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In the Shadow of *Brown*

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Abstract

In 2004, on the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), master's students in a History of Education course were inspired to investigate *Brown's* legacy in local school corporations. One student explored the history of a local high school that appeared to be racially imbalanced relative to the corporation as a whole. She delves into the history of the high school, focusing on the political struggles about consolidation and racial balance that enveloped the school corporation in the 1980s and early 1990s, then places these struggles within the context of economic and demographic change in the school corporation as well as in the county. The student and the course instructor reflect on what it means today to be living in the shadow of the *Brown* decision, and how historical research can help us construct new solutions for understanding and dealing with race and equity issues, as economic and demographic factors continue to reshape the reality that schools face.

***Brown's* Shadow: History as a Lens on the Present — Kathleen A. Murphey**

I teach a course, EDUC H504, the History of American Education, at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne. In this master's-level course, usually taken by practicing teachers and administrators as part of their graduate degree programs, the students study educational history by completing a local educational history project. They locate and interview people involved in the history, search through school board minutes, and read archived newspapers as they track down concrete evidence for their project. They “construct” the history, discovering in the process how difficult it is to pin down what exactly happened; when, by, and to whom; and how to make sense of it all. The students become detectives, and through their searches they construct interpretations of the past. It is an exercise in constructing knowledge about the past to use as a lens for understanding educational policies and praxis of today. The students' papers always seem

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to show that schooling is inseparably embedded in the historical, economic, political, and social fabric of the community.

In 2004, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) celebrated its 50th anniversary, which led to renewed reflection among educators and others about the impact and legacy of that legislation on racially segregated school systems (Altenbaugh, 2004; Anderson, Attwood, & Howard, 2004; Bell, 2004; Carter, Flores, & Reddick, 2004; Cottrol, Diamond, & Ware, 2003; Perlstein, 2004b; Morris & Morris, 2002; Patterson, 2001). The legacy of *Brown* has been, and continues to be, much contested, especially at a time when resegregation is becoming the norm (Boger & Orfield, 2005; Clotfelter, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Orfield & Eaton, 1996). The anniversary year became a springboard for much renewed historical scholarship about desegregation struggles in individual cities (Dougherty, 2004; Formisano, 2004; Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004; Perlstein, 2004a; Smith, 2004). The 50 years of distance we now have on *Brown* allow us to reanalyze the racial equity policies and practices of the past as we search to make sense of current realities.

The reawakened interest in *Brown* has had an impact on my H504 classes. We read about the efforts of a fifth grade class to study the history of desegregation in their town in New Jersey (Anand, Fine, Perkins, Surrey, & the Renaissance School Class of 2000, 2002); we read reports written by the Fort Wayne Urban League that document *The state of Black Fort Wayne* at the beginning and end of a 40-year period (1964; 2003). These readings, along with the 50th anniversary of *Brown*, have inspired several students to look into racial balance issues in local school districts. In 2004, one student, Dawn Runger Martz, chose to look at the history of Paul Harding High School, a high school whose student body is now predominantly African American in a local school district just east of Fort Wayne, East Allen County Schools (EACS or East Allen), whose other four high schools are predominantly white.

Allen County, in northeast Indiana, includes 20 townships that house four school corporations. Southwest Allen County Schools (SACS), in the southwest corner of the county, is comprised of two townships: Aboite and Lafayette; Northwest Allen County Schools (NACS), in the northwest of the county, is comprised of three townships: Lake, Eel River, and Perry. Both SACS and NACS, now mainly suburban, have developed in the past 20 years from what were rural communities. Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS) is an urban district in the middle of Allen County comprised of four townships: Washington, St. Joseph, Wayne, and Pleasant. East Allen (EACS) lies east of FWCS and continues to the Ohio border. It is comprised of 11, or over half of the townships in the county. It is the biggest geographic district in the state and includes urban, suburban, and rural schools. Several Amish communities thrive in the rural areas. A large part of the southeast quadrant of Fort Wayne, Adams Township, is one of the 11 townships in

EACS, thus bringing an urban, and increasingly minority, population into East Allen (See Allen County Townships map in Appendix, p. 24).

Fort Wayne Community Schools, East Allen's closest neighbor to its west, has been struggling since the 1960s, now successfully, to desegregate its schools, which have a roughly 30 percent minority population (Altevogt & Nusbaumer, 1978; Clark, 2006; Fife, 1997a; Fife, 1997b; The Fort Wayne Urban League, 2003; Martone & Mensing, 2006; Murphey, 2005; Stith, 2006; Quinn, 2006). In EACS the issue of racial balance did not appear until the 1980s and 1990s. Even then, it did not appear in isolation, but as a contextualizing force behind a movement to consolidate schools due to an overall declining school population. As the number of racial minorities has grown at Paul Harding and its feeder schools, and the economic base of East Allen has shifted, race has remained an issue. The EACS community struggles with the realities of economic developments, declining enrollment, a more diverse student population, and the challenge of providing high quality schooling for all of its children.

As we were developing this article, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments, on December 6, 2006, that challenge race-based student assignments to achieve racial balance in schools (Burns, 2006, December 4; Savage, 2006, December 5; Stockman, 2006, December 5). The arguments presented interpret the *Brown* decision in two very different ways: 1) one argument speaks against race-based strategies to achieve integration, and 2) the other speaks precisely for race-based policies to achieve integration, since separate facilities were declared "inherently unequal" (Haney-Lopez, 2006, November 3; Liptak, 2006, December 10). Dawn Runger Martz found both of these views expressed historically in the ongoing EACS debate over racial balance. We realize that there is the potential for the Supreme Court to overturn *Brown*, which could initiate a major rethinking about racial balance and equal opportunity in schools. This anticipated legal decision could return us legally to "separate but equal," as articulated by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). However, since many who believe in the message of *Brown* have been disappointed with the results and continual resegregation, this could also force us all to rethink the racial equality equation anew, perhaps with new insights gained from historical studies of *Brown's* impact in local communities.

Martz, a student in the master's program in education, researches the birth of Paul Harding High School in 1973, follows school board battles over consolidation and racial balance in the 1980s and early 1990s, and then, ties those developments to the present. In our concluding reflections we suggest further areas of research that Martz's paper invites, and reflect on the power of local educational histories for understanding and re-examining the legacies of past educational policies on the present. Both Martz and I are white.¹

**In the Shadow of *Brown*: The History of Paul Harding High School —
Dawn Runger Martz**

The road to *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) began shortly after the Civil War ended, when three constitutional amendments and a significant civil rights act were passed. In 1865, slavery ended with ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment; Southern states immediately enacted Black Codes limiting the rights of the newly freed slaves. Congress responded with the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, which declared that no state can take away rights guaranteed to all U.S. citizens. Ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 prohibited federal and state governments from removing a citizen's right to vote because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. In 1876, Jim Crow laws in the South were established making these amendments virtually irrelevant. In 1896, Jim Crow laws became the basis for *Plessy v. Ferguson* which then became the legal rationale for segregating by race in all institutions, including schools; it supported "separate but equal" facilities for people of different races. In 1954 the Supreme Court reversed *Plessy v. Ferguson* in *Brown v. Board* by ruling that "separate but equal" is "inherently unequal" (Anand et al., 2002):

In the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. (*Brown v. Board*, 1954)

While the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was landmark in declaring racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, years of struggle followed to implement the ruling. I chose to research the history of Paul Harding High School in the East Allen County Schools (EACS), Allen County, Indiana. The students are predominantly African American, but the students at the other four high schools in the school corporation are predominantly white. In 2004, on the 50th anniversary of *Brown*, a local newspaper reported on the lack of integration in EACS:

Instead of waiting for a lawsuit to force the issue of desegregation, East Allen County Schools leaders took it upon themselves [in 1989] to come up with options to integrate the inner-city black students on the southwest end of the district with the small-town white students in New Haven and the rural, Amish students on the northeast end of the district. ...But nearly two decades later, the schools are still not integrated. And a half-century after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled separate schools cannot

be equal, the schools in the Paul Harding High School area are even more racially isolated than they were in 1986 when the issue of integration first appeared. (Stockman, 2004, May 16)

I wanted to know how that came to be, especially since *Brown* stated that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

The EACS corporation was established in 1964 as a result of the Indiana General Assembly’s passing of the School Reorganization Act in 1959 which required school consolidation of Indiana’s many small school districts, so that every corporation had an enrollment of at least 1,000 students. By 1968, the number of school corporations in Indiana decreased from 939 to 382 (Reese, 1993). In Allen County, a comprehensive plan was proposed which initiated community-wide negotiations about the future of Allen County’s then 15 school corporations. Originally, it was proposed that the county be divided into three districts: the Allen County School System, Fort Wayne Community Schools, and New Haven Public School System, New Haven being a small city to the east of Fort Wayne (Stath, 1991). In the end, four school corporations were established out of the 15: Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS), Northwest Allen County Schools (NACS), Southwest Allen County Schools (SACS), and East Allen County Schools (EACS or East Allen), which included New Haven. East Allen, geographically the largest of the four corporations, includes 11 of the county’s 20 townships, representing 330 square miles, more than half of the county, within its boundaries (Allen County Genealogical Society, 2004). While originally mostly rural, it now includes rural, suburban, and urban schools.

In 1959 before the new school districts were formed, a white administrator, Paul Harding, was at the helm of the New Haven Public Schools; he had the challenge of leading the system through the reorganization of the Allen County school districts. He then became the first superintendent of the newly created EACS on June 16, 1964, when the board held its first meeting. Four years later on August 7, 1968, Superintendent Harding died in office. Six months after his death, on February 17, 1969, a unanimous board voted to build a new high school located on Wayne Trace Road, near Fort Wayne’s southeast border. It would be the fifth high school in EACS, and it would be named after Superintendent Paul Harding. On December 7, 1970, the final plans for Paul Harding High School were unanimously approved (Minutes EACS School Board: 1959, February 2; 1964, June 16; 1968, August 19; 1969, February 17; 1970, December 7). The doors of the new school opened in 1973.

Growing enrollment drove the decision to build the new high school. During the mid-1960s the business growth in southeast Allen County, an area served by EACS, generated substantial tax revenues for the district. This growth in business drove the housing and retail markets in the area and brought a subsequent increase in population.

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The school district grew from approximately 9,500 students in 1965 to over 12,000 in 1972. There were at the time four other high schools in EACS, Leo Junior/Senior High School in the suburban north of the district, Heritage Junior/Senior High School and Woodlan Junior/Senior High School in the middle rural areas, and New Haven High School in the city of New Haven. New Haven High School, built in the early 1920s for 1,500 students, had an enrollment in the late 1960s of more than 2,500 students. The question was whether to build an addition onto New Haven High School or construct a new building (Uebelhoer, 2002).

After making the decision to build Paul Harding High School, the school board appointed Michael Bonahoom, the white assistant principal at New Haven High School, to develop the curriculum and structure for the new high school. Bonahoom studied the research and teaching of J. Lloyd Trump, also white, who had a vision of individualized learning where students determined their own pace and progress. Bonahoom's desire was to build the new high school with an individualized system of education, which would include resource centers by subject area — math, science, English, and technology — with smaller classrooms surrounding each resource center. The smaller classroom would be used for teaching specific subjects with individualized learning taking place in the adjoining resource center. Walls could be moved as teachers, aides, and students developed ideas and needs. Paul Harding High School was the first individualized concept school built in the Midwest (Uebelhoer, 2002). When Paul Harding High School opened its doors on August 29, 1973, the enrollment was 1,057 for grades 9, 10, and 11 (EACS, 1974). The student body at Paul Harding High School was predominately white and upper middle class; estimates suggested that “82.6 percent of this student population would attend Harding for their entire high school career” (EACS, 1976).

In 1978, five years later, the North Central Visitation Summary Report outlined the strengths and weaknesses of Paul Harding High School during its first five years. The strengths included a well-qualified and experienced staff, a welcoming building, a variety of course offerings, involvement of parents and the community, an active student congress, good teacher-student relationships, and well-equipped classrooms. The challenges were mostly related to the structural design of the building and the fiscal issues created by that design. Challenges included class size; discipline, due to the openness of the building; lack of adequate personnel to monitor the individualized education program; lack of state and district funding for continued innovation; busing expenses being paid with salary and special program funds; and an inconsistent heating and air-conditioning system. The report indicated the majority of the students were not disciplined enough to handle the responsibility of an individualized education program. Overall, it appeared the open concept design was not effective and the school was

transitioning to a more traditional pattern of teaching and study. The major problems with this transition were the structural changes it required and the funding needed to make the necessary changes (EACS, 1979). Thus, Paul Harding High School opened with an innovative pedagogy and building design; its students came from fairly affluent white families. The corporation couldn't sustain the innovation economically, and many students did not adjust to the lack of structure the open concept approach offered them.

In 1981 International Harvester, a major employer located on the east side of Fort Wayne, near New Haven and the EACS school district, closed with a loss of thousands of jobs. This loss impacted all of Allen County, but particularly the Paul Harding attendance area in East Allen County Schools, the area physically closest to the closed plant. The area began to lose population and tax revenue; those who stayed or moved in were far less prosperous than those moving out. The population became more transient, and the number of minorities rose. School enrollment in all EACS schools began to fall.

In 1982 Michael Benway became the superintendent. Benway understood how the then-current changes in population, enrollment, and revenue would impact the district. Although he is white, he was particularly concerned with the issue of racial balance. In February 1989, Benway, in conjunction with consultants hired by the school board and district staff, prepared a report entitled *Focus on the future: Options today for continued excellence tomorrow*. The report documented East Allen County Schools' peak enrollment of 12,518 students in the 1973–1974 school year, the year Paul Harding High School opened, and indicated that district enrollments had declined each year since with one exception in 1986–1987 (EACS, 1989). This trend was also evident at Paul Harding High School with enrollment declining to 906 students in grades 10 through 12 in the 1983–1984 school year (EACS, 1984). These changes in enrollment, along with predictions from the consultants hired to study the district, resulted in the development of recommendations in the report for reorganization of the schools in EACS. *Focus on the Future* provided several options for reorganization of the district's student population and the closing of school buildings to address the implications that the declining enrollment would have on district finances (EACS, 1989). Through consolidation and reorganization of the schools, racial balance could also be achieved.

Between the issuing of the report in February 1989 and the school board's vote on its recommendations in February 1990, the community's divided opinion over consolidation and desegregation erupted. On Tuesday, February 20, 1990, the East Allen County School Board voted 4-to-3 "to approve plans to consolidate five high schools into three and convert to a system of middle schools for sixth- through eighth-graders." Minutes after the meeting, while police waited for outbreaks of violence, parents indicated they would make sure that new board members, who would overrule the decision to consolidate, would be voted into office in May. The plan approved by

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the board allowed for a “two-year window of opportunity” for declining enrollment and increases in the minority population to reverse (Von Frank, 1990, February 21).

This battle, which on the surface appeared to be mainly about reorganization through consolidation, was also about race. East Allen County Schools received national attention when David Maraniss, a white reporter for *The Washington Post*, wrote the first of five stories covering the controversy (1990, March 4). Maraniss, who was investigating the interracial dynamics in public schools and other key institutions in American life, studied the struggle in East Allen County Schools. His article’s major points focus on Superintendent Benway, the reorganization proposal, and the board vote:

When Mike Benway became superintendent of schools in Allen County eight years ago, he told the board of education that the number one problem he hoped to resolve was the system’s racial imbalance. He came closer to reaching the goal than many people expected, but not as close as he hoped. And soon he will be departing, leaving behind a five-year contract, a file of hate mail and a telephone that buzzed with racist insults. (Maraniss, 1990, March 4, p. A1)

Maraniss notes that the East Allen situation, as in other communities across the United States, “revealed both the promise and the failure of public school integration in the United States.” Maraniss links the developments in EACS to the *Brown* decision:

It has been 36 years since *Brown v. Board of Education*, the seminal school desegregation case in American history. More constitutional law, blood, sweat, time, money, research and political effort have been expended over the issue of race in public schools than in any other major institution in American society. This was the arena that was thought to be the nation’s major success story, but in many ways the frustrations of Superintendent Benway in northeastern Indiana are representative of larger failings in the north and south. (Maraniss, 1990, March 4, A22)

Consolidation and racial balance were both parts of the reorganization plan that the school board put forward:

The concept [consolidation] was incorporated into proposals to close two underpopulated rural high schools [Heritage Senior High School and Woodlan Senior High School] and a physically deteriorating predominantly black grade school, and redraw boundaries so that 10 of the district’s 15 schools would have populations that would be 15 to 25 percent black....The issue of racial balance and equity was juxtaposed against the desire of predominately white communities to retain their

local schools. The pressure on the seven-member school board to back away from change was intense....In an effort to find common ground between those pushing for reorganization and racial balance and those seeking to preserve old schools and ancient boundaries, the school board brought in an outside mediator. (Maraniss, 1990, March 4, A22)

There was peace for a while, but when the mediator left the “polarization became stronger than ever” (Maraniss, 1990, March 4):

The climactic moment occurred on the night late last month when the board finally gathered to vote on a racial balance plan. It was a compromise proposal that would not take effect for two years, and then only based on trigger mechanisms of declining enrollment in the rural white schools and enrollment increases in the minority schools. Benway and [Mary] Barksdale [the only black school board member, who worked closely with Benway] thought it was the best they could get. They were unsure about the vote. It appeared that three board members supported it and three were opposed. The swing vote was Steve Stieglitz, 29, a soybean farmer who graduated from the one of the rural white schools slated for closing and whose family had tilled the soil here for generations. When his “aye” vote resounded through the auditorium, there was a clamor. “We’ve got to take Stieglitz out!” a woman in the back yelled to her compatriots...After a few black citizens shook his hand and thanked him, the young farmer found himself engulfed by the hostile crowd, “Traitor!” someone yelled. “How could you?” yelled another. (Maraniss, 1990, March 4, A22)

In May 1990, the sentiments of the woman who yelled, “We’ve got to take Stieglitz out,” were supported by voters who felt the same way. Stieglitz ran for re-election, but was soundly defeated and replaced by a person who did not favor consolidation or reorganization (Von Frank, 1990, May 9). Thus the 4-3 balance in favor of consolidation and reorganization was reversed, 3-4.

In the EACS School Board election in May 1992, the ouster continued. One of the three board members, John Glass, who had supported reorganization, chose not to run for re-election. The two remaining supporters of reorganization, Mary Barksdale and Kay Meyer, lost their bids for re-election; thus, all the supporters of the reorganization plan were off the board (Von Frank, 1992, May 6; Creek, 1992, May 6). The election results show that Barksdale and Meyer actually received the majority of votes in the area they represented, District 5, which included the Paul Harding and New Haven High School attendance areas. Their opponents, Connie Heckler and Steve Gordon, both white, who

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had opposed the reorganization plan, won in Districts 2, 3, and 4 by 4-to-1 margins, areas that included Woodlan and Heritage High Schools — the two high schools that would have been closed if the reorganization had been implemented. EACS includes five districts, each district with one representative, except District 5 which has two because of greater population; one at-large member is also elected. All voters, however, vote on all candidates (“EACS Voters,” 1992, June 23). Gordon, who for two years had participated in a group that actively opposed reorganization, was quoted as saying that the voters did not want to be forced to do something they didn’t want to do, i.e., have children bused out of their neighborhoods: “They realize that there’s more than one way to solve a problem. . . . There’s been too much talk of closing schools as the only viable alternative.” He went on to say that “New ideas, educational reform. . . it’s too dangerous. Most people want to stay with the style of education that has worked for so long” (Dooley & French, 1992, May 6).

The need for East Allen County Schools to address declining enrollments and reorganization was due, in large part, to the change in the economic base in Allen County. In September 2000, a report published by the Community Research Institute of Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne detailed the economic performance of northeast Indiana’s nine counties — Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Lagrange, Noble, Steuben, Wells, and Whitley — from 1970 to 2000 and documented the reasons for that performance. During the years 1979–1982, the economic stress in northeast Indiana was, in large part, due to the closing of International Harvester and the almost immediate loss of 10,000 relatively high-paying manufacturing jobs. The loss of Harvester impacted the tax base in Allen County, and in particular, East Allen County Schools. It also created a void in the job market for non-college-degreed students (Guthrie & Richardson, 2000).

As Allen County began to rebuild itself economically, there was a focus on recruiting a broader business base, and that would require a highly skilled available workforce because

Allen County — the core county — provides many services — e.g., medical and legal — to the outlying counties. Allen County has approximately twice the percentage of its jobs in services as do the remaining eight counties. Also, it has a markedly higher percentage of jobs in wholesale trade, finance, insurance and real estate, and transportation, communication and public utilities. (Guthrie & Richardson, 2000, p. 3)

Although Allen County was successful in building a broader economic base, the “growth in manufacturing employment in northeast Indiana since 1979 occurred

solely outside Allen County — manufacturing employment in Allen County actually decreased...” (Guthrie & Richardson, 2000, p. 2). If the economic base depends on production tasks that require workers to have few skills, then employment is not always dependent on education, but high performance firms demand workers with significant and sophisticated social and intellectual skills (p. 69). When a community moves from opportunities for employment in agriculture, to opportunities for non-college educated workers in manufacturing, to a demand for workers that can translate information and knowledge into productivity, then workers possessing high-level skills are needed. (Payne, 2003, December 12). Thus, EACS had the challenge of preparing students to work in the disappearing rural, disappearing industrial, emerging high-tech economy.

Demographic data from the townships in EACS give further perspective on the community that the Paul Harding attendance area serves. In 1960, the population of Adams Township (EACS) was 18,428 and by 1970 it had increased to 31,034, which is one of the reasons school enrollment increased and made it necessary to build Paul Harding High School. Between 1970 and 2000 the population only grew by 371 people. It is important to note that five of Allen County’s 20 townships — Aboite (SACS), Adams (EACS), St. Joseph (FWCS), Wayne (FWCS), and Washington (FWCS) — had 82 percent of the population (See Appendix, p. 24). The 2000 census data indicates that 74.4 percent of the black population lived in 17 census tracts where the population was, and is, at least 30 percent black. Additionally, 86 percent of Allen County’s black population lives in the census tracts located in Adams (EACS) and Wayne (FWCS) Townships. The census data further reveals that this has been true only for Adams and Wayne Townships since 1990. One population trend identified in the 2000 census shows the increase in the non-white population from 7.3 percent in 1970 to 16.9 percent in 2000. The non-white population is substantially younger than the white population and birthrates are higher, thus the future impact on school enrollment would be greater (Guthrie & Richardson, 2003).

Although the population has remained stable in Adams Township, the people living in the township have become more impoverished. The overall poverty rate in Allen County is 9.1 percent, but the poverty rates in Adams and Wayne Townships range from 17.9 percent to 51 percent. The elderly population living in poverty primarily resides outside of Adams and Wayne Townships while children in poverty reside primarily in Adams and Wayne Townships. As Adams Township became predominately black, the middle and upper-middle class whites moved to homes in other parts of Allen County (Guthrie & Richardson, 2003). In 1980–1985, Paul Harding High School’s minority enrollment was 24 percent. That enrollment reached 79 percent in 1995–2000 and is 80.6 percent today. The changes in enrollment have resulted in *de facto* racial segregation in the school, segregation perpetuated by changing residential housing patterns, which have been driven by economic developments. The dramatic closing more than 25 years

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ago of a major manufacturing industry, International Harvester, became a harbinger of an emerging pattern of deindustrialization throughout the county, and the country, a development that continues at an even more rapid pace today (Cochren, 2000; Guthrie & Richardson, 2003).

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) data show East Allen for the past 10 years, 1996/1997–2006/2007, becoming slightly more black, from 16.5 to 17.5 percent, and slightly less white, from 80.8 to 73.5 percent, with a small but growing Hispanic population, from 1.5 to 4.0 percent (IDOE, 2006a). Statistics for Paul Harding High School during the same years show a starkly different racial balance than the school corporation as a whole, with the school becoming 14 percent more black, from 64.3 to 80.6 percent, and 21 percent less white, from 31.1 to 9.9 percent (IDOE, 2006b). During those same years the free and reduced lunch statistics, a barometer of poverty, increased markedly at Paul Harding. In 10 years the percent of students paying for lunch has been cut in half, from 75.8 to 37.1 percent; the number of those receiving free and reduced lunch has more than doubled, from 24.2 to 63 percent (IDOE, 2006c). Tentative enrollment data at Paul Harding for the 2006–2007 school year is 588 students in a school that once held more than 1,000.

Paul Harding's current and first African American principal, Neal Brown, has served the school corporation in various positions since 1981. He has been principal at Paul Harding since 1997 and has enabled it to endure. He is in a position to provide vision and wisdom to the youth at Harding, offering opportunities for them to succeed both academically and personally. In May 1999, the *Effective Schools Climate Survey: Paul Harding High School* was completed by Paul Harding faculty and students. Faculty reported that high expectations for success were communicated to staff, programs in the school enhanced learning, discipline problems were handled by the school's administration, teachers were satisfied with the school, and sources for professional development were available. Students believed school work was challenging and required "best effort," teachers asked questions to make sure materials were understood, and teachers held high expectations for student learning (1999, May). One hundred percent of the faculty and 75 percent of the students completed the surveys.

Today, Paul Harding High School offers a comprehensive four-year program with advanced and honors courses in English, math, foreign language, social studies, and science. In addition, academic classes in business, vocational technology, and general studies are available for students. Harding is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and is designated as a First Class School by the Indiana Department of Public Instruction (Brown, 2003). Thus, in spite of Paul Harding's declining enrollment, increasing impoverishment, and growing racial imbalance relative to the school corporation, its principal, faculty, and students view

it as a success and are very proud of its efforts and accomplishments. That positive, hopeful environment, however, has not protected Paul Harding from having to struggle academically. While its scores on the state's ISTEP+ test improved in 2003–2005, in the last round of state testing in 2006 it fell behind to its lowest level in 10 years. The EACS administration is hoping this is an anomaly and has promised full support to get the scores back in the acceptable range by working collaboratively with all schools in the Paul Harding attendance area, as well as with parents. (Stockman, 2006, December 22).

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *Brown v. Board of Education* that school segregation was unequal and a violation of rights. *Brown* explicitly states that “‘separate but equal’ has no place.” Paul Harding High School’s complex history shows a school that was built to meet expanding enrollment in EACS, but since then has faced declining enrollment, as has the whole school corporation. The racial and economic profile of its students has also dramatically changed. Paul Harding originally served a predominantly white, middle class population. As the economic situation in Allen County changed, Paul Harding High School eventually began to serve a predominantly black, non-middle class population. The corporation tried unsuccessfully in the early 1990s both to consolidate and racially balance its schools. A complex mix of social class, race, and tradition stymied change and, in fact, seems to have reinforced continued and even accelerated separateness by class and race. In the end, the history of Paul Harding High School reflects the vicissitudes of a community impacted by economic and demographic change beyond its control, and that has led to challenges it has yet to resolve.

Reflections on the Shadow of *Brown* — Kathleen A. Murphey & Dawn Runger Martz

In the shadow of *Brown*, Paul Harding High School is striving to carve out its own place, irrespective of statistics that show racial imbalance relative to the East Allen County Schools corporation. A de-industrializing economy has impacted all of Allen County and has had ramifications for the demographic and economic growth of all of its school corporations. Economic developments have triggered population migration within the county, which has redistributed wealth and school enrollment among the school corporations. Racial divisions have been closely tied to those developments, as have social class divisions (IDOE, 2007).

Paul Harding High School’s attendance area, which serves an urban community, is located in a school corporation that is not primarily urban. East Allen is comprised of contiguous urban, rural, and suburban communities. Most recent historical studies of desegregation, noted earlier, have focused on urban areas that have undergone decades of struggle to work toward racial balance. The unit of study is the urban school corporation. Some recent studies critiquing urban school reform analyze the relationship between

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race and class within the context of the United States's changing, deindustrializing economy (Lipman, 2004). While the economic context is national, as well as global, and the definition of inequities has broadened, an urban center is still the focus of study. Additionally, scholars who have traditionally been interested most in race and gender, are now looking more seriously at the intersections of race and gender with class, as bell hooks does in *where we stand: class matters* (2000). Here, too, the context in which race is discussed is broadening. Since the 1960s educators have tended to see urban education as in need of intense study, however, a deindustrializing economy, an increasingly impoverished school population, and declining school enrollment challenge any school corporation, even if it isn't primarily urban. Thus, East Allen's concerns with consolidation and racial balance are similar to those an urban corporation faces. The issues may appear more extreme to the EACS community, because of perceived rural/urban cultural differences, but they are less visible to the outside world, precisely because EACS is not a large urban metropolis.

We're all living in the shadow of *Brown*, yet racial, demographic, and housing patterns have been shifting to such an extent that we wonder if *Brown* will ever have the power that its supporters and advocates have hoped for, or if schools like Paul Harding will be called upon to redefine new ways to live successfully with an identity that is explicitly and proudly race conscious and separate. Perhaps the Supreme Court decision expected in spring 2007 will lift the shadow of *Brown* and reconfigure the discussion, as well as the policy, on what is "inherently unequal." We both grew up in the shadow of *Brown*, believing in its assertion that "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." This study, however, shows us that many other factors that foster racial segregation in schools are also "inherently unequal." The distribution and redistribution of wealth, jobs, and quality housing operate independently of school corporations and do not respect borders between them. A school corporation is, however, challenged with responding to the redistribution. We conclude that inequity in all of its community forms needs to be studied historically, and the forces that drive those inequities need to be analyzed, so they can be addressed. Martz's class project, which became for us a scholarly partnership, demonstrates the power of studying local educational history.

In 1954 *Brown* became the clarion call for righting inequalities by race. In the 1960s other social movements built on *Brown*, which was rooted in the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1981, the U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrence H. Bell, created the National Commission on Excellence in Education which wrote *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform* (1983). It signaled a new era in education with concern for higher academic standards and assessment of learning outcomes, not the equity of access and opportunity that *Brown* had championed for three decades, but excellence in academic achievement for all students. Superintendent Benway in East

Allen cited the importance of *A nation at risk* in his report, *Focus on the future: Options today for continued excellence tomorrow* (EACS, 1989). The excellence, assessment, and standards movements culminated philosophically and politically in the federally mandated *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001, which requires yearly testing of K–12 students at various grade levels, with tough sanctions for those schools whose students do not make progress. These movements have reframed the debates about equity and, to a great extent, have muted the discussion about race and class, except as it relates to academic achievement. Focused historical studies of communities can document and connect the various data about race, class, political and economic developments, and achievement, as they intersect in changing configurations over time. Historical studies can reach beyond the geographic boundaries of a school corporation; they can also make visible the impact of individuals and ideas within the social, cultural, economic, and political constraints that frame historical options. Such studies help us assess the strengths and limitations of school policies, like those developed in response to *Brown*. As researchers we see the limits of our own views, as we learn from evidence of the past. With gained understanding and historical perspective, we are in a better position to construct new policies to address age-old educational equity dilemmas.

We see both interpretations of *Brown* that were recently argued before the Supreme Court — both the colorblind and the color-conscious interpretations — as roughly those espoused by the opponents and supporters, respectively, of desegregation in EACS in the 1980s and early 1990s. The issues before the Supreme Court mirror the positions that the East Allen community has long struggled over, which perhaps demonstrates the extent to which East Allen’s struggles are echoed throughout the country. In East Allen some people, both black and white, agree with the major tenant of *Brown* that “‘separate but equal’ has no place,” while others, both black and white, disagree. Perspectives are complex and reflect different experiences and histories, not necessarily defined by race. Through democratic governance procedures, the EACS community elected school board members in 1992 who reflected the majority view at the time, which favored no reorganization, in spite of the school corporation’s shifting economic and demographic profile. The history of Paul Harding High School reveals to us a quarter century of ongoing change, as its school population has dwindled and a traditional pedagogy has replaced a progressive one, an urban school population has replaced a rural one, a minority school population has replaced a majority one, and a non-middle class population has replaced a middle class one. Striving for success — by the principal, teachers, staff, and students — has, however, not been replaced.

East Allen, and all of us, still stand in the shadow of *Brown*. Even if its shadow is lifted, we still face the issue of equity in educational opportunity by race. We need richly textured histories to understand the complexity of our seemingly conflicting views, which are

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inseparably embedded in the economic, political, and social fabric of our communities. We need to examine and analyze that history, as we seek to understand how it can constrain, or unleash, imaginative educational policies that deal boldly and courageously with race and equity issues. History, like a magnifying glass that the past puts up to the present, helps us to understand today's complex realities, so we can, then, build educational policies that prepare all children well for a better, more socially just future.

Notes

¹To tell this story most effectively, we have chosen to identify the race of all persons identified by name, including ourselves. This helps underscore our point that people's interpretations of the *Brown* decision vary, whatever their race. Also, we want you to know that our own perspectives are not neutral. We came to this research with our own assumptions, which reflect our own histories. It is our hope that this study opens up new ways of thinking for us and our readers about race and equity issues.

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Appendix

Allen County Townships



Source: Census 2000 Tiger files
Map produced by the Indiana Business Research Center, IU Kelley School of Business

- *Southwest Allen County Schools:* Aboite and Lafayette Townships
- *Northwest Allen County Schools:* Lake, Eel River, and Perry Townships
- *Fort Wayne Community Schools:* Washington, St. Joseph, Wayne, and Pleasant Townships
- *East Allen County Schools:* Cedar Creek, Springfield, Scipio, Maumee, Milan, Jackson, Jefferson, Adams, Marion, Madison, and Monroe Townships