



School Segregation in North Carolina

Overview

Students will experience the unjust feelings associated with segregation by participating in an experiential exercise. Students will also gain an understanding of North Carolina's school segregation history by examining both state and national responses to "separate but equal."

Grade

8

Course

North Carolina: Creation and Development of the State

North Carolina Standard Course of Study

- Objective 7.02: Evaluate the importance of social changes to different groups in North Carolina.
- Objective 7.04: Compare and contrast the various political viewpoints surrounding issues of the post World War II era.
- Objective 7.05: Evaluate the major changes and events that have affected the roles of local, state, and national governments.
- Objective 9.02: Identify past and present state and local leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds and assess their influence in affecting change.
- Objective 9.03: Describe opportunities for and benefits of civic participation.

NC Essential Standards for 8th Grade Social Studies (to be implemented in the 2012-2013 school year)

- 8.H.1: Apply historical thinking to understand the creation and development of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.2.1: Explain the impact of economic, political, social, and military conflicts (e.g. war, slavery, states' rights and citizenship and immigration policies) on the development of North Carolina and the United States
- 8.H.2.2: Summarize how leadership and citizen actions influenced the outcome of key conflicts in North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.3.3: Explain how individuals and groups have influenced economic, political and social change in North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.C&G.1.4: Analyze access to democratic rights and freedoms among various groups in North Carolina and the United States
- 8.C&G.2.1: Evaluate the effectiveness of various approaches used to effect change in North Carolina and the United States
- 8.C&G.2.2: Analyze issues pursued through active citizen campaigns for change
- 8.C&G.2.3: Explain the impact of human and civil rights issues throughout North Carolina and United States history
- 8.C.1.3: Summarize the contributions of particular groups to the development of North Carolina and the United States

Essential Questions

- What was segregation, and how did it affect North Carolina's schools and students?
- Why is "separate but equal" unconstitutional?
- What happened in the case of *Brown v. BOE*, and how did its ruling affect school segregation?
- Evaluate various state responses to integration.
- What was the Pearsall Plan and how did it affect school integration in North Carolina?
- What was the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and why was it considered landmark legislation?



- How did active, engaged community members work to change segregation laws?

Materials

- Images of classrooms “then and now,” attached
- Brown v. BOE handout, attached
- Image of Leroy Frasier, Ralph Frasier, and John Brandon, attached
- Image of Elizabeth Eckford, attached
- North Carolina’s Pearsall Plan, reading attached

Duration

60-90 minutes

Procedure

Warm Up: Experiencing Segregation

1. As a warm up, set students up to slightly experience the unfairness of segregation. Before students enter, divide your classroom into two sides, either using a piece of tape down the middle of the floor, or by separating desks in an obvious manner. Once divided, make one side of the classroom more pleasant than the other (place small treats on the desks of one side, homework passes, a piece of candy, etc.), move classroom resources to that side (pencil sharpeners, waste basket, class art supplies, TV, computers, etc.), and make as many creative changes possible within the limits of your room to make one side superior. Any resource that is moved to the superior side will not be able to be used by students on the other side of the room.

As students enter, separate them on either side of the classroom based on a common factor, such as eye color (brown eyes on one side, all other colors on the other), shoe style or color, pants style, etc. Do not tell students why you are separating the class, or what factor is determining the side they go to. Tell students on the superior side (Side A) that they can choose their own seat. Tell students on the other side (Side B) that they cannot choose their seat, and assign them a seat. As students on Side B complain, ignore them or answer curtly. When addressing any comment or request from Side A, answer very kindly.

2. Begin class by telling students you are going to play a review game, in which anyone answering a question correctly will get an extra credit point on their final grade. Ask questions from whatever lesson you taught during the last class, but only call on students on Side A to answer. As you receive their answers, overly compliment students on that side, even going as far as to make sarcastic comments regarding Side B. Again, as students on Side B complain of the unfairness, ignore them.

Finally, tell students on Side A that due to their excellent behavior, they are all receiving a treat. Hand out a piece of candy and allow them to eat it. Do not give students on Side B the treat, and encourage Side A to flaunt how good it tastes. You may go as far as telling students from Side B to collect the candy wrappers.

Continue this unfair treatment for around 8 minutes, really working to make your treatment of students on the opposite sides drastically different. Finally, return to your normal self and let students know that you were treating them like this on purpose. Apologize to Side B, and allow them access again to all classroom resources. (If you gave Side A candy during the exercise, share the same with Side B at this point for fairness.)

3. Encourage students to relate their experiences to segregation by asking:
 - Side B, how did you feel throughout the beginning of class? (Chart answers on the board.) Why did you feel this way?
 - Side A, how did it feel to be on your side, rather than the other? Explain.
 - What types of treatment did you experience that was unfair or unequal?
 - Between the two separate sides of the room, which side do you feel was treated as superior? Why?



- If these two sides of our rooms represented entire schools, in which school would students have learned better? The school with more resources or less? Explain.
- How can a lack of opportunity today affect our future?
- How does it feel when you are deprived of the same opportunities that someone else is being given?
- If a school treated students in this way, favoring one particular race or gender over another, what are some words that would be associated with this? (prejudice, racism, discrimination, etc.)
- What is the term used to describe the separation of people based on their race? (segregation)

How Linda Brown Challenged “Separate but Equal”

4. Explain to students that the experience they just went through was a lighthearted example of what white, black, and other minority students actually experienced in North Carolina during the years when schools were segregated. Handout or project the attached images of “Classrooms Then and Now” (or similar images found off the internet) and ask students to respond:
 - Compare and contrast these two classrooms. What differences do you notice?
 - What time period might each photo represent?
 - How does your current classroom compare and contrast to the photos you see?
 - When were North Carolina schools segregated?
 - Remind students of their study of the Reconstruction Period. It was then that segregation in education officially began in North Carolina, when the state appropriated funding to educate the white and black populations separately. This was upheld throughout the Jim Crow Era (see the Consortium’s lesson “Life in the Jim Crow South”) and the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1898 declared “separate but equal” constitutional for institutions such as schools.
 - Tell students that both of the images they are viewing are from the 1950s. Only 60 years ago, it was illegal for children of different races to go to the same school.
 - Consider the experience you just had at the start of class when we were separate and segregated. Why did you feel your rights were violated, when the 1898 Supreme Court said “separate but equal” was constitutional? (Facilitate a discussion about how separate facilities were not actually equal.)
5. Explain to students that if they were living in North Carolina during the 1800s-1970s, they would not have been legally allowed to attend the same school as someone of another race. However, based on people standing up for their rights, eventually segregation was declared unconstitutional. Give students the attached handout on *Brown v. Board of Education*, instructing them to read and answer the questions. You may assign this as individual or partner work. Once students have finished, discuss the handout questions as a class, and culminate by asking:
 - How are we affected today by *Brown v. BOE*?
 - How might history have been different if the Brown family, along with the NAACP, had not been active citizens who advocated for their rights?
 - What negative consequences could you have experienced from going to a segregated school? (lack of diversity, deprived from learning about other cultures, etc.)
 - Given that many schools for blacks were given less resources and funding, and many white schools were given more resources, how would a black student and white student graduating from two such different schools differ? How would the black student’s future be negatively impacted from such unfair segregation policies? How might this then negatively impact his/her family’s future?
 - Discuss with students that while segregation was officially ended in the 1970s, much damage had been done throughout those years. When two people line up at the starting line for a race, but one person has to start one mile behind the other, they are not going to be able to finish at the same time.

Fighting Segregation at UNC-Chapel Hill

6. Explain to students that while Linda Brown’s family was challenging segregation in Kansas, residents of North Carolina were doing the same. Project the attached picture of Leroy Frasier, Ralph Frasier and John Lewis Brandon. Tell students that the first court decision regarding integration attempts in the state of North Carolina was in March of 1951, when a court order required the University of North Carolina to admit

African Americans to its law, graduate, and medical schools. On Sept. 17, 1955, Leroy Frasier, Ralph Frasier and John Lewis Brandon – graduates of Durham’s all-black Hillside High School – attended their first classes at UNC. The trio became the first black undergraduates to be admitted in the University’s 166-year history.

Discuss:

- Why do you think these students were admitted? Had these students not been active citizens advocating for their rights, how might things have been different?
- How do you imagine these three young men felt as they first entered UNC?

The Little Rock 9

7. Remind students that while *Brown v. BOE* had called for the integration of schools with “deliberate speed,” by 1964 less than 2 percent of formerly segregated school districts had experienced any desegregation! State to state, local governments refuted the idea of integrating schools. Project the attached picture of Elizabeth Eckford and ask students to discuss:

- What do you see in this picture? What first captures your attention and why?
- What emotions do you see represented?
- What do you think is happening? What evidence makes you think this?
- (Point out Elizabeth Eckford) What do you think she is experiencing and why? How would you feel in this moment if you were her? Why?

8. As you discuss, explain Elizabeth’s story, and that of the Little Rock 9, to students:

In 1957, three years after the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. BOE* ruling, a federal court ordered schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, to comply and integrate. However, when nine African-American students - Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, Jefferson Thomas, Terrence Roberts, Carlotta Walls LaNier, Minnijean Brown, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Thelma Mothershed, and Melba Beals - attempted to enroll at Arkansas’s Little Rock High School as the first non-white students, the Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, who was determined to stop integration in his state, defied the courts and sent the National Guard to stop the students from entering the school. Ten days later in a meeting with President Dwight Eisenhower, the President tried to persuade the Governor to obey the Supreme Court’s ruling. Governor Faubus agreed to use the National Guard to instead protect the students when entering the school, but on returning to Little Rock, he instead dismissed the troops and left the nine African American students vulnerable to angry, white mobs gathered at the school to prevent their entry. Within hours, the jeering, brick-throwing mob had beaten several reporters and smashed many of the school’s windows and doors. By noon, local police were forced to evacuate the nine students. When Faubus did not restore order, President Eisenhower dispatched 101st Airborne Division paratroopers to Little Rock and put the Arkansas National Guard under federal command. By 3 a.m., soldiers surrounded the school, bayonets fixed. Under federal protection, the “Little Rock Nine” finished out the school year. The following year, Faubus closed all the high schools, forcing the African American students to take correspondence courses or go to out-of-state schools. The school board reopened the schools in the fall of 1959, and despite more violence — for example, the bombing of one student’s house — four of the nine students returned, this time protected by local police.

(Source: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-postwar/6027>)

9. Project or handout the attached image of “Integration Protestors” to further the conversation. Discuss with students that it might be hard for them to imagine such hatred today, since segregation has not been legal for some years. It might also be hard for them to imagine that some government officials themselves were in favor of and fighting for segregation. Discuss:

- What shocks you most about this history?
- How do you typically feel before the first day of school? What are some of the things you worry about? Do you have a ritual that you go through before the first day of school (i.e. pick out your outfit, arrange your school supplies, etc.)? Explain.



- Many of us feel very nervous before the first day of school. Consider those normal emotions, coupled with the situation the nine African American students were entering when trying to enroll for their first day in a new school. How do you imagine they felt?
- What does it say regarding the character of the students comprising the “Little Rock Nine” that they were able to walk into that school?
- How does this serve as an example of why we all need to be very aware of what our elected officials are up to, as well as participate in the political process?
- When viewing the image of Elizabeth trying to go to school, you noted seeing hatred in the image. Why do you think there was so much hatred based on race? In this image, you see people so against integration that they are protesting over it. Why was it so difficult for people to accept one another? What were they so afraid of?
- In terms of history, segregation actually took place fairly recently. In fact, some of your own older family members likely were in school during this time. Do you think we are in any way still affected by the repercussions of segregation today?
- Hatred, prejudice, racism, etc. are still problems to be addressed in our society today. No matter how far we come, there always seem to be mean people who are ignorant and angry. How can we all work to ensure that such hatred is not allowed in our communities? How do we make sure that the laws our government passes are not racist, as were the laws for segregation?
- Why is it important to listen to, learn from, get to know, and befriend people from all different races, cultures, ethnicities, etc.?

North Carolina Fights Integration: The Pearsall Plan

10. Explain to students that opposition to integration existed within our own state as well. The North Carolina General Assembly created the Pearsall Plan in 1955, in response to *Brown v. BOE's* decision. Assign the attached reading on the Pearsall Plan then discuss:
 - Describe the Pearsall Plan. What is your opinion of this resolution to refute integration?
 - Under Thomas Pearsall’s amendment, what choice did public schools have regarding integration? What choice did individual parents have?
 - Why do you think the North Carolina General Assembly was so concerned about integration?
 - What was the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and how did this act contradict the Pearsall Plan? Why was the Civil Rights Act of 1964 considered landmark legislation? (Discuss how it made discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin illegal.)
11. Explain that throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, active citizens fought for equality and spoke out against segregation while encouraging their government to change and enact legislation. However, it was not until 1971 that the federal government demanded that North Carolina schools completely desegregate. Discuss:
 - What actions did it take, from the government, individual citizens, and groups of citizen advocates, for this change to take place?
 - What other changes throughout history can you think of that involve citizen action and advocacy?
12. Options for culminating activities:
 - Imagine you are living in North Carolina during the year 1956. The Pearsall Committee is holding a public hearing to hear opinions from North Carolinians regarding whether or not schools should remain segregated. Prepare a statement to deliver at the hearing in which you persuade the Committee to rule in favor of desegregation. Make sure you present at least three compelling reasons as to why segregation is not good for North Carolina schools. You should also reference historical events that we addressed within the lesson. Be prepared to present your argument to class. (Depending on time, teachers can have students present in front of the entire class the following day, or present in small groups (a quicker option.) Have students provide feedback to the presenter noting what they felt the most compelling argument was contained in their speech.)
 - Ask students to determine their favorite college or university and research its history related to segregation. (Was it segregated and if so, when was it integrated? Who were the students and/or other key players who integrated the school? What challenges were faced? etc.) Students who choose an



HBCU might research the history of the school, when, why and by whom it was founded, what role the school's students played in the Civil Rights Movement, etc.

Additional Activities

- Discuss the Supreme Court Case “Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education” with students, which address the issues of bussing and neighborhood schools. Information and lesson plans on this topic can be found at <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-postwar/6083>.
- Have students read and/or listen to excerpts of oral histories from people who experienced segregation/desegregation. Numerous clips from North Carolinians can be found at <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-postwar/4.0>.
- Have students read “Through My Eyes,” the winner of the 2000 Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children, presenting the stirring account of a tiny 6-year-old girl escorted by federal marshals through a jeering mob to integrate a New Orleans public school in 1960. Ruby Bridges blends her childhood reflections with background information on the Civil Rights Movement. Dramatic photographs and quotes from witnesses highlight the importance of this historic event.
- Watch “The Children’s March,” a brilliant documentary chronicling the 1963 children of Birmingham, Ala., who flooded the city's streets, and the city's jail, to challenge segregation. As police used dogs and fire hoses to try and stop them, the children prevailed, defying the police intimidation that long had plagued Birmingham's black community. This sensational documentary is available for free at www.tolerance.org.



Classrooms Then and Now



Name: _____

Brown v. Board of Education

Linda Brown, a young African-American girl, was seven years old in the year of 1951. She attended Monroe Elementary School in Topeka, Kansas. It was hard for Linda to attend Monroe Elementary School however, because it was far from where she lived. She had to cross a railroad yard and busy boulevard to wait for a frequently delayed bus that would take her 20 blocks to the all-black Monroe Elementary. Right by her home was the all-white Sumner Elementary, which Linda was not allowed to attend because of her race. Topeka's elementary schools had been segregated since 1896, when the Supreme Court's decision in **Plessy v. Ferguson** sanctioned "separate but equal" classrooms for black children.

- What do you think of the idea of "separate but equal"?
- Why was it unfair for 7-year-old Linda Brown to have to attend Monroe Elementary rather than the school right by her home?

Monroe Elementary and Sumner Elementary in Kansas played a significant role in the landmark Supreme Court case, **Brown v. Board of Education**, when the NAACP filed suit against this unfair segregation. But in August 1951 a three-judge federal panel threw out the case, ruling that although segregation might be detrimental to Topeka's black children, it was not illegal, since all Topeka schools had equal facilities and programs. The NAACP appealed to the Supreme Court, joining the Brown case with similar cases from Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina, and the District of Columbia, and naming it after the Kansas case to show that the issue was not unique to the South.

Special counsel **Thurgood Marshall** argued that segregation was unconstitutional because it stigmatized African Americans, thereby denying them the equal protection guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. Chief Justice Earl Warren and a unanimous court agreed. **On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."**

- What do you think happened next?

Even though on May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," the court did not order immediate implementation of the decision. In 1955, often called **Brown II**, the decision was made that local district courts in each state would oversee implementation of the 1954 decision "with deliberate speed."

- Do you think it was a good idea to allow individual state courts to oversee desegregation of schools? Why or why not?

"The NAACP urged desegregation to proceed immediately or at least within firm deadlines. The states claimed both were impracticable. . . . By 1964, a decade after the first decision, less than 2 percent of formerly segregated school districts had experienced any desegregation."

Image of Leroy Frasier, Ralph Frasier and John Lewis Brandon



Image of Elizabeth Eckford



Integration Protestors



North Carolina's Pearsall Plan

The United States Supreme Court's ruling in the *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. Following the *Brown* ruling, North Carolina enacted legislation that undermined the Supreme Court ruling.

In August 1954 and in response to the *Brown* decision, Governor William B. Umstead created a "Governor's Special Advisory Committee on Education," with Thomas Pearsall, a prominent Rocky Mount farmer and businessman and former North Carolina Speaker of the House, as chairman. Along with Pearsall, the advisory committee included twelve whites and three blacks. The Committee concluded that integration in the public schools could not be accomplished nor should it be attempted. Trying to delay desegregation, the committee proposed giving local districts control over the assignment of students to particular schools. As a consequence, in the spring of 1955, the General Assembly enacted the Pupil Assignment Act. It used race-neutral criteria to block options for African Americans to transfer to white schools.

After Governor Umstead's untimely death, Governor Luther H. Hodges continued to stall desegregation. Governor Hodges created a new committee that became known as the Pearsall Committee. Chaired by Pearsall, the seven-member committee included no African Americans. At the conclusion of several meetings, conferences, and hearings, the committee recommended a state constitutional amendment that empowered the General Assembly to enact legislation circumventing integration. The legislation proposed by the committee, which became the Pearsall Plan, amended the Compulsory School Attendance Law so that students might be excused from attending an integrated public school. The Plan also recommended that the state consider special applications requesting state to pay private school tuition grants to parents whose children were assigned to the integrated public schools. During a special session of the General Assembly in July 1956, legislators adopted the Pearsall Plan with only two dissenting votes, yet needed the public's opinion for the bill to become law. Many African American leaders and some whites argued that the Pearsall Plan violated *Brown*, and others criticized the Plan because they claimed it threatened public schools by relinquishing power to local school boards. In the end, North Carolinians voted five to one to uphold racial segregation in the state's public schools.

Although the 1964 Federal Civil Rights Act, which contained a provision prohibiting discrimination in public education, declared the Pearsall Plan unconstitutional in 1966, token integration and residential segregation allowed the Pearsall Plan to continue. Finally, the case of *Godwin v. Johnston County Board of Education* (1969) ruled the Pearsall Plan unconstitutional.

Source: <http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/318/entry>