

(8) School districts had to send out forms, letters of explanation, and publish newspaper notices giving students and parents information concerning the administration of freedom of choice plans.

The Office of Education had originally hoped to publish the guidelines in January, but they were not promulgated until March 7. This was because HEW took extra time to consult with Southern school officials before the new guidelines were issued, and because the guidelines were being carefully reviewed by HEW's legal counsel. The 1966 guidelines required that school districts operating under a freedom of choice plan should have a free choice transfer period beginning no earlier than March 1 and ending no later than April 30. Many school administrators were undoubtedly caught by surprise, and they generally felt that they had too little time to interpret the guidelines and follow their requirements. Ninety-eight of South Carolina's 108 school districts were operating under freedom of choice plans. Of the remainder, some districts were still in violation of the 1965 guidelines and had no authorized plan at all. Six of the state's largest districts were operating under federal court orders. Since many districts were concerned only with complying with the absolute minimum requirements of the guidelines, they felt that they were being pressured into a quick acceptance of the guidelines without being given time to study them adequately. However, some districts complained because they found 50 days inadequate time to plan for the traditional tactics of delay and circumvention when faced with the possibility of meaningful school desegregation.

By May 7, 1966, 105 of the 108 school districts in South Carolina had filed Form 441-B with the U.S. Office of Education. If a district did not submit Form 441-B, the commitment of federal funds for new activities was subject to deferral. The record of South Carolina school districts submitting Form 441-B was one of the best in the South.

South Carolina school administrators did follow those guideline regulations which called for letters, explanatory notices, and choice forms to be sent to all parents. In many cases these forms followed the exact form recommended by the Office of Education. There is no question but that the mere sending of these letters and forms resulted in an increased number of transfers from Negro to desegregated schools.

THE PERCENTAGES

In order to have an administrative guide by which they could determine whether or not a school system was making satisfactory progress towards the abolition of the dual school system, the Office of Education established a system of percentages in the 1966 guidelines. These percentages were grossly misunderstood by the public and school officials.

The percentages were misinterpreted to mean "racial balance" or the percentage of Negroes attending schools with whites. Superintendent J. B. Kirkley of Marion District # 3 (which had its funds deferred) said that the ratio of Negro to white students in the desegregated schools of his district exceeded that of many larger districts in the state (*Columbia State*, September 5, 1966). Bluffton District Superintendent H. E. McCracken said, "Twenty per cent of the students in our white schools are Negro . . . one of the highest percentages in the state. The federal government is using some sort of new math on us" (*Charleston News & Courier*, August 16, 1966.)

Some school officials understood the percentages to mean the percentage of increase in the number of Negro students attending desegregated schools this year as compared to last year. Georgetown County Board County Chairman James C. Bourne said, "Well, we've doubled our Negro enrollment this year" (*Charleston News & Courier*, July 20, 1966). Mr. Bourne did not say that there would still be 98% of the Negro students in the county attending segregated schools. Similarly, Chester County Superintendent E. W. Nunnery expressed surprise that the performance of his school district had been judged unsatisfactory by the Office of Education even though the Negro enrollment in the county's all-white schools doubled that of last year (*Columbia State*, August 4, 1966). In Chester County in 1965 there were 80 Negroes attending desegregated schools, and there are 177 in 1966. This still leaves 96% of the Negro students in the county attending segregated schools. Superintendent Hugh T. Stoddard of Sumter School District #2 said, "We had more than 90 last year and we're expecting more than double that amount in the fall" (*Charleston News & Courier*, August 3, 1966). This year there are only 171 Negroes in desegregated schools