carnegie Units
Grade Nine	
English I	1
Algebra I or Geometry	1
Latin I	1
Modern Foreign Language I	1
Laboratory Science or Biology	1
Ancient and Medieval History	1
Typing (Personal) and Notetaking	½
Physical Education	½
Community Laboratory Project	¼
	7¼
Grade Ten	
English II	1
Geometry or Other Mathematics Course	1
Modern Foreign Language II	1
Chemistry or Biology	1
Global Perspectives: World History - World Geography	1
Health and Physical Education	1
Community Laboratory Project	¼
	6¼
Grade Eleven	
English III	1
Intermediate Algebra or Other Mathematics Course	1
History of the United States	1
Life Skills Seminar or elective*	1
Music-Art Seminar	1
Elective	1
Community Laboratory Project	½
	6½
Grade Twelve	
English IV	1
History of the District of Columbia	½
United States Government	½
Electives	3
Community Laboratory Project	½
Grand Total	5½
	25½

*Student may be exempted from Life Skills Seminar by examination and must take an additional elective.

Source: Model High School Education Plan, D.C. Public Schools, 1981.

KEY FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM
1802-1982

Historical analysis points to several key factors that explain why curriculum developed and changed when it did. Let us examine each of these in turn.

The Political and Economic Environment

Both the political and the economic environment have significantly influenced curriculum development. The United States Congress has always played an active role in the development of public education in the District of Columbia. The Organic Law of 1844 prescribed that annual examinations be administered in the schools by the Board and the Organic Law of 1858 required the Board to establish courses of study and legislated that no textbook could be changed except by a two-thirds vote of the entire Board.

In 1864, Congress created the first public school for colored pupils and a separate Board for these schools, thereby establishing a legally sanctioned dual system of public education in the District. In 1900, the course of study offered by the elementary public schools was the subject of an inquiry ordered by the Senate of the United States and conducted by the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia. This Committee reported that more drill in such subjects as spelling, penmanship, and arithmetic was necessary, and the Superintendent adopted these recommendations. The 1927 Bureau of Efficiency survey of the public school system brought forth a new policy on organization and operation of kindergartens which legalized the transfer of qualified kindergarteners to grades one to four and the subsequent discontinuance of the separate training program for kindergarten teachers at the teachers colleges. In 1934, the Board, upon strong recommendation by the Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Racketeering and Crime, initiated the Washington Experiment in Character Education which prepared the way for the establishment of the Child Development Program in 1937.

Actions of courts [131] have also produced significant changes in curricula. [132] In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in Brown that the segregation of schools by the states on the basis of race was in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and in Bolling v. Sharpe that such segregation by the District of Columbia was in violation of the due process of law guarantee of the Fifth Amendment. The resulting change in the socio-economic and racial mix in the schools of the District of Columbia led to the installation of the track system. The philosophy of this system was that a curriculum should be constructed to accommodate the varied achievement levels of the students. Dr. Carl F. Hansen, then Assistant Superintendent in charge of senior high schools, wrote in 1957 that the track system was a part of the "big solution" to desegregation. [133]

In 1967, less than a decade after the institution of the track system, the system was terminated by court order. In Hobson v. Hansen, Judge Skelly Wright wrote:

> ... ability grouping as presently practiced by the District of Columbia school system is a denial of equal opportunity to the poor and a majority of the Negroes attending school in the Nation's capital, a denial that contravenes not only guarantees of the Fifth Amendment but also the fundamental premise of the track system itself. [134]

131/ Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954);
Hobson v. Hansen, 269 F.Supp. 401 (1967);
Hobson v. Hansen, 320 F.Supp. 720 (1970);
Mills v. Board of Education, Civil Action No. 1939 - (1972);
Bolling v. Sharpe, 347 U.S. 497 (1954).

132/ For an excellent presentation of educational policy and the courts, see Julius Hobson, Jr. "Educational Policy and the Courts: The Case of Washington, D. C. 1978," The Urban Review, 10 (1978) p. 5-19.

133/ Carl E. Hansen, Miracle of Social Adjustment and Desegregation in the Washington, D. C. Schools (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith), 1957, pp. 68-70.

134/ Ibid, p. 443.

In the 1970 case of Hobson v. Hansen, the District Court found that per-pupil expenditures for teachers were higher in the more affluent white section of the city. Concluding that smaller classes and greater teacher experience can greatly enhance the quality of a student's education, and noting that, notwithstanding the 1967 decree, the public schools had failed to equalize access of all students to resources, Judge J. Skelly Wright mandated that pupil expenditures from the regular District of Columbia budget in each elementary school be within plus or minus five percent of the average per-pupil expenditures in all of the elementary schools.

The case of Mills v. Board of Education was filed on behalf of several children who had been denied admission or dismissed by the public schools on the basis of mental retardation, emotional instability, or behavioral problems. In 1972, the District Court decreed in this case that no child eligible for a publicly supported education in the District of Columbia public schools may be excluded from a regular public school assignment by a rule, policy, or practice of the Board of Education of the District of Columbia unless such child is provided (a) adequate alternative educational services suited to the child's needs, which may include special education or tuition grants, and (b) a constitutionally adequate prior hearing and periodic review of the child's status, progress, and the adequacy of any educational alternative. This ruling required that a special education curriculum be developed for "exceptional" children.

In Mills the court pointed out that, in the District, failure of a parent to enroll a child in school is a criminal violation; this assumes the availability of educational opportunities. In response to the argument that "special education" costs created grave problems for the school budget, the court stated:

> The inadequacies of the District of Columbia Public School System...certainly cannot be permitted to bear more heavily on the "exceptional" or handicapped child than on the normal child.

While, as can be seen from this example, compulsory attendance laws have been used by the courts to force change in the curriculum over the objection of the Board of Education, alterations in curricula have been necessitated also

because these laws and the closely related child labor laws have produced larger and more varied student populations which, on the average, have stayed in school for longer periods of time. In 192_, a new compulsory school attendance law for the District was passed by Congress. The old law of 1900 had made school attendance mandatory for children between the ages of eight and fourteen. The 1925 law raised the latter age to sixteen and prescribed penalties for parents of children who violated it. Similarly, in 1928 a new child labor law imposed substantial penalties on parents or guardians who permitted children under the age of fourteen to be gainfully employed. These laws necessitated the development of a functional curriculum which would provide students with the necessary vocational preparation to live in the community and to support themselves.

These laws reflected society's response to changing economic conditions. Between 1890 and 1920, large numbers of rural people, both native and foreign-born, moved into urban areas. The emergence of a large urban working class thrust job preparation to the forefront of curriculum considerations. Later, during World War II, thousands of students from junior and senior high school left school to go to work for high war-time pay. Many courses in high school were modified to give boys special training before induction into the armed forces.

Educational Leadership and Administrative Structure

Prior to the appointment of a Superintendent for the colored schools in 1867, the Board of Education was entirely responsible for the curriculum. The duties and authority of the Board included the setting of the course of instruction and the choice of textbooks, the prescription of tuition for certain courses, the hiring and retention of teachers, and the determination of the aims of the public education system in general.

For the most part, since the District has had a Superintendent, the Board of Education has generally taken the position that the Superintendent should be given a free hand in shaping the curriculum. The movement to a system of junior high schools in the District was spearheaded by Superintendent Ernest Thurston.

This movement caused a dramatic public school reorganization, necessitating adjustments at all levels in the course content and teaching force. Former Superintendent Robert L. Haycock, a writer on the history of the D. C. Schools, has pointed to the influence of J. Ormond Wilson and Frank W. Ballou, Superintendents from 1860 to 1885 and 1920 to 1945 respectively, whose visions, executive abilities and educational philosophies brought the schools of their day, in his view, to a high state of efficiency. 135/

Ballou, Superintendent of schools from 1920 to 1943, was the dominant force in reorganizing the curriculum to emphasize the child as the center of the educational process. Superintendent George F. T. Cook was a major figure in the development of the colored schools. Superintendent William B. Powell, "a man of vision with a progressive educational philosophy and an impelling pioneer spirit," according to Haycock, "gave much attention to the development of better courses of teacher training in the normal schools. An ardent advocate of manual arts for young children, he introduced domestic art and domestic science into elementary schools for 7th and 8th grade pupils." 136/ As former Acting Superintendent James T. Guines observed, the effect of the acceptance by the Board of the notion that the shaping of the curriculum is for all practical purposes in the domain of the Superintendent has been the tendency of each Superintendent to introduce a new program. 137/ Indeed, Superintendents have come to be identified by their programs; some examples are the track system of former Superintendent Carl Hanson; the multi-level, multi-cultural, multi-modal delivery of educational services of former Superintendent Barbara Sizemore; and the Competency-based Curriculum (CBC) of former Superintendent Vincent E. Reed.

135/ Haycock, op. cit., p. 30.

136/ Ibid., p. 39.

137/ Personal Interviews, 7 and 11 December 1981.

The Board of Education has also relied occasionally on educators other than Superintendents for recommendations on curriculum reform. A notable example was the Board's commission of Dr. Kenneth Clark, noted psychologist and New York educator, to make a study and provide recommendations to the Board as to how scores on national examinations in English and mathematics could be raised. A plan was produced and adopted by a majority of the Board, but, perhaps because it was not a plan developed by the Superintendent and his staff, it did not win support within the school system itself.

Surveys and Evaluations.

Surveys and evaluations on the local and national level have tended to influence the curriculum. In 1954-55, reports on serious educational retardation and poor test scores on standardized examinations by tenth graders helped to provide the atmosphere in which then Assistant Superintendent Carl Hansen, high school principals and others were able to install the track system curriculum. In the 1967 Hobson v. Hansen decision, the court used the fact that the elementary schools in the more affluent white section of the city tested higher on achievement tests as one of the reasons for abolishing the track system. It is clear that national college entrance examinations have long had a great influence on the shaping of secondary education curricula. Examples of other reports which have motivated curriculum considerations are the Bureau of Efficiency Report (1928), which recommended substantial changes in the organization of the public schools particularly as regards the system of kindergartens, the Strayer Report (1949), which was commissioned by the Congress and which showed clearly the poor conditions of colored junior high schools, and the Passow Report (1967), which recommended that the track system be abolished and that a variety of educational programs be offered to serve the wide range of differences one finds in a city's pupil population. These recommendations prompted far-reaching changes in the organization of the schools.

Characteristics of the Student Population

Socio-economic characteristics of the student population have also historically influenced the curriculum in the Washington, D. C. schools. Public schools were originally started to offer instruction to the children of "humbler walks of life." They were exclusively charity schools designed for orphans and

destitute children. "By a liberal disposition on the part of administrative agents," the school Trustees reported in 1845, "there were admitted and educated in those schools the children of many persons in easier circumstances, and thus for many past years the schools were overcrowded with pupils, of whom it is therefore believed a great number were not of that description or condition for whose instruction schools were originally instituted." 138/ Tuition was collected from those who could afford to pay and pay students were given instruction in additional subject areas.

Different curricula were also designed on the basis of sex. These were predicated on the perception of natural interests; for example, women received training in areas such as home economics, while men received training in manual skills such as carpentry.

Before the emancipation of the slaves, schooling in public institutions was available only to whites. Then a dual school system educated black and white children separately until 1954. Early in the life of the colored high school, modifications of the curriculum were installed to satisfy what were thought to be the special needs of black pupils. There were fewer electives available, since it was felt that "few colored boys and girls of high school grade had anyone at home to give them help in making their selection of subjects in a course largely elective." Later, Americanization schools were created and curricula were designed to educate new immigrants in the ways of American life.

In the 1870s, some students were allowed to eliminate certain studies from the four-year course and give special attention to those subjects likely to afford "immediate practical benefit." In the early 1900s, a general review of arithmetic was offered in the second half of the fourth year because graduates who went to teach in the South needed to know how to teach many subjects. One of the main purposes of the junior high school organization was to encourage the early choice of careers.

138/ Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public Schools for the year ending June 30, 1845. p. 4.

In general, the history of curriculum development in the District of Columbia Public Schools shows a correlation between changes in the socio-economic characteristics of the student body and the movement toward job-oriented curricula. Since the system became predominantly low-income and black in the 1950s, the "cultural refinement" in the curriculum has been steadily de-emphasized, and more and more emphasis has been placed on providing the tools necessary to acquire a desirable job.

Individual Differences of Students

Public education by its very nature must serve a broad spectrum of students and hence must provide for substantial individual differences. Throughout its history, the curriculum has undergone many changes designed to meet this necessity. Several types of curricula have been created and offered simultaneously to meet multiple purposes.

As early as 1868 the Department of the Interior appropriated funds for the instruction of the deaf and dumb at the Columbia Institute for the Deaf. In 1907 special classes were organized for the so-called "atypical children". Before 1908 several centers for emotionally disturbed children who presented disciplinary problems were established and special courses and materials of instruction for handwork and other activities were provided. Programs such as these further illustrate the ongoing attempts to provide for individual differences through the curriculum: college preparation, regular and vocational education, business and commercially oriented options, ability grouping systems, individualized instruction, semi-annual promotion periods, special education programs for the physically and mentally handicapped, junior high school, academic high school, and career education.

Public Perception of the Effectiveness of the Curriculum

Another factor which has motivated changes in the curriculum has been the public perception of the effectiveness of public education. For example, according to one account, "the Passow Report grew out of pressure from citizens groups in the District of Columbia for a plan to change the faltering school system.... Through the efforts primarily of the D.C. Citizens for

Better Public Education, ... they sought out Columbia University's Teachers College and in June, 1966, helped to arrange a $250,000 contract for the year's study." 139/

Julius Hobson, Jr. wrote in a recent article that "Historically, the acquisition of quality education for blacks in the District of Columbia has been sporadic, and at times impossible." 140/ The perception has been and remains that the public school system is ineffective in providing quality education. Historically, this feeling on the part of the public has been manifested by such developments as the demand for an elected school Board and by decreases in the enrollment in public schools. In recent times, lack of confidence in the school system has been created largely by publicity surrounding the performance of students on national examinations and on college entrance examinations and the curriculum has undergone many transformations in attempts to raise the scores of students on such tests. The latest such attempt is the implementation of CBC. 141/

139/ Paul Lauter and Florence Howe, "The School Mess," The New York Review of Books, February 1, 1968, pp. 16-21.

140/ "Educational Policy," p. 5.

141/ For a comprehensive study of public perception of the effectiveness of the District of Columbia Schools, see Steven J. Diner, "Crisis of Confidence: The Reputation of Washington's Public Schools in the Twentieth Century," Paper No. 1 in this series, 1982, pp. 1-2.

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The stated purposes of the public school system of Washington, D.C. have changed very little from the earliest official statements to the latest. The following excerpts from a statement of the philosophy of education for the public schools of the District of Columbia, adopted by the Board of Education in October, 1940, is typical:

> We believe that each child is an individual with needs and interests peculiar to himself. He is the center of the educational process. He should be thought of as a whole--mind, body, and spirit. He should learn to appreciate the privileges and to meet the responsibilities of life. He develops through participation in mental and physical activities and through the satisfactions of real and vicarious experiences in group contacts. We believe we should seek to develop in him a deep-seated sense of service and tolerance, and an increasing awareness of the individual's responsibility to his group and of the group's responsibility to the individual.
>
> We believe we should provide opportunities for differentiated education; use the data which will discover remedial needs; apply the corrective techniques; integrate the factors that influence development; and through purposeful teaching, provide challenging situations that lead to desirable outcomes.
>
> Our materials of instruction should be so varied that each pupil will find numerous appropriate challenges. We should use from our cultural heritage and from our present environment that which enriches, interprets, and encourages investigation and creative activity. We should take from the current fields of experience and subject-matter that which is functional.
>
> We should hold as the ultimate aim an individual who is physically sound, with wholesome recreational interests; who is emotionally stable and spiritually conscious; who is capable of independent, discerning, and critical thinking; who is socially competent and economically sufficient; who as a responsible citizen is ready for the enjoyments and duties of home, family, and community life, with an understanding and an appreciation of American ideals, principles and purposes that will promote the progress of our own democracy and carry over into world citizenship.

The history of curriculum development shows that over the years the goal of employment has reigned as the fundamental purpose of the school system. Contemporary educators make it clear that this purpose continues to dominate. Design of the curriculum has for the most part been directed at enabling students to acquire jobs.

Historically, the public has expected a positive correlation between the level of public school education acquired and the job benefits secured. Public discontent with the schools has been highest when students graduating from high school have been inadequately prepared to compete for supervisory jobs and openings in emerging job markets. The major curriculum reforms in the history of the school system, including the back-to-basics movements, CBC, and academic high schools, have had as their ultimate objective preparing students for high status jobs upon graduation from the schools or success in higher educational programs leading to professional employment.

Since we note that job acquisition has received virtually all of the attention, it is not surprising to find that remedies for failures of the school system have been sought in curriculum reform designed to prepare students better for jobs. The new superintendent, Floretta D. McKenzie, recently proposed that business invest time and money in a better public school system so that it can save in the future on the costs of basic education, training and rapid turnover of workers. 142/

It is important to realize that most curriculum initiatives have been associated with a particular Superintendent and ratified by the Board of Education. Former Superintendent Vincent Reed, aware that changes in curriculum historically accompany changes in the Superintendency, convinced the Board to incorporate CBC as Board policy. With this commitment, applicants for the Superintendency after his resignation were sought with the understanding that CBC was to be implemented. This development was an important step forward.

This historical examination of curriculum change suggests that the following questions should be raised whenever curriculum reforms are proposed:

- What is the socio-economic status of the population?
- What is the political and economic environment?
- How will public perception of the effectiveness of the public school system be affected?

142/ Washington Post, December 7, 1981, p. 28.

- How will the effectiveness of the public school system be formally evaluated?
- What are the varied needs of the student body?
- What are the stated purposes of the school system?
- Given the limitations on resources and the answers to the questions above, is it possible to construct a curriculum to make reasonable progress towards meeting the stated purposes of the school system, or, indeed, to foster the public perception that the system is effective?

Moreover, curriculum reformers of the future should keep certain historical trends in mind when designing changes in the content of education:

1. The stated purposes of the District of Columbia school system have remained constant through the years and are unlikely to change.

2. The curriculum in the D.C. public schools is likely to be more stable in the future than it has been in the recent past because the Board has established CBC as the official policy of the schools. In the recent search for a Superintendent, the Board insisted that all candidates be willing to continue the implementation of CBC.

3. More and varied career-oriented curricula will be instituted in an attempt to keep pace with changing job markets.

4. The need to pass examinations to qualify for jobs and for entrance into college -- and the need to change public opinion concerning the effectiveness of the school system in preparing students for jobs -- is likely to force significant efforts to improve the ability of D.C. students to take standardized tests.

5. Only token attention will be given to meeting stated purposes of the schools other than those related in some way to employment.

In summary, although the public educational system has been and will continue to be significantly affected by many factors, the most potent of these factors for the District of Columbia Public Schools is the socio-economic status

of its students. The system, given its limited resources, will continue to prepare students for jobs, or for higher education leading to jobs, to the virtual exclusion of all else. In spite of considerable public disenchantment with the effectiveness of the public school system, the system is now and will remain for the foreseeable future the only accessible source of education for most students and therefore their only hope for economic and social mobility.

. end .

THE D.C. HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY PROJECT

STAFF 1981-1982

Steven J. Diner, Project Director

Joseph S. Drew, Researcher

Julia C. Parks, Researcher

Marie M.B. Racine, Researcher

Colin F.S. Walters, Government Liaison

Clinton Borland, Student Assistant

Anthony Douglas, Student Assistant

Tony Durrah, Student Assistant

Helen Young, Student Assistant

George V. Zito, Evaluator

Diane Ravitch, Historical Consultant

Gail L. Holt, Word Processing Specialist

"END OF DOCUMENT"