

**The “Unraveling”:
Resistance to Desegregation in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1971-1998**

An Honors Thesis in the Department of History

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Introduction

Since the creation of an all-White public school system in Pittsburgh in 1834, Black activists and community members have pushed for school reform and desegregation. The end of *de jure*, or legal, segregation in Pennsylvania’s public schools in 1881 was not an end to segregation in the schools of Pittsburgh because of the city’s heavy residential segregation. Nearly 90 years later, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) sent a desegregation order to the Board of Public Education¹ of the Pittsburgh Public Schools. The PHRC’s 1968 order came at a time when lawsuits and protests brought the school desegregation process to Northern cities, over a decade after the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*. In Pittsburgh, the Board of Education and school officials treated the system’s segregated schools unequally; as a former Board member, Jean Fink, said, school officials created “dumping grounds” in poor and Black neighborhoods.² Desegregation in Pittsburgh was an attempt to combat this racist system. If all schools were desegregated, then the district’s leadership – the Board and Superintendent’s office – could not concentrate resources in predominantly White schools.

Throughout the 1970s, desegregation attempts met resistance from Black and White communities for different reasons.³ During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Pittsburgh was almost entirely Black and White. Black communities opposed desegregation efforts when they consisted of “one-way busing” of Black students to White neighborhoods without sending White students to Black neighborhoods. White neighborhoods opposed to desegregation were against sending White students outside of their neighborhoods to predominantly Black schools,

¹ I use Board of Public Education, Board of Education, and Board synonymously.

² Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

³ I capitalize “Black,” “People of Color,” and “White” because these terms refer to politically constructed racial groups, as opposed to adjectives describing skin color.

regardless of whether this transfer was one-way or two-way. Demands for desegregation were strongest in Black neighborhoods, while resistance was strongest in White ones.

My project focuses on resistance to desegregation in the Pittsburgh Public Schools from 1971 to 1998. I chose this topic for my senior thesis after growing up in Pittsburgh and, in college, studying the “desegregation” of the Boston Public Schools. I was born and raised in Squirrel Hill and never attended the Pittsburgh Public Schools, instead going to private schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Authors’ identities matter, and mine, as a White man from Squirrel Hill educated in private schools, is relevant to the story that I’ve written.

My research for this project came mainly from newspaper articles, interviews, dissertations, and archival documents. I contacted a number of people to interview as I read about their involvement related to desegregation, and some responded and agreed to talk with me. Most of my interviews were over the phone and all had approval from the Institutional Review Board at Tufts University. Interviewees had different and sometimes conflicting memories and interpretations of past events.

I begin in Chapter 1, “Foundations of Desegregation,” with a historical background of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Public Schools that will set the stage for the rest of the story. Chapter 2, “Grassroots Opposition,” focuses on the opposition to the Board of Education’s 1971 reorganization plan. A goal of this plan was to increase “racial balance” in the district by sending many Black students to mostly White schools and some White students to mostly Black schools. The most sustained and successful opposition to these changes came from a group of White parents from the neighborhood of Carrick. These parents, whose children used to attend a predominantly White school closer to Carrick in the neighborhood of Overbrook, led a boycott of Knoxville Junior High School, a predominantly Black school to which their children were

assigned under the 1971 reorganization plan. For two years, the parents won court battles in which they framed the issue as one of student safety, rather than race, and kept their children out of Knoxville. Race and racial prejudice were important issues in this boycott; so was a strong desire to keep students in schools close to their homes. While the White parents from Carrick won several court cases, a group of Black parents from Beltzhoover lost a lawsuit against the 1971 reorganization plan in which they challenged the one-way busing of their children to a predominantly White school. The difference in these two rulings shows how the focus in court on safety, not race or desegregation, was a key reason for the Carrick parents' legal success.

Another critique that the Carrick parents had of the school system was that the Board of Education, a fifteen-member body appointed by judges of the Common Pleas Court, did not represent them. The grassroots tactics that the parents used were only necessary because they did not have political power on the Board. A power struggle over whether the Board should be appointed or elected began in the midst of the Knoxville boycott.

Chapter 3, "School Board Politics," is about the transition of resistance to desegregation from the grassroots to positions of power. A key part of this second phase of resistance was the creation of an elected Board and the election of a "conservative faction" in 1976. The change to a nine-member elected Board changed its racial, political, and geographical makeup. The first elected Board included two Black and seven White members. Five White members made up what the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* called the "conservative faction" and held a majority of the votes on the Board. This faction was against "busing" for desegregation, which is the transfer of students via bus outside their neighborhood in order to desegregate a school. These five members laid the foundation for a desegregation plan that a moderate faction passed in 1980, following the 1979 Board elections. The two Black and two White members who most

supported desegregation voted against the 1980 plan because it left much of the school district segregated. This plan used some busing for desegregation, especially at the middle school level, but its focus was on magnet schools. These schools had specialized programs that were meant to increase the quality of education and entice Black and, particularly, White parents to send their children to schools outside their neighborhoods. The elected Board consistently delayed and watered down the PHRC's desegregation order; the movement against desegregation had moved from the streets and courts to the boardroom.

Chapter 4, "Neighborhood Schools and Resegregation," shows how a third phase of resistance during the 1990s rescinded parts of the 1980 desegregation plan. A bill that passed the state legislature in 1996 effectively stripped the PHRC of its power to order school districts to desegregate. In the same year, the Board of Education passed a "redistricting plan" that had the opposite effect of the "reorganization" and desegregation plans of the 1970s. By creating "neighborhood schools," the 1996 redistricting plan sent students to schools closer to their homes and resegregated part of the district. Pittsburgh's neighborhoods remained segregated in 1990, so neighborhood schools generally were segregated schools. Redistricting in the 1980 desegregation plan had made all ten middle schools "racially balanced," as defined by the PHRC.⁴ But by 1999, after new redistricting plans in 1996 and 1998, just nine of 20 middle schools were "racially balanced." With only two or three Board members in favor of maintaining desegregation measures and no PHRC to enforce a desegregation order, proponents of desegregation had little political power in the mid- and late 1990s. The legislation and

⁴ In this paper, "racial balance" and "racially balanced" refer to the PHRC's definition of a racially balanced school. The PHRC used a formula to determine whether a school was racially balanced. The formula started with the Black student population in a school district, broken down by three levels (elementary, middle, and high school). A "racially balanced" school had a Black population within roughly 15 percentage points of the district-wide average for the relevant level. For example, if the Black middle school population in a district were 50%, then a racially balanced middle school would be between 35% and 65% Black.

redistricting plans of the 1990s resulted in, as former Superintendent Dick Wallace put it, an “unraveling” of the desegregation program.⁵

This unraveling had in fact begun 25 years earlier at the grassroots level and had moved to the boardroom in 1976. The Board in the 1970s weakened the PHRC’s desegregation guidelines and formed a partial desegregation plan in 1980. Board members who were proponents of desegregation were typically Black, but they were outnumbered on a Board that was at least two-thirds White, even when Black students became a majority in the school district in the 1980s. The proposals passed in the 1990s, then, were the final phase of a long process of the unraveling of desegregation in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

⁵ Robert Peebles, *School Desegregation: A Shattered Dream?* (New York: Vantage Press, 2007), p. 19.

Chapter 1: Foundations of Desegregation

During the mid-1800s, Black activists worked to combat segregation in Pittsburgh's public school system. According to the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society, a group of Black Pittsburghers opened the first school for Black children in 1832 in the basement of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.¹ Two years later, the state legislature passed a law establishing public schools throughout the state, but these schools were for White students only.² In 1835, four Black Pittsburghers sent a petition to the directors of the public schools that stated that while Black people paid taxes, they had no schools for their children.³ After sustained pressure from Black community members and a wealthy White businessman, the directors opened a school for Black students in 1838.⁴

The state legislature passed a law requiring segregated education in 1854. A year later, another state law gave Pittsburgh its own school district, which had formerly been controlled by the state.⁵ A Black school committee controlled the city's single school for Black students.⁶ The law mandating segregation in schools stood until 1881, when a new law prohibited school

¹ Reverend Lewis B. Woodson was this school's first teacher. One of his students was Martin Delaney, who became an abolitionist and is known by some as the "Father of Black Nationalism." Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, *Beyond Adversity: African-Americans' Struggle for Equality in Western Pennsylvania, 1750-1990* (Pittsburgh, 1993), p. 5.

² Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, *Beyond Adversity*, p. 5; John M. Brewer, Jr., *African Americans in Pittsburgh* (Charleston, Arcadia, 2006), p. 73; William D. McCoy, *History of Pittsburgh Public Schools to 1942* (Pittsburgh, 1959), p. 135. McCoy's work is in the PA Dept. of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Main Branch.

³ McCoy, *History of Pittsburgh Public Schools*, p. 174.

⁴ Charles Avery, the White businessman, argued that state law did not prohibit integration. Martin Delaney was hired as a teacher at this school in 1852 and became its principal in the same year. Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, *Beyond Adversity*, p. 6. The Board of Education opened another school for Black students in the late 1830s and combined them into one school on Miller Street in 1867. Ralph Proctor, "Racial Discrimination against Black Teachers and Black Professionals in the Pittsburgh Public School System, 1834-1973" (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1979), p. 31.

⁵ McCoy, *History of Pittsburgh Public Schools*, p. 135.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

directors, superintendents, or teachers from maintaining segregated schools.⁷ The passage of this legislation made *de jure* segregation illegal. Pittsburgh's school board directors had lobbied the state legislature to allow integrated schools, and they closed the school on Miller Street to save money in 1881, despite protests by Black Pittsburghers to keep the school open.⁸ As Ralph Proctor shows in his dissertation, "Racial Discrimination against Black Teachers and Black Professionals in the Pittsburgh Public School System, 1834-1973," there were no known Black teachers in the district from 1881 until 1937.⁹ "Desegregation" in the late 1800s further segregated the teaching staff, due at least in part to the district's racist hiring practices.¹⁰

The racial makeup of Pittsburgh changed during the early and mid-20th century due to an influx of Black migrants from the South in a period known as the Great Migration (see Table 1.1). The Hill District was a primary destination of Black newcomers to the city; 44.6% of Pittsburgh's Black residents lived in the Hill District in 1930.¹¹ White ethnic neighborhoods also formed as Italian Americans moved to Bloomfield, Polish Americans to Polish Hill, and Jewish Americans left the Hill District for Squirrel Hill. The neighborhoods of Beltzhoover, Manchester, and Homewood-Brushton all had significant Black populations, particularly after the city's "urban renewal" project displaced 1,551 families, of whom 1,239 were Black, in the Lower Hill District to build the Civic Arena in 1959.¹² Race and class were linked in Pittsburgh,

⁷ Ibid., pp. 219-221. Republicans in the state legislature had proposed a bill to allow integrated schools in 1874, but it was defeated. Democrats who opposed the bill used the argument that Whites would send their children to private schools rather than to an integrated public school. This argument and reality returned in the 1970s. Edward J. Prince, Jr. "School Segregation in Nineteenth Century Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 43 no. 2 (April 1976), pp. 129-30.

⁸ Proctor, "Racial Discrimination," p. 33.

⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 46-50, 56-57.

¹¹ Ancella Bickley Livers, "Defining Ourselves: Gender Construction and the Creation of a Black Community in Pittsburgh, 1925-1955" (PhD, Carnegie Mellon University, 1998), pp. 35-36.

¹² 53 percent of displaced Black families and 6 percent of displaced White families moved into public housing; 7 percent of displaced Blacks and 51 percent of displaced Whites purchased private housing; and others rented private housing. The construction of the Civic Arena also removed 400 businesses from the Lower Hill. Joe W. Trotter and

and the neighborhoods with the lowest median family income were Black neighborhoods (see Appendices 4 and 5). Students in Black neighborhoods also attended public schools at a much higher rate than students in White neighborhoods, many of whom went to parochial schools (see Appendix 8).

Table 1.1: Pittsburgh Population, 1900-1970¹³

Year	Total Population	White	Black	% Black
1900	321,616	304,421	17,040	5.3
1910	533,905	508,008	25,623	4.8
1920	588,343	550,261	37,725	6.4
1930	669,817	614,454	54,983	8.2
1940	671,659	609,236	62,216	9.3
1950	676,806	593,825	82,453	12.2
1960	604,332	502,593	100,692	16.7
1970	520,117	412,280	104,904	20.2

Though state law prohibited segregated schools, Pittsburgh’s school system remained segregated. Neighborhoods in Pittsburgh were racially segregated and ethnically divided due to racist housing practices and the tendency of migrants and immigrants to live together. In *Afro-Americans in Pittsburgh: The Residential Segregation of a People*, Joe T. Darden shows that the segregation of Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods remained high from 1930 to 1970. This segregation

Jared N. Day, *Race and Renaissance: African Americans in Pittsburgh since World War II* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), pp. 55-56, 69-71.

¹³ See Appendix 1 for a table of Asian American, Black, Latino/a, and White population from 1900-2000 in Pittsburgh.

Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung. “Pennsylvania – Race and Hispanic Origin for Selected Cities and Other Places: Earliest Census to 1990” (U.S. Census Bureau: Washington, DC, February 2005), <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/PAtab.pdf>.

was due more to racial discrimination than the cost of housing.¹⁴ The East End¹⁵ Multilist was a powerful real estate organization that did not allow Black members until Black realtor Robert Lavelle won a 1967 lawsuit accusing the Multilist of discrimination. Outside the city, White realtors in suburbs such as Mt. Lebanon, Bethel Park, and Fox Chapel prevented Black, and often Jewish, people from viewing, buying, or renting houses.¹⁶ Pittsburgh's schools were segregated because its neighborhoods were segregated, a condition known as *de facto*, or "by fact," segregation.¹⁷ Legal racism in the housing market was a major cause of segregated neighborhoods; *de facto* school segregation had its roots in *de jure* housing segregation.

People of Color in the U.S. had been mounting legal challenges to school segregation for decades, and several of these lawsuits culminated in a 1954 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*.¹⁸ In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" and unconstitutional by the 14th Amendment.¹⁹ This ruling overturned the 1896 case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which had ruled that "separate but equal" was constitutional. According to *Brown*, separate meant unequal because schools for White students received more resources than schools for Black students.

In Pittsburgh, desegregation was an attempt to uproot a public school system of separate and unequal conditions. Predominantly Black schools had fewer specialized programs, more non-professional employees and full-time substitute teachers, and higher teacher turnover than

¹⁴ Joe T. Darden, *Afro-Americans in Pittsburgh: The Residential Segregation of a People* (Lexington Books: Lexington, MA, 1973), pp. 63-5.

¹⁵ The East End in Pittsburgh is the area north of the Monongahela River, south of the Allegheny River, and east of downtown.

¹⁶ Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance*, pp. 67-8, 102; Darden, *Afro-Americans in Pittsburgh*, p. 47.

¹⁷ In 1928, for example, only 20 of 106 elementary schools enrolled Black students. Proctor, "Racial Discrimination," p. 45.

¹⁸ Examples of previous legal challenges to segregation in education include *Roberts v. Boston* (1849), *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), and *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946).

¹⁹ Waldo E. Martin, Jr., ed. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's: Boston, 1998), p. 174.

predominantly White schools.²⁰ Former Board of Education member Jean Fink explained that schools in Black and low-income neighborhoods were “dumping grounds.” According to Fink, “If you had a teacher that wasn’t real effective, a principal that wasn’t real effective, you might send them to some of the poorer neighborhoods where parents wouldn’t notice as much.”²¹

In 1965, after the civil rights movement had secured the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, the Pittsburgh Board of Education titled its annual report, “The Quest for Racial Equality in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.” The report featured the planning of an Education Park concept, which the Board later called its Great Schools plan. This concept called for five high schools with student populations between 3,000 and 5,000. The Board would then build integrated middle schools or modify existing junior high schools for students in grades 6-8. Finally, the Board would modify elementary schools attendance patterns to ensure they were also desegregated. The main goal of this plan was an improvement of educational quality, which, in theory, would come from large schools that could offer many resources including technology, world languages, and athletic facilities that would be too expensive to maintain at a higher number of smaller schools.²²

The Great Schools plan also introduced the “5-3-4” concept, in which students would attend elementary school until fifth grade, middle school for grades 6-8, and high school for grades 9-12.²³ The district at the time did not have a unified grade structure, for it had K-5, K-6,

²⁰ Herbert A. Aurbach, “The Status of Education of Negroes in Pittsburgh 1963-1964,” (City of Pittsburgh: Commission on Human Relations, June 1965), pp. 4-6

²¹ Jean Fink served on the Board of Education from 1976 to 2013, with one four-year absence from 1993 to 1997. Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

²² “Question and Answer Portion of Testimony by Dr. Louis J. Kishkunas Before the Basic Education Sub-Committee,” May 8, 1969 (HHC).

²³ Tracey A. Reed, “The Politics of School Desegregation: The Case of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1965-1980,” (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1997), p. 202; B.J. McCormick, “The Pittsburgh Story,” American Association of School Administrators Convention (Atlantic City, February 17, 1969), pp. 1-2; Board of Public Education, Report of the Committee of the Whole (June 15, 1971), *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1970-1971* (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 7).

K-8, 7-9, 7-12, 8-12, and 9-12 schools.

The 1965 annual report put forth sixteen principles aimed at “improving the educational circumstances of Negro boys and girls in Pittsburgh.” Number 12 included this assertion: “To remove a child by government action from his neighborhood and locate him in a different neighborhood solely to accomplish an enforced integration which may be contrary to his family's wishes is as serious an affront to freedom as enforced segregation.”²⁴ The Pittsburgh chapter of the NAACP responded to this report with a statement emphasizing that “forced” desegregation was, rather than “an affront to freedom,” a necessary feature of a desegregation plan.²⁵

During the late 1960s and into the 1970s, another strand of activism came out of the era of Black Power. Black students and community members clashed with White power structures as they fought for Black studies, Black teachers, Black administrators, and community control of schools. When Stanley Lowe was a student at Oliver High School, the White principal suspended him during the 1967-1968 school year after an exchange that began when the principal told him to remove a sweatshirt that read, “Black is Beautiful Baby.”²⁶ Demonstrations ensued after attacks on Black students by White students at schools like Oliver on the North Side and Gladstone High School in Hazelwood. In these protests, Black students and community members demanded fair treatment by the police and school administration.²⁷ In June of 1968, Black students at Westinghouse High School in Homewood held a protest that led to an early dismissal. These students’ demands included courses in Black history, literature, and arts;

²⁴ Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, “The Quest for Racial Equality in the Pittsburgh Public Schools” (Pittsburgh, 1965), p. 17.

²⁵ Tracey A. Reed, “The Politics of School Desegregation: The Case of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1965-1980,” (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1997), p. 174.

²⁶ Stanley Lowe, interview with author, November 11, 2013.

²⁷ Jack Ryan, “To Keep Order at Oliver High,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 3, 1967, p. 1; “Cops Force Calm at Gladstone,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 22, 1969, p. 1; “State Police Probe School Riots,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 19, 1969, p. 1; Diane Perry, “The Coming Crisis in Pgh. Schools: Perry High School ‘White Power Day,’” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, p. 3.

improved building conditions; the firing of the White principal; and holidays honoring Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.²⁸ At Taylor Allderdice High School in Squirrel Hill, Black students formed the Organization for Black Awareness in Taylor Allderdice (O.B.A.T.A.) and published a newsletter.²⁹ Black Power activism in Pittsburgh's schools did not include desegregation in its agenda; going to school with White students would not increase Black political and cultural power in the schools.

Others advocated for Black history and Black teachers while at the same time pushing for desegregation. Two Black organizations had been formed during the early stages of the Great Migration that would support school desegregation. The Pittsburgh branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed in 1915 and the Urban League of Pittsburgh was founded in 1918.³⁰ In one instance, the Urban League met with the Board of Education in 1921 regarding the fact that the district had hired no Black teachers since the school on Miller Street had closed in 1881.³¹ These organizations also wanted desegregation, and the local NAACP chapter, for example, criticized the Great Schools plan for not immediately desegregating the city's elementary schools.³²

Momentum for desegregation across Pennsylvania picked up when the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission got involved. The PHRC was originally the Pennsylvania Fair Employment Practice Commission, created in 1955 by the Pennsylvania Fair Employment Practice Act. In 1961, this commission became the PHRC and gained responsibility for

²⁸ Reed, "The Politics of School Desegregation," pp. 180-81.

²⁹ "Nation News from OBATA" no. 4 (April/May/June, 1971), pp. 1-5 (Heinz History (hereafter "HHC"), Urban League of Pittsburgh Series III, Box 88).

³⁰ Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, *Beyond Adversity: African-Americans' Struggle for Equality in Western Pennsylvania, 1750-1990* (Pittsburgh, 1993), pp. 18-19.

³¹ An investigation of hiring practices in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, led by Black state Representative Homer S. Brown, culminated in 1937 with the hiring of Lawrence Peeler, the first known Black teacher in PPS since 1881. Proctor, "Racial Discrimination," pp. 34, 63-65.

³² Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance*, p. 99; "Board Criticized for New School Integration Plan," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 15, 1967, p. 1.

prohibiting discrimination in housing and public accommodations.³³ The PHRC gained power over segregated school districts in 1967 after a legal battle with the school board in Chester, PA. In November of 1964, the PHRC had ordered the desegregation of the Chester Public Schools following protests by Black activists. The case made its way to the state Supreme Court, which ruled in 1967 that the PHRC had the authority to order a school district to desegregate if there was segregation, *de jure* or *de facto*, in that school district.³⁴ On February 2, 1968, the PHRC ordered the Pittsburgh Public Schools and sixteen other segregated school districts in Pennsylvania to desegregate.³⁵ This order was the beginning of a contentious relationship between the PHRC and Pittsburgh's Board of Education that featured a number of legal battles over desegregation.

³³ Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, "Sunset Performance Audit: Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission," November 1990, pp. 72-75, <http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us/reports/1990/226.PDF>

³⁴ Louis H. Mackey, "The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and Desegregation in the Public Schools of Pennsylvania, 1961-1978," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1978), pp. 52-60; Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission v. Chester School District, 427 Pa. 157, 233 A.2d 290 (1967) (HHC, Maxine Aaron Papers, Box 9, Folder 7).

³⁵ Mackey, "The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission," p. 61.

Chapter 2: Grassroots Opposition

Middle Schools and the 5-3-4 Plan

After the 1968 order, the Board of Education needed to create racially balanced schools in order to meet the Pennsylvania Human Relation Commission's guidelines for desegregation.¹ Desegregation attempts met strong opposition, mostly from White parents who wanted their children to attend school in their neighborhoods. Opposition to the construction of two desegregated middle schools – Columbus Middle School in 1967 and Arsenal Middle School in 1969 – were precursors to the boycott of Knoxville Junior High School in 1971.

In 1967, a year before the PHRC sent its desegregation order, the Board of Education rebuilt the Columbus Middle School on the North Side. The old Columbus Middle School had burned down in 1952, and it was not until the mid-1960s that the Board approved plans for a new school. Columbus was located between Brighton Heights, a middle-class White area, and Manchester, a predominantly Black, low-income neighborhood. At first, the Board designated the new Columbus school as an elementary school that would have an 87% Black student population. But on May 22, 1967, the Board announced a change to this plan: Columbus would be an integrated middle school and there would be a new elementary school feeder pattern in the area. Columbus Middle School fit with the Board's attempt to create a 5-3-4 grade structure in accordance with the Great Schools plan. Some Black students and parents protested this change at the Board of Education building in the neighborhood of Oakland with signs reading, "Don't take our school" and "My children are too small to be bussed."² Other Black parents supported

¹ For the PHRC's definition of a racially balanced school, see Introduction, note 3.

² "School Bussing Plan Protested by Negroes," *The Washington Post*, May 26, 1967, p. A2; Ralph Hallow, "Parents Protest Columbus School 'Loss,'" *The Pittsburgh Press*, May 24, 1967, p. 2; Henry W. Pierce, "Busing Protested by Negro Parents," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 25, 1967, p. 27.

the middle school because they believed that the new elementary school zoning would lead to better education quality.³

At the start of the 1967-1968 school year, the protests against Columbus Middle School came from White parents of students who had attended John Morrow Elementary School, which had previously gone through eighth grade. John Morrow's student population was 23% Black in 1967, while Columbus opened at 37% Black.⁴ Parents of an estimated 50 White students boycotted Columbus and held a sit-in at John Morrow when the school year began on September 4, 1967. Some parents and students picketed at the Board of Education building because they wanted their children to go to school in their own neighborhood.⁵ The two schools were just over two miles apart. The leader of the boycotting parents, Reverend Alan Walbridge, opened a private school, Brightwood Academy, for parents who did not want to send their children to Columbus. Brightwood Academy had an attendance of 50 students in December of 1967. A group of White parents also filed a lawsuit against the Board of Education.⁶ Protesters felt disconnected from the Board and accused its members of living outside the city in wealthy suburbs like Fox Chapel and Mt. Lebanon. While this notion was false, it was widespread in Pittsburgh.⁷

Two years later, similar protests ensued in the neighborhood of Lawrenceville over the opening of Arsenal Middle School. Arsenal was formerly a vocational school and was slated to

³ William H. Rodd II and Richard P. Ridenour, "Rodd/Ridenour Task Force Testimony," June 7, 1968, Library & Archives, (HHC, Maxine Aaron Papers, Box 9). The new middle school was in line with recommendations of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Racial Equality, a group that advised the Board on how to racially balance its schools. "Integration Education Plan Told," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 22, 1967, p. 19.

⁴ When I refer to a school's demographics in 1967, for example, I am referring to the 1967-1968 school year. Urban League of Pittsburgh, "Black Percentage of the Students: Pittsburgh Public Schools," 1967-1979.

⁵ "Pittsburgh Group Boycotts School," *New York Times*, September 6, 1967, p. 37; "Pittsburgh Busing is Protested by 70," *The Washington Post*, September 6, 1967, p. A2.

⁶ "Busing Fight by Whites is Continuing," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 14, 1969, p. 1.

⁷ Though a disproportionate number of Board members lived in Pittsburgh's East End, they did live in the city. Carrie Anderson, Delores Gluck, Evelyn Murrin, Robert J. Kibbee, "A Report on the Operation of the Columbus Middle School and Related Matters," 1967-1968 (HHC, Maxine Aaron Papers, Box 8).

become a middle school in September of 1969. Due to community pressure, the Board pushed back the opening date to February of 1970.⁸ A mostly White group, Parents Who Care, attended a Board meeting with a petition that supposedly contained the names of 60,000 people opposed to the middle school.⁹ One member of Parents Who Care whose child was assigned to Arsenal filed a lawsuit against the Board, challenging whether it was allowed to transfer students for desegregation purposes. In June of 1969, a Common Pleas Court judge ruled that the Board was indeed within its rights to make these transfers.¹⁰ Two years later, in May of 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court made a similar ruling when it unanimously held in the case, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Co.*, that school districts may use the busing of students to schools outside their neighborhood for the purpose of desegregation.¹¹

Parents used similar means to similar political ends in the protests against Columbus and Arsenal. Since the Common Pleas Court judges appointed the Board, parents and community activists could not easily get into positions of power. Parents opposed to the creation of Columbus and Arsenal were mostly White and used tactics including boycotts, sit-ins in a school auditorium, and lawsuits against the Board of Education. These organizing techniques were the most feasible way for parents who were opposed to desegregation and had little political power to achieve their goals.

“Reorganization” (Desegregation)

Another round of desegregation came about in 1971 after the abandonment of the Great Schools plan and increased pressure from the PHRC. On June 23, 1970, the Board of Education

⁸ Richard D. Gutkind, “Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980: A Study of the Superintendent and Educational Policy Dynamics” (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1983), 45.

⁹ “Whites File Suit to Block Transfers for Race Balance,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 19, 1969, p. 1.

¹⁰ “Busing Fight by Whites is Continuing,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 14, 1969, p. 1.

¹¹ Richard A. Pride and J. David Woodard, *The Burden of Busing: The Politics of Desegregation in Nashville, Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 66-7.

voted to discontinue the Great Schools plan because of its cost and lack of public support. This decision ended a six-year process in which the Board had spent \$21 million buying property and paying architects and consultants. The Board estimated that by scrapping the Great Schools plan, it would sustain a \$5 million loss.¹² During the meeting in June of 1970, the Board also created a Department of School Reorganization.¹³ On May 4, 1971, this department submitted a proposal to the Board to redraw attendance boundaries in order to comply with the PHRC's order.¹⁴ Pressure from the PHRC was mounting after the commission issued a "Final Order" on June 4 that required the Board to submit a partial desegregation plan within thirty days and a full plan by November 1.¹⁵ The Board adopted the proposal recommended by the Department of School Reorganization in its meeting on June 15. This plan included over two dozen changes in feeder patterns and was essentially a mild desegregation plan, although the Board did not label it as "desegregation." Black and White students would attend school outside their neighborhoods for the purpose of desegregation and to relieve overcrowding. This proposal also made strides in moving the district towards the Board's desired 5-3-4 grade structure.

The redistricting plan sparked a backlash before the school year began in September. A group of Black parents whose children had attended Beltzhoover Elementary School organized into a group called Concerned Parents of Beltzhoover. Beltzhoover was a middle-class neighborhood south of the Monongahela River whose Black population had risen from 43% in

¹² Jack Hillwig, "City Drops 'Impractical' Great High Schools," *The Pittsburgh Press*, June 24, 1970, p. 2; Vince Gagetta, "Great High School Proposal Scuttled," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 21, 1970, p. 1; Gagetta, "Schools Ask \$40 Million for Building," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 25, 1970, p. 5.

¹³ Paul Williams, who in 1969 had become the first Black principal at Westinghouse High School in Homewood, chaired the Department of School Reorganization. "Principal is Named," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 12, 1968, p. 13; Doug Smock, "Top Secret Integration Plan Bared," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 22, 1972, p. 11.

¹⁴ Jack L. Palmer, "A Case Study in School-Community Conflict over Desegregation" (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1974), pp. 69-70.

¹⁵ The Final Order required the Board to eliminate segregation in high schools and middle schools by the beginning of the 1972-1973 school year and in elementary schools by the 1974-1975 school year. Tracey Reed, "The Politics of School Desegregation: The Case of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1965-1980," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1997), pp. 199-202; Louis Hoffman Mackey, "The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and Desegregation in the Public Schools of Pennsylvania," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1978), p. 90.

1960 to 69% in 1970.¹⁶ The 1971 reorganization plan transferred 83 Black and seven White students from Beltzhoover to Boggs Avenue Elementary School. No White students would move from Boggs Avenue to Beltzhoover, even though Boggs Avenue was overcrowded and Beltzhoover had room for additional students. This transfer would not significantly change Beltzhoover's racial makeup, but it would increase Boggs Avenue's Black student population from 0% in 1970 to 10% in 1971.¹⁷ The Concerned Parents opposed one-way busing that put the burden of desegregation on Black students and also demanded "ongoing training of teachers in intergroup relations."¹⁸

Although the Board did not send White students from Boggs Avenue to Beltzhoover, the 1971 reorganization plan did call for the transfer of some students from predominantly White schools. Concord Elementary School, which had no Black students from 1967 to 1970, is one example of such a transfer.¹⁹ Concord was located in the neighborhood of Carrick in the South Hills, an area that refers to the city neighborhoods and suburbs south of the Monongahela River. Students at Concord typically went to Overbrook School for seventh and eighth grades.²⁰ Overbrook was a neighborhood that bordered Carrick, and Overbrook School's student population was 98% White in 1970. To create more racial balance, the Board planned on sending 69 seventh grade students from Concord to Knoxville Junior High School, which had a 66% Black student population in 1970. This change would comply with the 5-3-4 model by

¹⁶ Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of... (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)*, "A Community Profile of Beltzhoover" (Pittsburgh, August 1974), pp. 4-9.

¹⁷ Urban League of Pittsburgh, "Black Percentage of the Students: Pittsburgh Public Schools," 1967-1979 (HHC).

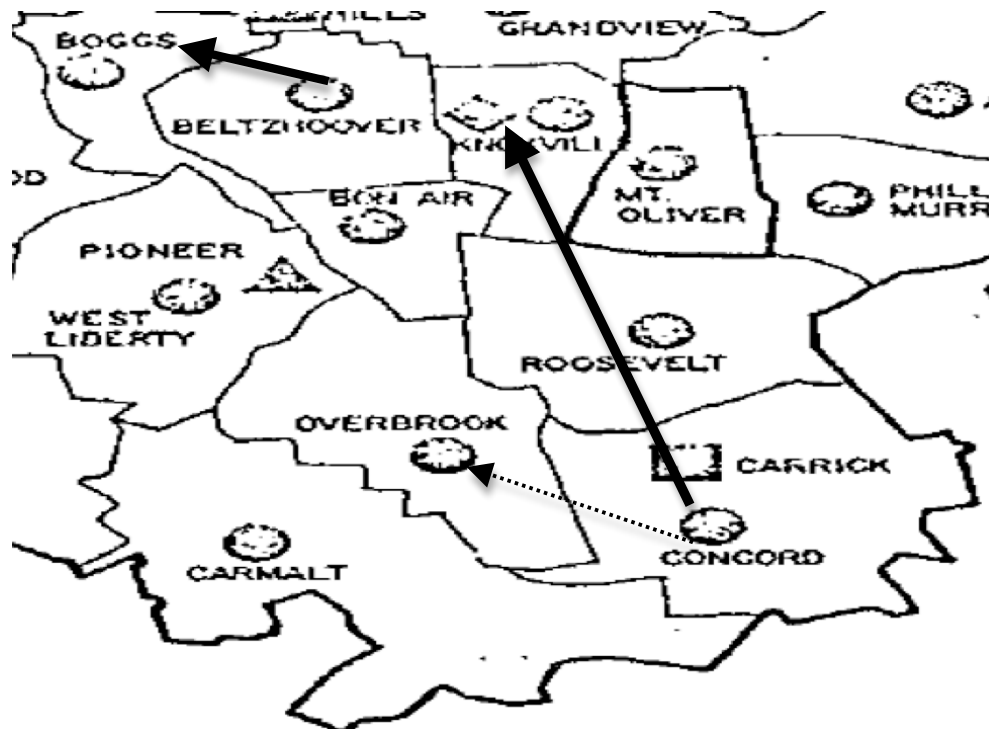
¹⁸ "Beltzhoover Parents," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, p. 1.

¹⁹ Urban League of Pittsburgh, "Black Percentage of the Students: Pittsburgh Public Schools," 1967-1979 (HHC).

²⁰ Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013; Palmer, "School-Community Conflict," p. 5.

phasing out the sixth grade at Concord.²¹ For the reorganization plan to work, though, parents of students assigned to new schools— including those from Carrick – had to comply with it.

Figure 2.1: 1971 Reorganization Plan



The June 1971 reorganization plan assigned 69 students from Concord Elementary School (0% Black in 1970) to Knoxville Junior High School (66% Black). Students from Concord, located in the neighborhood of Carrick, used to attend Overbrook School (2% Black) for seventh and eighth grade. The plan also sent 90 students (83 Black and seven White) from Beltzhoover Elementary School (94% Black) to Boggs Avenue Elementary School (0% Black). The reorganization plan created other changes, but these were the two that led to the most resistance.

²¹ Urban League of Pittsburgh, “Black Percentage of the Students: Pittsburgh Public Schools,” 1967-1979 (HHC); Palmer, “School-Community Conflict,” pp. 197-198. See Appendix D in Palmer for the full reorganization plan.

Carrick

Carrick was a relative newcomer to the city of Pittsburgh. From 1852 to 1904, Carrick was part of St. Clair Township and then Baldwin Township. On June 21, 1904, with 503 signatures from residents of St. Clair and Baldwin, Carrick became its own borough.²² After a generation of independence, Carrick residents joined the city of Pittsburgh to access a better sewage system and other services. They voted 2020-1607 to become the city's 29th Ward on March 2, 1926.²³ In early January of 1927, Carrick officially became part of Pittsburgh.²⁴

Carrick was a southern border of the city and was home to many German Americans. In 1970, 15,491 people lived in Carrick; six were Black. Carrick had a median family income of \$9,386 in 1970, which was slightly higher than the citywide rate of \$8,800, and was a working- and middle-class community (see Table 2.1).²⁵ The major crime rate in 1972 was less than half the citywide rate. In 1970, 44% of Carrick students attended private school, while 56% went to public school.²⁶ Most of the private school students in Carrick went to affordable parochial schools at churches like St. Norbert, St. Basil, St. Sylvester, and St. Anne.²⁷

Table 2.1: Employment in Carrick, 1970

Job Type	Carrick	Pittsburgh
Professional, Technical, Managerial, and Administrative	715 (14%)	41,400 (24%)
Sales and Clerical	1,910 (37%)	55,160 (32%)
Craftsmen, Operatives, and Foremen	1,286 (25%)	31,222 (18%)
Laborers, Services, and Household Workers	1,212 (24%)	31,222 (26%)
Total	5,123 (100%)	173,738 (100%)

²² The boroughs and townships in Allegheny County made up the suburbs of Pittsburgh. Stephanie Herder, "Historic Carrick Once Home of Garden Farms and Coal Mines," *South Hills Record*, January 27, 1976, p. 18.

²³ "Carrick Votes to Become Part of the City," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 2, 1926, p. 1.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Data in this table is from: City of Pittsburgh, "A Profile of Change: Carrick," January 1984.

²⁶ City of Pittsburgh, "A Profile of Change: Carrick," January 1984.

²⁷ Carol Anthony, interview with author, January 10, 2014.

Even after joining the city, Carrick had an independent streak and resisted outside influences. When City Council proposed the placement of an 11-story high-rise apartment building for the elderly in Carrick, many people in the community protested. Lawyer Thomas L. Jones represented a group fighting the high rise and said in April of 1971, “All of us like what we have, and we think we have the right to fight for it.” He went on to say that “this fine community” was not “in need of redevelopment.”²⁸ The *South Hills Record*, a community newspaper, reported that opponents feared “the project would be a slum in five years.”²⁹ The city council voted down this housing plan 8-1, prompting one writer of the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, the city’s main Black newspaper, to ask of the council, “Are they siding with the racists in Carrick?”³⁰ Most of the elderly people who would have lived in this high rise, though, were White. The fight for “what we have” in Carrick as well as the defiance of city powers would be driving forces of the boycott of Knoxville Junior High School just months later.

At Carrick High School, racial tensions ran high in 1970 and 1971. In May of 1970, the *New Pittsburgh Courier* reported that periodic fights broke out between Black and White students at Carrick High, which had 126 Black students out of a total student population of 2,056. Most of the Black students at Carrick High lived in St. Clair Village, a public housing community.³¹ A conflict over a class play occurred during the 1970-1971 school year after a White teacher made a comment about wanting to avoid casting interracial couples because he was unsure how White and Black parents would react.³² This issue reached the news through

²⁸ Jack Warner, “Residents Rip High Rise for Carrick,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 28, 1971.

²⁹ “City Public Hearing Attracts Large Crowd,” *South Hills Record*, May 4, 1971, p. 1.

³⁰ Donald W. McIlvane, “Raps Council Vote on Council Hi Rise,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 5, 1971 p. 14.

³¹ “Area High Schools Hit by Racial Strife,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, May 16, 1970, p. 1; “Carrick Cancels Play Rather than Integrate Cast,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 19, 1970, p. 1.

³² The teacher, Richard Price, claimed in a written statement that he had said “that I do not know what the attitudes of Black and White parents are about a racially mixed romance on state. And, for that reason, I would prefer to avoid that situation...” Richard Price, “Statement of Mr. Richard O. Price Concerning the Selection of a Cast for the Class Play at Carrick High School,” December 16, 1970 (HHC, Records of Pittsburgh Public Schools, Box 167).

WAMO, a Black radio station, and the Pittsburgh branch of the NAACP became involved. Area Superintendent Elmo Calloway informed principal Frank Crawley that the school could not hold the play if the roles were not integrated. The cast of the play voted to cancel it.³³ Later that school year, in April of 1971, a crowd of Whites blocked the entrance to Carrick and threw bricks at the bus carrying Black students from St. Clair Village.³⁴ Racial violence erupted in other Pittsburgh high schools as well during the late 1960s and early 1970s due to the hostility of White students and communities towards Black students.³⁵

There was a mixture in Carrick of a desire for independence, defiance towards city authorities, and racism that made it poised for resistance to desegregation. Unlike wealthy White communities, Carrick did not have a Board of Education representative in 1971 and could do little on a policy level to avoid desegregation.

Knoxville Boycott Begins

In 1971, Knoxville Junior High School drew its student population from several communities that differed by race and class. Including Carrick, seven neighborhoods fed into Knoxville in 1971. Five of these communities had median family incomes between \$7,599 and

Price's statement about the matter differs from other reports that allege he said that "the community is not ready for a Black leading lady opposite a White leading man." "Carrick Cancels Play Rather than Integrate Cast," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 19, 1970, p. 1.

³³ "Carrick Cancels Play Rather than Integrate Cast," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 19, 1970, p. 1.

³⁴ The police arrested 49 White students for blocking the entrance. This attack followed two racially charged assaults, both of which resulted in students going to the hospital. The first was a group of White students beating a Black student, and the second was a group of Black students beating White students. "Negroes Demand Carrick Closed, Principal Fired," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 10, 1971, p. 1; David Nilsson, "Parents Ask Protection for Carrick High Blacks," *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 14, 1971, p. 12; "Black Parents Ask Safety Measures at Carrick School," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1971, p. 7.

³⁵ For example, a series of fights at Oliver High School in 1967 began after several White young men shouted racial slurs at a group of Black Oliver students as they walked to a Halloween party on a recently integrated street near the school. Similar fighting also took place at Allegheny High School and Gladstone High School. Ralph Koger, "Riot Rips Oliver High School, 15 Injured: Halloween Party Starts School Brawl" *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 4, 1967, p. 1; "Cops Force Calm at Gladstone," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 22, 1969, p. 1; Diane Perry, "The Coming Crisis in Pgh. Schools: Perry High School 'White Power Day,'" *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 19, 1970, p. 3.

\$9,386 in 1970.³⁶ The two exceptions were St. Clair Village, with a median income of \$4,931, and Bon Air, a more affluent area whose median income was \$10,960 in 1970.³⁷ Three neighborhoods – Carrick, Allentown, and Bon Air – were nearly all White and had Black populations of less than 2% in 1970.³⁸ Two other predominantly White neighborhoods – Arlington and Knoxville – had slightly larger Black populations but were over 94% White.³⁹ St. Clair and Beltzhoover had both become majority Black by 1970.⁴⁰ Knoxville Junior High School drew heavily from Black students in the latter two neighborhoods, for in 1971 its Black population was 64% of the total student body.⁴¹

When classes began on September 7 in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, there were no boycotts or demonstrations at Knoxville Junior High School. About 800 students came to school, including the students from Carrick who had formerly attended Concord Elementary School.⁴² On September 24, there were rumors that a riot would take place, and a fire alarm sounded. Both the riot rumors and the fire were false alarms, but after this incident, Carrick parents who argued that Knoxville had been unsafe for their children for the past three weeks decided to take their children of the school.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 59; Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of... (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)*, “A Community Profile of Carrick” (Pittsburgh, August 1974), p. 9.

³⁷ Palmer, p. 58.

³⁸ Carrick’s population was .03% Black in 1970, Allentown was .4% Black, and Bon Air 1.1% Black. Department of City Planning, “A Community Profile of Carrick” p. 5; Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of... (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)*, “A Community Profile of Allentown” (Pittsburgh, August 1974), p. 5; Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of... (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)*, “A Community Profile of Bon Air” (Pittsburgh, August 1974), p. 5.

³⁹ Arlington was 3.8% Black in 1970 and Knoxville was 5.2% Black. Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of... (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)*, “A Community Profile of Arlington” (Pittsburgh, August 1974), p. 5; Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of... (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)*, “A Community Profile of Knoxville” (Pittsburgh, August 1974), p. 5.

⁴⁰ St. Clair was 60% Black in 1970 and Beltzhoover was 69% Black. Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of... (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)*, “A Community Profile of St. Clair” (Pittsburgh, August 1974), p. 5; Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of Beltzhoover*,” p. 5.

⁴¹ Palmer, “School-Community Conflict,” p. 60.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 60, 71.

The parents organized in the Carrick Community Council (CCC) under the leadership of Robert Zebra, whose child had made the transfer from Concord to Knoxville. Zebra had spoken for the CCC about its views on “busing” in a speech to the Board of Education on February 16, 1971, in which he said, “We wish to go on record as being emphatically against busing of students to schools outside their own community.”⁴³ On Monday, September 27, the parents acted on this position by beginning a boycott, demanding that the Board send their children to Overbrook School.⁴⁴

The parents began the boycott by bringing their children to the school they believed their children should attend, Overbrook. Between 40 and 50 students came to the Overbrook auditorium for a “teach-in.” The parents insisted that there was no racial aspect to their protest, even though they were all White and Overbrook School was 98% White in 1970 and 93% White in 1971.⁴⁵ As reported by the *South Hills Record*, one spokesman said, “This is not a racial issue. We do not like the media referring to us as ‘an all White group.’ We are just parents interested in the safety and education of our children.”⁴⁶ Parents marched with signs that read “Keep Neighborhood Schools” and “My Child My Choice.”⁴⁷

Acting Superintendent Jerry C. Olsen, filling in for an ill Louis J. Kishkunas, came to Overbrook on the boycott’s second day and told the parents that they were not allowed to remain there.⁴⁸ The next day, boycotters held classes for the students on the steps of Overbrook.⁴⁹ Nine

⁴³ Zebra also weighed in on the class play issue in his statement, saying that “the real discrimination in this case was not against a Black girl, but against the entire student body of Carrick High – Black and White – and the community of Carrick, which have been denied their class play.” Frank Mazzei to Louis J. Kishkunas, March 2, 1971 (HHC). A copy of Zebra’s speech is attached to this letter.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴⁵ “Parents Renew School Protest,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, September 28, 1971, p. 2; “Carrick Area Parents Press for Boycott,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 30, 1971, p. 1; Urban League of Pittsburgh, “Black Percentage of the Students: Pittsburgh Public Schools,” 1967-1979.

⁴⁶ “Parents Hold Teach-In as Protest to Switch,” *South Hills Record*, October 5, 1971, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Terry Shields, “Carrick Citizens Continue Knoxville Protest,” *South Hills Record*, October 12, 1971, p. 1.

⁴⁸ “Parents Protest School Placing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 29, 1971, p. 17.

of the 15 members of the Board of Education met with the parents, but this exchange did not slow the protest's momentum.⁵⁰ According to the *South Hills Record*, the Board members "urged" parents to send their children back to the school.⁵¹ No members of the court-appointed Board lived in Carrick, which created distrust between the Carrick community and the Board.

By holding teach-ins and classes, parents continued their protest while protecting themselves from accusations that they were disrupting their children's education. On October 4, after over a week of boycotting, the students moved to the Carrick Literary and Social Association, a local bar and meeting place.⁵² The creation of this makeshift schoolhouse is similar to what parents of John Morrow students did in 1967 to avoid going to Columbus Middle School. If the Board made feeder patterns that the parents did not like, they would educate their children their own way. Mike Dawida was a senior at the University of Pittsburgh at the time and became a teacher for the Carrick students, who included his younger brother. According to Dawida, many students "said they actually felt they got more educated by my little class for couple weeks" than they had in the Pittsburgh school system.⁵³

On the day that Dawida began his teaching stint, the Carrick parents' lawyer, Paul Kachulis, wrote to Acting Superintendent Olson with a list of about 100 "alleged incidents that occurred on Knoxville premises." These items ranged from "gum put in hair" to "harassed for money" to "girl molested by boy." No specific names or locations were attached to these incidents, which were marked only by a date.⁵⁴ Kachulis' letter painted a picture similar to Dawida's description of Knoxville:

⁴⁹ "Carrick Area Parents Press for Boycott," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 30, 1971, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Shields, "Carrick Citizens," p. 1.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² "Carrick's School Protest Class Gets Temporary Room," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 5, 1971, p. 1.

⁵³ Mike Dawida, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

⁵⁴ Paul G. Kachulis to Jerry C. Olson, October 4, 1971 (HHC).

Nearly every one of the kids had some kind of physical threat or bodily harm visited upon them at this school. So the problem with Knoxville is, it wasn't a safe school for anybody. But it was also kids who were in middle school who were a little less wise to the ways of the street going into a very tough inner city school and getting abused physically.⁵⁵

Jean Fink, who served on the Board of Education from 1976 to 2013 with one four-year absence, became involved with the Carrick Community Council during the Knoxville boycott. She remembers that Carrick students “were not welcome there.”⁵⁶ This side of the story focuses on student safety, with little or no mention of race.

Jack Palmer, Knoxville's principal from 1971 to 1973, had a different story to tell. Palmer, who was White, wrote a dissertation in 1974 in which he analyzed the relationship between Knoxville Junior High School and the Carrick community during the boycott. Palmer wrote that students from Concord had “a generalized fear that appeared to have no base in reality – except to the students.”⁵⁷ He argues that complaints by Carrick students about mistreatment were generally unfounded and cites vice-principal records of student referrals that document just five cases of mild altercations, such as shoving or slapping. Palmer wrote that the “generalized fear” of Carrick students “could be a result of rumors they heard, an incident they knew about first-hand, or the fears of their parents. The writer is inclined to believe that they could possibly be the result of being exposed to a different cultural setting for the first time and not knowing how to relate to it.”⁵⁸

The parents' decision to boycott came from the related factors of racial prejudice, a strong desire to keep children in their community, and fear. Carol Anthony, who has lived in

⁵⁵ Mike Dawida, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

⁵⁶ Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

⁵⁸ Palmer, “School-Community Conflict,” p. 72.

Overbrook for the past 45 years, picketed with boycotting parents after reading about their cause in the *South Hills Record*. Speaking of the parents' motivations to boycott, Anthony said:

Well, I think it was two-fold. First of all, most of the schools in this area—in Carrick and Overbrook School—were predominantly White. And to send your child to an unfamiliar school with mixed races was a problem for some people. And like I said before, though, the other reason is that people just didn't want to see their child having to be put on a bus and taken to a different area.⁵⁹

The “different cultural setting” and “different area” that students were entering were “unfamiliar” because this was the first time that Carrick students had Black classmates and were going to school outside their neighborhood.

Students' fears of this new encounter, as well as their status as newcomers, contributed to both the incidents they experienced and their strong reaction to these events. A week after the boycott began, a parent from Beltzhoover said, “The Carrick people tend to be cloistered in their own community. When they came here, the other students tended to test them to see how they would react.”⁶⁰ Palmer commented that physical altercations, like the ones Carrick students experienced, were common for students transitioning from elementary to middle school.⁶¹ The Carrick parents' lawyer, Kachulis, included in his list of infractions some incidents common to middle school, such as fights and demands for lunch money, which were not reflective of “a very tough inner city school.” At a meeting on October 6, a group of parents of Knoxville students agreed that the curriculum of the school was positive and that Knoxville was not in a crisis.⁶² There was a heightened sensitivity to these common altercations for Carrick parents who were, for the first time, sending their children outside their neighborhood to a predominantly Black school.

⁵⁹ Carol Anthony, interview with author, January 10, 2014.

⁶⁰ Douglas Smock, “Carrick Parents' Uprising Draws Knoxville Response,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 6, 1971, p. 21.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² A. Ronaldson (group leader), “Notes taken during Parent-Discussions,” October 6, 1971 (HHC).

Pittsburgh's main newspapers were critical of the boycott. Diane Perry of the *New Pittsburgh Courier* wrote that the boycotting White parents "ingrain in their children groundless prejudicial fears about Black folk."⁶³ The *Post-Gazette*, a White newspaper, published an editorial asserting that the parents should spend their energy supporting, not boycotting, their children's new school.⁶⁴ The *Pittsburgh Press*, also a White newspaper, stated that "the core of the problem seems to be racial mixing."⁶⁵ The *South Hills Record*, the White community newspaper, reiterated that despite media coverage, the Carrick group "wanted to make certain that this is not any sort of racial protest but rather a move to safeguard the health and well-being of their children."⁶⁶ The Carrick parents did not want the press and other Pittsburghers to view their attempt to hold on to their neighborhood schools as an act of racism. By reporting on the racial motivations and implications of the boycott, the Black and White media provided a different narrative than the parents' statements about student safety.

Meanwhile, the parents of the Concord Elementary School students assigned to Knoxville Junior High School took their case to court. They requested an injunction from the Common Pleas Court against the Board of Education with the goal of having the Concord students attend Overbrook School rather than Knoxville. To support the ongoing boycott, the Carrick Community Council also created a mailbox, telephone line, 12-person telephone committee, and thousands of leaflets.⁶⁷ A CCC meeting a week before the first day in court had drawn over 300 people from Carrick and surrounding communities, including the nearby suburbs of Bethel Park and Pleasant Hills. The suburbs had not been included in any of Pittsburgh's desegregation plans. While the spotlight was on Carrick during the Knoxville boycott, an even stronger

⁶³ Diane Perry, "Handful of Whites Block School Busing," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, October 23, 1971, p. 9.

⁶⁴ *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 2, 1971, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Palmer, "School-Community Conflict," p. 83.

⁶⁶ "Court Ruling Favors Carrick Citizens...Temporarily," *South Hills Record*, November 2, 1971, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Palmer, "School-Community Conflict," p. 77.

backlash from suburban Whites likely would have occurred if there had been a desegregation plan that included both the city and suburbs. But Carrick was not part of Pittsburgh's business or civic elite and, in the early 1970s, had no power on the Board of Education to divert desegregation to other neighborhoods.

Throughout the hearing, the parents and their lawyer, Paul Kachulis, focused their argument on student safety. Kachulis avoided "any mention of race or the part it might play in this instance," according to Palmer, who testified as Knoxville's principal.⁶⁸ On October 19, over 200 Carrick residents attended the opening day of the trial as others picketed outside the courtroom. Students and parents testified about the children's state of fear at Knoxville. One girl said that other students threw food at her and that it was "so noisy in classrooms that I couldn't think." The most striking testimony was from a girl who told a story of classmates trying to force her to use a sanitary napkin and a boy whose head was split open after another student pushed him into a table.⁶⁹ A White parent standing outside had a different perspective, saying, "Why don't they get to the real issue—that I don't want my child bused."⁷⁰ If the parents had focused their argument on a dislike of having children "bused," though, the school district would have countered that "busing" was necessary to meet the PHRC's desegregation requirements. This issue of having children "bused" to neighborhoods outside their own also could have made the role of race more central to the court case.

In *Zebra et al. v. School District of the City of Pittsburgh*, Judge Charles McCarthy granted a temporary injunction to the parents on October 26. This ruling required the Board of Education to assign the students who were part of the lawsuit to Overbrook or another nearby

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

⁶⁹ "Hearings begin on Knoxville Parent Protest," *South Hills Record*, October 26, 1971 p. 1.

⁷⁰ "200 Carrick Parents Jam Court Airing," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 20, 1971, p. 16.

school.⁷¹ The decision did not make requirements for future desegregation plans. The judge wrote in his ruling that he was pulling the children out of Knoxville “to prevent irreparable harm to these boys and girls of tender years who had been subjected to such conditions in and around school as shocks this court.”⁷² Kachulis’ painting of the boycott as not about race or desegregation but instead about student safety was crucial to the parents’ legal success. Judge McCarthy’s temporary injunction would stand until the Board ensured that students from Concord Elementary School would be safe at Knoxville.

After the decision, school officials decided to send the students who had boycotted Knoxville to two predominantly White schools. The Board of Education assigned 24 students to South Junior-Senior High School and 22 students to Prospect Junior High School.⁷³ A school official cautioned Superintendent Kishkunas against sending Carrick students to South because of racial incidents in the building at the high school.⁷⁴ But since the Board did not want to send middle school students to Overbrook, which had an elementary school and would not fit the 5-3-4 model, South and Prospect were the only feasible options. These two schools were, besides Knoxville, the only other middle school or junior high school options in the area of Pittsburgh south of the Monongahela River.

This change brought about more busing, though it was not for the purpose of desegregation. It took 20-45 minutes by bus to travel from Carrick to South and Prospect, both

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 85.

⁷² *Zebra et al. v. School District of Pittsburgh*, Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania Civil Division 433 (1972).

⁷³ There were 47 students who boycotted Knoxville, but the evidence I have says that only 46 students were sent to either South or Prospect. The 47th student may have moved or transferred to a parochial school. “Carrick Citizens Still Battling Busing,” *South Hills Record*, December 21, 1971, p 7.

⁷⁴ John M. Brewer letter to Louis J. Kishkunas, “Re-assignment of Children from Concord,” October 28, 1971 (HHC).

longer rides than the trip to Knoxville.⁷⁵ In 1971, South was 87% White and Prospect was 95% White.⁷⁶ If the Carrick parents' case had solely been about using "student safety" to mask racial prejudices, they would have been content with having their children go to these predominantly White schools. The parents did show some commitment to neighborhood schools – as opposed to simply White schools – by briefly extending their boycott to South and Prospect. Only two students from the boycotting group went to Prospect and one to South on the first day they were supposed to report.⁷⁷ The boycott of South and Prospect only lasted a few days, though, after which the parents relented and sent their students to school for the first time since September. If the Board had reassigned the Carrick students to a predominantly Black school, such as Fifth Avenue School in the Hill District, this boycott may not have ended.⁷⁸

Students, teachers, and school officials found Judge McCarthy's portrayal of Knoxville to be unfounded and unsettling. Palmer wrote that Black and White Knoxville students' "general reaction was that 'we are not bad.'"⁷⁹ Superintendent Kishkunas said after the ruling that school officials believed they had done what they could to make Knoxville safe for all its students.⁸⁰ At the request of Knoxville teachers, the president of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, Al Fondy, put out a news release supporting the Knoxville staff. Fondy said, "Knoxville teachers feel sincerely concerned and let down that the impression has been created, and augmented by Judge McCarthy's temporary action, that their school is somehow inferior to any other city

⁷⁵ Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013; Elmo C. Callaway letter to Concord School parents, October 29, 1971 (HHC). This letter contains the bus schedule from Carrick to South and Prospect.

⁷⁶ Urban League of Pittsburgh, "Black Percentage of the Students: Pittsburgh Public Schools," 1967-1979.

⁷⁷ Barbara Squires to John Brewer, Nore DiNardo, and Alberta Williams, November 2, 1971, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁸ *The Pittsburgh Press* reported the day after McCarthy's ruling that given the open space at Fifth Avenue, superintendent Louis Kishkunas "did not rule" it out when questioned. David Nilsson, "Carrick Bus Foes Win; Schools to Fight Transfers," *The Pittsburgh Press*, October 27, 1971, p. 2.

⁷⁹ Palmer, "School-Community Conflict," p. 87.

⁸⁰ David Nilsson, "Carrick Bus Foes Win; Schools to Fight Transfers," *The Pittsburgh Press*, October 27, 1971, p. 2.

school.” The Knoxville faculty wrote to Judge McCarthy inviting him to visit the school to determine its safety, and Kishkunas sent a letter to the teachers expressing his support.⁸¹

Throughout the redistricting process, Kishkunas and his administration were pressured from one direction by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and from the other side by resistant parents. Several days after Judge McCarthy’s decision, Pittsburgh Public Schools and PHRC officials attended a hearing to discuss the issues the district was having with school “reorganization,” which in this context meant desegregation. Homer Floyd, the executive director of the PHRC, said that all-Black and all-White schools are unequal and that the school district must address racial imbalance by desegregating. Kishkunas explained that segregation in Pittsburgh was a complex issue. He said, “In summary, the efforts for integration must be conducted on many fronts—employment and housing being vital considerations.”⁸² Along this line of thinking, combating racism in employment and housing could have created more integrated neighborhoods and lightened the Board of Education’s responsibility to desegregate the schools.

As Kishkunas made his comments about segregation, an estimated 300 Whites opposed to busing for desegregation listened in the audience or picketed outside. One person who spoke to officials was the president of Parents Who Care, the organization that in 1969 had protested against the creation of Arsenal Middle School.⁸³ While Kishkunas thought that busing was necessary for desegregation, these White parents did not want desegregation plans to use their children to address an issue that, as Kishkunas said, was more than a school problem. The commitment of many White parents to the neighborhood school concept was in conflict with

⁸¹ Faculty of Knoxville Junior High School to Charles McCarthy, October 28, 1971 (HHC); Louis J. Kishkunas to The Faculty (Knoxville Junior High School), November 4, 1971 (HHC); “Knoxville: The Teachers’ Side,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 6, 1971, p. 8.

⁸² “State Hearing Becomes Anti-Bus Rally,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 6, 1971, p. 1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

school desegregation, though. Desegregated schools in Pittsburgh could not, for the most part, be neighborhood schools.

The state's capital was the next destination for the *Zebra* case after the Board of Education filed an appeal with the Commonwealth Court in Harrisburg in December of 1971.⁸⁴ This court was higher than the Common Pleas Court but below the state Supreme Court. In early March of 1972, the Commonwealth Court ruled to make Judge McCarthy's preliminary injunction into a permanent one. A permanent injunction was significant because it was a ruling used only "where exceptional circumstances compel the granting to prevent irreparable injury and where the rights of the parties are entirely clear."⁸⁵ The seven judges ruling on the case had a close vote, 4-3, in favor of the parents. Judge Glenn Mencer wrote the majority opinion and concluded that Knoxville was unsafe and that its staff did not do a good job of addressing discipline problems. The Carrick parents succeeded in convincing Judge Mencer, as they had with Judge McCarthy, that the case was about safety and not race. Judge Mencer wrote in the decision that race was not relevant to the case because the parents "never objected to attending Knoxville on any racial basis." In his dissenting opinion, Judge Theodore Rodgers argued that the testimony that 11 children gave about Knoxville did not prove it to be an unsafe school. The argument that Carrick children had a right to attend Overbrook was also invalid, he argued, because the only school that students had a right to attend was the school assigned to them by the Board of Education.⁸⁶

With a favorable ruling by the Common Pleas Court that was upheld by the Commonwealth Court, the parents from Carrick won the first round of the Knoxville boycott.

⁸⁴ Justin M. Johnson to Louis J. Kishkunas, December 14, 1971.

⁸⁵ *Zebra et al. v. School District of the City of Pittsburgh*, Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania, No. 1232 (1973), p. 287a (HHC).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 302a-319a.

The students from Carrick were now going to school even further away and were not going to Overbrook School, but they had gotten out of Knoxville. The ruling that the case did not have to do was race and that Knoxville was “unsafe” was a deciding factor in the Carrick group’s success. Attempts by Knoxville students, teachers, and administrators to show that the school was indeed safe and not creating “irreparable injury” had failed.

Concerned Parents of Beltzhoover

On the first day of school in 1971, the majority of Black students from Beltzhoover assigned to Boggs Avenue Elementary School stayed home to boycott the reorganization plan. The Concerned Parents of Beltzhoover had already filed an injunction to the Common Pleas Court against the plan on September 1, before the school year began.⁸⁷ Their chief complaint was against one-way busing; the plan sent no White students from Boggs Avenue to Beltzhoover Elementary School, even though Boggs Avenue was an overcrowded school and Beltzhoover had extra room.⁸⁸ This transfer of Black students to Boggs Avenue catered to White parents who would not want to send their children to school in a Black neighborhood. Beltzhoover parents also disliked that Boggs Avenue was farther away than the neighborhood elementary school.⁸⁹ This protest was similar to the Knoxville boycott in that both groups of parents wanted their children to remain in neighborhood schools. The two groups stated different reasons for protesting, though, because the Beltzhoover parents made race and desegregation explicit parts of their argument.

⁸⁷ “Officials Admit Plan a ‘Booboo:’ Only 24 Pupils Attend First Day,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 11, 1971, p. 1.

⁸⁸ In the town of Aliquippa, located northwest of Pittsburgh along the Ohio River, the Black Parents for Equal Desegregation also organized a boycott against one-way busing when schools opened in 1971. “Aliquippa Schools Boycotted,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 4, 1971, p. 1.

⁸⁹ “School Negotiations Bog Down, Beltzhoover Parents Sue Board,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 4, 1971, p. 1.

Beltzhoover parents did not continue their boycott through September and instead sent their children to Boggs Avenue “under protest” while bringing their case to court.⁹⁰ The Pittsburgh Public Schools filed a motion to the Common Pleas Court to dismiss the Beltzhoover parents’ injunction. The school district’s attorney, Bernard Markovitz, claimed that the reorganization plan did not place the burden of desegregation on Black families because it also made students at White schools—like Concord Elementary School—transfer to predominantly Black schools.⁹¹ The case went on, though, and on November 10 and 11, Judge Warren Watson held hearings in which students and parents testified. Parents and their lawyer, Mark Senick, made their case against one-way busing and the overcrowding at Boggs Avenue. Several Black students spoke of experiences of racial harassment from classmates and unfair punishment from teachers.⁹² Judge Watson ruled that students were not suffering permanent harm at their new school, allowing the district to continue sending students from Beltzhoover to Boggs Avenue.

In just over two weeks, the Common Pleas Court released two different opinions on two seemingly similar cases by interpreting “safety” at school in different ways. Judge McCarthy considered Knoxville to be full of “danger and confusion.”⁹³ The list of dozens of altercations that the Carrick parents’ lawyer Kishkunas provided, as well as testimony from students, made an impression on Judge McCarthy. Carrick parents won by arguing that they gave Knoxville a fair chance, but the school was a hostile environment for their children. Judge Watson, on the other hand, did not rule that testimony from Beltzhoover students about racial harassment

⁹⁰ On the first day of the 1971-1972 school year, 24 Black students from Beltzhoover went to Boggs Avenue. On the second day, 30 students were in school. There were originally over 80 students assigned from Beltzhoover to Boggs Avenue, but the Board allowed six sixth graders to remain at Beltzhoover. “Officials Admit Plan a ‘Boo-boo’ Only 24 Pupils Attend First Day,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 11, 1971, p. 1; “Three Judge Court to Hear School Reorganization Suit,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, October 2, 1971, p. 1.

⁹¹ “Three Judge Court to Hear School Reorganization Suit,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, October 2, 1971, p. 1.

⁹² “Black Beltzhoover Child Tells Judge of Busing Woes,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 10, 1971, p. 23; “Beltzhoover Pupils Heard in School Suit,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 10, 1971, p. 39.

⁹³ *Zebra et al. v. School District of Pittsburgh*, Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania Civil Division 433 (1972).

showed that Boggs Avenue was an “unsafe” school. If Beltzhoover parents had waited a few weeks into the school year before going to court and had framed their case around student safety, perhaps the results would have been different.

The Beltzhoover case was about more than school safety, though, since it directly attacked the reorganization plan. After Judge McCarthy’s ruling in the Knoxville case, the Beltzhoover parents’ focus on one-way busing looked even stronger. Senick, the Beltzhoover parents’ lawyer, argued that over 400 Black students and just 69 White students were bused to new schools for the purpose of desegregation in the 1971 redistricting plan.⁹⁴ The two-day hearing on November 9 and November 10 in which Senick made his arguments and Judge Watson heard testimony from Beltzhoover students came after Judge McCarthy’s October 26 ruling.⁹⁵ After Judge McCarthy granted the temporary injunction, the school district sent 47 of the 69 White students bused under the original reorganization plan to predominantly White schools. There were thus only 22 White students who actually attended predominantly Black schools under the reorganization plan when Judge Watson was hearing testimony in the Beltzhoover case. The argument against one-way busing, however, was not enough for the Beltzhoover parents to win in court. The difference in the outcomes of the Knoxville and Beltzhoover cases led *New Pittsburgh Courier* writer Diane Perry to call them “conflicting rulings.”⁹⁶

Knoxville Boycott: Round 2

As the 1971-1972 school year neared its end, Pittsburgh’s movement against desegregation was gaining steam. An anti-busing boycott held on April 18 contributed to over

⁹⁴ “Injunction Denied Black Parents,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 20, 1971, p. 1.

⁹⁵ “Black Beltzhoover Child Tells Judge of Busing Woes,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 10, 1971, p. 23; “Injunction Denied Black Parents,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 20, 1971, p. 1.

⁹⁶ Diane Perry, “Notes from an Editor’s Notebook,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 11, 1971, p. 9.

15,000 more students being absent than on an average day.⁹⁷ The South Hills was one of the highest areas of absenteeism; reports gave different figures, but between 70 and 89 percent of South Hills students were out of school.⁹⁸ On this day, anti-busing protesters marched to the Board of Education meeting. Leading the Citizens Against Busing group was Bouie Haden, a Black activist who had produced a Black Power newspaper, *The Thrust*, in the late 1960s. Many White parents were in this group of several hundred, some of whom held signs reading “Save Neighborhood Schools” and “Our Children Are Not Chess Pieces.”⁹⁹ Haden and these White parents seem unlikely political allies at first glance, but Black Power support of community control was partially consistent with the neighborhood schools mantra.¹⁰⁰

White communities that wanted neighborhood schools frequently argued that the Board and PHRC were using children as “chess pieces” to further their liberal agendas. In 1972, the Reorganization Advisory Committee (RAC), which proposed desegregation plans to the Board, considered recommending that the Board bus students between the predominantly White South Hills and the predominantly Black Hill District. Jean Fink was a member of the RAC at the time and mounted a dissent to this feeder pattern. Fink said that other RAC members were “trying to force their idea of social justice on 70,000 children and the parents of those children.”¹⁰¹ “Force”

⁹⁷ Sources were inconsistent about the precise number. “School Boycott Called Big Success,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 19, 1972, p. 23 cites 16,700 extra students were out of school. Palmer, “School-Community Conflict,” p. 98 puts the number at “around 24,000.” It was a sunny day and there was an all-time high attendance at the Pittsburgh Pirates’ home opener, but that could only account for part of the absentee rate. The Pirates, who had won the World Series in 1971, had an attendance of 47,489 on April 18. Alvin Rosensweet, “Game Draws ‘Excused’ Kids,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 19, 1972, p. 1.

⁹⁸ For the 70% figure, see “School Boycott Called Big Success,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, p. 23. For the 89% figure, see Joseph Barsotti, “700 School Bus Foes Confront City Board at Forum,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 19, 1972.

⁹⁹ Joseph Barsotti, “700 School Bus Foes,” p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Community control pushed for Black parents’ control of curriculum as well as the hiring and firing of personnel. It was part of an effort to gain more Black teachers, Black administrators, and Black studies courses in schools with predominantly Black children. White parents who wanted neighborhood schools did not want Black Power, but what both groups shared was the goal of sending students to schools in their own communities.

¹⁰¹ “Increased-Busing Plan Submitted to City Schools,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, October 24, 1972, p. 2.

was a key word in this statement. Opponents of the Board's use of busing for desegregation often called it "forced busing," a process to which they had never agreed.

The Carrick parents took the *Zebra* case back to the Common Pleas Court, this time asking for a permanent injunction. During the testimony in May of 1972, Judge Ralph Smith had ruled that race was not a factor in the case.¹⁰² This assertion, like Judge Mencer's ruling in March, gave the parents a victory in the battle of portraying their issue with Knoxville as one of school safety rather than race. In the summer of 1972, the Board of Education retained the feeder pattern that sent students from Concord Elementary School to Knoxville Junior High School. On September 14, 1972, Judge Smith ruled in favor of the parents, agreeing with the previous rulings that Knoxville was unsafe.¹⁰³ Smith, who had never visited Knoxville, called it "one of the most dangerous schools" in Pittsburgh.¹⁰⁴ Principal Palmer, Superintendent Kishkunas, and Board president Gladys McNairy all spoke out against Smith's decision while wearing "Knoxville is Together" pins. Kishkunas and Palmer invited Smith and anyone interested in coming to Knoxville to see the school for themselves.

Members of the White and Black press took them up on this offer. Roy McHugh, a White reporter from *The Pittsburgh Press*, who expected the school to be a warzone like "Quang Tri," was instead "taken aback at the tranquility." One teacher he interviewed said that a court case about "assault" and "extortion" was ludicrous because fights at Knoxville were no different than typical middle school fights.¹⁰⁵ The *New Pittsburgh Courier* showed Knoxville as a calm environment with a front-page photograph of Black and White students working

¹⁰² "Race Not Issue in Busing Suit, Judge Says," *The Pittsburgh Press*, May 18, 1972, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Regis Stefanik, "Court Blocks Student Shift to Knoxville," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 15, 1972, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ "The Injudicious Judge Smith," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 16, 1972, p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Roy McHugh, "Knoxville School is Quiet Eye in Angry Racial Hurricane," *The Pittsburgh Press*, September 21, 1972.

“harmoniously,” as the caption put it.¹⁰⁶ Knoxville’s teachers and administrators maintained that the school was never “dangerous,” and throughout the 1971-1972 school year they worked to further improve conditions. Staff members participated in conflict workshops in November of 1971, and 300 students went on camping outings that the school sponsored to improve student relations.¹⁰⁷ On May 18, 1972, the last day Judge Smith heard testimony, hundreds of Black and White students marched around the school building to show that they were united in creating a more positive image of the school.¹⁰⁸ Even if claims that Knoxville was unsafe were true in September of 1971, the counterpoints made by students, teachers, school administrators, and PPS officials show that the school was indeed safe during the fall of 1972. But these efforts could not dislodge the notion that Knoxville was “one of the most dangerous schools.”

Many parents of Carrick children a year younger than the original boycotting students had heard the stories and rumors about Knoxville and wanted to stay away from the school. Judge McCarthy’s injunction applied only to the 47 original boycotters. Other parents of students who had attended Concord Elementary School wanted their children to move on to Overbrook School rather than Knoxville, but the Board did not accept the requests that these parents sent during the summer of 1972.¹⁰⁹ Parents questioned why they needed to prove that Knoxville was unsafe for the younger group of Concord students when the courts had already ruled that it was unsafe for the older children.

Another boycott ensued. On September 7, 1972, only 17 of the 41 students assigned from Concord to Knoxville were in attendance, and parents ran their own classes instead. On

¹⁰⁶ “School Heads Rebuke Knoxville Verdict, Undermine New Plans,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 23, 1972, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Nilsson, “Kishkunas Invites Full Probe,” p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ David Nilsson, “Students Protest Knoxville Suit,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, May 18, 1972, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ One student from Concord was allowed to attend Overbrook due to a medical condition. Justin M. Johnson to Alfred Fascetti, June 12, 1972.

Friday, September 15, the parents met with Judge Ralph Smith to present their case.¹¹⁰ Smith ruled that the Board could not continue busing 11 students who were younger siblings of some of the original 47 children.¹¹¹ Parents of the other students still assigned to Knoxville continued their protest, and parents of 84 students from Carrick and the neighboring community of Overbrook went to Judge Smith asking to be included in the original injunction. Smith did not rule on their case until late August of 1973, though, because he wanted to wait for an appeal the Board of Education had filed to a higher court to be settled.

In the meantime, the parents found alternative ways of educating their children. Some parents sent their children to Catholic schools.¹¹² Some tried home schooling, while others used a \$7 per hour service at the South Hills Tutoring School. This service, though, was expensive for parents in Carrick and Overbrook.¹¹³ While many parents in Carrick did send their children to parochial school, the Pittsburgh Public Schools were the only option for those who could not afford private schools or a move to the suburbs.

The Board appealed Smith's ruling of a permanent injunction to the state Supreme Court, which ruled in the Board's favor. The court stated in its November 1972 decision that the Board did nothing illegal in transferring students from Concord to Knoxville. Since only 11 students in the original group of boycotters had testified, the court said that it was a stretch to apply the injunction to 47 students.¹¹⁴ This decision was largely symbolic, though, because the Board decided that disrupting the students' school year with a transfer was not worth it. The Carrick students still did not have to go to Knoxville.

¹¹⁰ "Carrick Parents Charge School Board Contempt," *South Hills Record*, September 12, 1972, p. 1.

¹¹¹ "Fight Over Knoxville School Far from Over," *South Hills Record*, September 19, 1972, p. 1.

¹¹² "Carrick Student Shift Bar is Permanent," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 29, 1973, p. 17.

¹¹³ "It's Off to School in the Dining Room," *South Hills Record*, January 30, 1973; Palmer, "School-Community Conflict," p. 116.

¹¹⁴ "High Court Lifts Knoxville Jr. High Transfers Ban," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 18, 1972, p. 1.

During the same month, the Board passed a resolution that showed its desire to avoid another Knoxville debacle. On November 21, John Conley, a Black Board member from Homewood, proposed an “anti-busing resolution.” It stated: “It is the position of this board of directors that we do not endorse the concept of forced busing for racial balance purposes. We direct the staff not to include the element of forced busing solely for racial purposes in its reorganization plan.” The motion passed by a 7-3 vote, with two Black and five White members voting for it and three White members voting against it.¹¹⁵ David Brownlee was a White Board member who voted against the measure and remembers that Conley believed desegregating the whole district was not feasible and instead wanted more Black educators and local control.¹¹⁶ Brownlee recalls Conley saying, “There just weren’t enough little White faces to go around” in the district and would be even fewer if the Board tried to desegregate every school.¹¹⁷ The Board did not stop using “forced busing for racial balance purposes,” for at the time this method was the only one in the district’s arsenal that could create a significant amount of desegregation. This resolution did show that the Board in late 1972 did not have the political will to desegregate the entire district, which would have required extensive busing. Organized resistance to desegregation contributed to this climate in the boardroom, for even if the Board had passed a citywide desegregation plan in the early 1970s, boycotts and protests may have prevented the district from carrying out that plan.

¹¹⁵ One member abstained and three were absent. The 15-member Board had only 14 members at this time because one member had recently stepped down. Palmer, “School-Community Conflict,” p. 119.

¹¹⁶ David Brownlee, interview with author, January 30, 2014. Moe Coleman, who also was on the appointed Board with Conley, said that Conley was part of “a sort of Black Power movement” that did not favor integration. Moe Coleman, interview with author, October 21, 2013.

¹¹⁷ David Brownlee, interview with author, January 30, 2014.

City and Suburbs

To get a sense of what different communities thought about busing for desegregation, the Board held public forums in mid-November of 1972. In South Hills, the discussion took place at Carrick High School, where three Board members fielded questions. The Greenfield Community Council sent representatives to this meeting, and they told the Board members that if the Board became an elected body, current members would lose votes unless they stopped using busing for desegregation. Mayor Carl M. Patrick of Mt. Oliver showed a petition signed by over 1,600 residents who wanted to keep Mt. Oliver School open as a neighborhood school.¹¹⁸ When someone complained about overcrowding at Carrick High School, Board member Samuel Cornell cautioned against this argument because schools in the Hill District were not overcrowded.¹¹⁹ The Hill District was, by the early 1970s, a Black community comprised of a middle-class section and several low-income sections. If parents in Carrick opposed having their children go to Knoxville, they almost certainly would have opposed having their children go to school in the Hill District because of its demographics and distance.

Across the Monongahela River, in the neighborhood of Oakland, another discussion about busing for desegregation was taking place at Frick School. In attendance was Mayor Pete Flaherty, who was White and had grown up on the North Side, where he had attended Allegheny High School. Flaherty was the first Mayor to go to a Board hearing, and this was the second one he was attending. He said that he had Black neighbors and classmates growing up and that “it bothers me to hear people in intellectual circles” say that those opposed to busing for desegregation were “bigots.” Flaherty supported neighborhood schools and recommended that the Board ignore the PHRC order to desegregate. He said, echoing an argument familiar in

¹¹⁸ Mt. Oliver was an independent borough but was part of the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

¹¹⁹ “Parents Blast Busing at Carrick High School Hearing,” *South Hills Record*, November 21, 1972.

Carrick, that people bought their homes in a neighborhood partly because they wanted their children to attend school in that neighborhood.¹²⁰ This comment was similar to one that President Richard Nixon made in August of 1972 when he said that the neighborhood school “is important to the youngsters of a community and it strengthens the neighborhood as well.”¹²¹

Alma Fox, vice president of Pittsburgh’s NAACP chapter and president of Black Parents of Taylor Allderdice, called out Flaherty and others for using racial code words. Fox said, “What we are really talking about is race, and all the cries of forced busing arise from the unwillingness to deal with the problems of racial segregation.”¹²² The anti-busing movement in Pittsburgh may not have viewed *de facto* segregation as a problem. Many White parents opposed to busing for desegregation thought that it was certainly not up to their children, and perhaps not up to a school district, to address segregation. Robert Zebra, the leader of the Knoxville boycott, said in 1972, “The people of Carrick, we’re not the smartest people in the world. We don’t know the ultimate solution to this. All we know is our kids are getting harmed and they’re not getting an education.”¹²³ Fox’s comment suggests that the movement against desegregation, by focusing on White children “getting harmed,” did nothing to improve the school system that, because of separate and unequal conditions, was harming Black children.

Racial prejudice was often behind “the cries of forced busing.” In Carrick, racial prejudice could be implicit and, in the words of Carol Anthony, “swept under the rug,” but it came to the surface in the Knoxville boycott.¹²⁴ A parent of a Knoxville student who went to Carrick during the summer of 1971 to talk with parents there about the reorganization plan wrote

¹²⁰ Douglas Smock, “School Busing Ripped by Flaherty, Foerster,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 21, 1972, p. 1.

¹²¹ Richard Nixon, “Statement about Pending Legislation on School Busing,” August 24, 1972, online by John and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3540>.

¹²² David Nilsson, “Frick Meeting Told Two Sides,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 21, 1972, p. 2.

¹²³ “Fight Over Knoxville School Far From Over,” *South Hills Record*, September 19, 1972.

¹²⁴ Carol Anthony, interview with author, January 10, 2014.

in the *New Pittsburgh Courier* that based on those discussions, “it was quite obvious that race was an insurmountable issue with those parents.”¹²⁵ Reporters from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* interviewed six students from Carrick who remained at Knoxville during the 1971-1972 school year. These students “said that race was the only issue.” The incidents that students from Carrick reported were exaggerated, and some had never happened, according to this group of students. One student who stayed at Knoxville moved out of Carrick because she was not welcomed there after standing up for the school.¹²⁶ Race, rather than the “danger” of Knoxville, was a root cause of what Palmer, the principal, called the Carrick students’ “generalized fear.”

The neighborhood schools ideology was more complicated, however, than White parents defending White children’s “right” to go to White schools in White neighborhoods. Jean Fink explains the philosophy of education that was widespread among those participating in the Knoxville boycott:

It was made out to be a racial issue. It was not a racial issue. It was simply, you know, you lived in a community where you wanted your family to be raised. This is where you shop. This is where you went to church. This is where you went to school. This was the community where you buy your home and plan to raise your family. Then the state comes along and says, oh, excuse us, you can’t do that. You have to go over here. We didn’t like that.¹²⁷

A foreign power like the PHRC or the Board of Education may have had legal powers, but these had little value in communities opposed to busing for desegregation. Busing felt so “forced” to people in Carrick because politicians in Harrisburg, unelected Board members, and other “intellectuals” were making decisions for them. The Knoxville boycott was a racial issue, but it was not only a racial issue because it also dealt with class and political power. Students in wealthy White neighborhoods such as Point Breeze and Squirrel Hill, for instance, had not been

¹²⁵ Constance Wellons, “Parent Defends Knoxville Jr. Hi,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 3, 1972, p. 8.

¹²⁶ Douglas Smock, “Knoxville Withdrawal Blamed on Racial Bias,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 3, 1972, p. 1.

¹²⁷ Jean Fink, interview, December 23, 2013.

sent to predominantly Black schools for desegregation purposes. The desegregation order from the state, along with the belief of Carrick residents that the Board was unfairly targeting them, contributed to the Carrick parents' disdain of the reorganization plan.

The suburbs were watching these events unfold but were unaffected. Zebra said in 1972 that "if we don't stop this forced busing for integration in Pittsburgh, watch what happens in the boroughs."¹²⁸ Pittsburgh is part of Allegheny County, which was over 90% White in 1970. 68% of Allegheny County residents lived outside the city of Pittsburgh.¹²⁹ Baldwin and Brentwood were two suburbs that bordered Carrick but had their own school districts. The exclusion of the suburbs from redistricting likely contributed to the feeling of residents in Carrick that the Board was singling them out. Superintendent Kishkunas discussed "White flight," the movement of Whites from the city to the suburbs, in his testimony to the state House of Representatives in May of 1969. He said, "To be even more specific, if we are to achieve school integration that will work in large urban areas like Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, then the Commonwealth must devise the policies and the procedures by which these communities can draw upon the total population resources of a metropolitan area."¹³⁰ If the city's desegregation plans drew from suburban school districts, which were wealthier and whiter than the city, the Pittsburgh Public Schools would have increased its tax revenue while addressing John Conley's issue of there not being "enough little White faces to go around." Though Superintendent Kishkunas supported a desegregation plan that would have included the suburbs, the Board did not propose such measures.

¹²⁸ "Fight Over Knoxville School Far From Over," *South Hills Record*, September 19, 1972.

¹²⁹ 1970 Census of Population, "General Population Characteristics: Pennsylvania," <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/00496492v1p40s1ch3.pdf>.

¹³⁰ Louis J. Kishkunas, "Testimony by the Pittsburgh Public School District to the House of Representatives Basic Education Subcommittee, Pennsylvania General Assembly," Harrisburg, May 7-8, 1969 (HHC, Maxine Aaron Papers, Box 9).

New Goals

As John Wilds, who served on the Board from 1972 to 1976, said, “Certain neighborhoods went to the mat to try to preserve schools in their neighborhoods.”¹³¹ Carrick was one such community, and it was not until the start of the 1973-1974 school year that Carrick parents ended their fight. Zebra said that Knoxville Junior High School had become a “safe” school, a conclusion that, according to Principal Palmer, he made despite the fact that neither he nor any boycotting parents had visited Knoxville during the previous school year.¹³² The students who originally boycotted Knoxville were in ninth grade and moving on to Carrick High School in the fall of 1971, and perhaps the community was tired of protesting. At the end of the two years, the Carrick parents had defeated the Board in court and had avoided sending their children to Knoxville. They had convinced Judge McCarthy, Judge Mencer, and Judge Smith that race was not a factor in the case. The parents fell short, though, of achieving their goal of getting their students into a neighborhood school. The original 47 students had an interrupted year with transfers to South Junior-Senior High School or Prospect Junior High School in November of 1971, and dozens of students missed all of the 1972-1973 school year. The Board’s attempt at a mild desegregation plan in 1971 took a hit from the boycott, for the Carrick parents showed that a desegregation plan in the Pittsburgh Public Schools could not feature only “busing” because of the resistance it would meet.

When Zebra resigned as president of the Carrick Community Council in the summer of 1973, he passed the torch to a new leader who would advocate against busing for desegregation and for neighborhood schools for the next three decades. Jean Fink took over as president of the CCC two years after she attended its first meeting after seeing signs in neighborhood shops.

¹³¹ John Wilds, interview with author, October 29, 2013.

¹³² Palmer, “School-Community Conflict,” p. 124.

Fink had already made her mark as an activist when she joined arms with other parents in the middle of Route 51 to block traffic and signal to the Board that it needed to make walking conditions safer for children at Overbrook School.¹³³ As president of the CCC, she tackled another Knoxville redistricting situation in 1974 by meeting with Jerry Olson, the new Superintendent, about the policy of sending Carrick students to Knoxville and not Carrick High School for ninth grade. Fink said of this school feeder pattern, “What it boils down to is that somebody out there hates Carrick!”¹³⁴ Although Carrick High School was overcrowded, the Board of Education changed this attendance pattern for the 1974-1975 school year by sending 9th grade students from Carrick to Carrick High School.¹³⁵

One alternative to combating the Board that Fink considered was to make a clean break from the city of Pittsburgh. In early 1974, 50 years after Carrick had joined the city, Fink started talking about “secession.” She argued that the city fell short in providing a variety of services, from quality education to a new swimming pool. To become a borough again, Carrick would need to send a petition with signatures from 20 percent of Carrick residents to City Council and would likely have to take the issue to court.¹³⁶ The most plausible method would have been for another borough to annex Carrick. This idea never took hold, and many business leaders in the community disagreed with it.¹³⁷ Some people who would have agreed to secession were city employees who needed to live in the city to keep their jobs.¹³⁸ Although Carrick did not become independent, secession talks symbolized how people in Carrick were disgruntled with the city in general and the Board of Education in particular.

¹³³ Bill Zlatos, “Longtime Director on Pittsburgh Public Schools Board Bids Farewell,” *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, November 26, 2013; Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

¹³⁴ “Carrick Community Council Proposes Anti-Busing Strategy,” *South Hills Record*, February 19, 1974, p. 1.

¹³⁵ “Knoxville Busing Out, Reorganization In,” *South Hills Record*, March 19, 1974.

¹³⁶ David Nilsson, “Disgruntled Carrick Residents Talking ‘Secession,’” *The Pittsburgh Press*, March 18, 1974, p. 2; Nita Fandray, “Carrick Folks Want to Secede from City,” March 19, 1974, p. 1.

¹³⁷ “Carrick Businessmen Discuss Local Issues,” *South Hills Record*, April 2, 1974, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Tom Barnes, “In Brookline, Angry Citizens Talk Secession,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 13, 1996, p. B2.

Despite its success in court, the Carrick parents' boycott had only an indirect effect on the Board of Education. The boycott of Knoxville may have informed John Conley's anti-busing resolution in November of 1972, but the Carrick parents had little political power in the school district because no Board members were from Carrick. In the mid-1970s, the CCC and other leaders opposed to busing for desegregation formed a new phase of their opposition by advocating for an elected Board of Education.

Chapter 3: School Board Politics

Elected to Appointed

From 1855 until 1911, an elected school board governed the school district in Pittsburgh.¹ As the city annexed areas in the East End and South Side, Pittsburgh's population and the number of sub-districts in its school system increased.² By the early 1900s, there were 61 sub-districts that hired staff, built and equipped schools, and distributed local school taxes. The sub-districts were independent of one another, and there were also two central boards that ran the high schools, paid salaries, and bought supplies.³ Corruption was a problem in the sub-districts, as demonstrated by the Voters' League of Pittsburgh in a 1911 report, "Concerning the Public School System." The report stated that school picnics, illegally funded with school money, "have been nothing more than drunken orgies for the directors and their dissolute and disreputable friends." Expenses filed under "Other Purposes," the hiring of unqualified teachers, and directors who claimed a percentage of contractor's payments also caught the eye of the Voters' League.⁴

The Voters' League joined with bank presidents and corporate officials to support a bill that passed the Pennsylvania legislature in 1911 and made the board appointed rather than elected.⁵ This legislation, the School Code of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, was a Progressive Era change that created a fifteen-person Board of Public Education and a central

¹ This central Board took the place of a ward system.

² Paul Francis Black, "A Historical Study of the Structures and Major Functions of the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1972), pp. 47, 55.

³ "School Board Setup Dates from 1911," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 7, 1969, p. 6.

⁴ A. Leo Weil, "Concerning the Public School System," 1911, cited in Ralph Lemuel Hill, "A View from the Hill: A Study of Experiences and Attitudes (1900-1973)," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1973), pp. 188-192; Black, "A Historical Study," p. 78.

⁵ This bill also changed City Council into an elected body (it was formerly appointed). Michael P. Weber, *Don't Call Me Boss: David L. Lawrence, Pittsburgh's Renaissance Mayor* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), p. 16.

school district to replace the two central boards and 61 sub-districts. The appointed Board was responsible for creating and maintaining buildings as well as making decisions about policy and personnel.⁶ A committee of judges from the Common Pleas Court selected members to the Board. The judges, who were elected by voters in Allegheny County, typically appointed Board members who were community leaders or part of the city's business or civic elite.⁷ Each member of the appointed Board was meant to represent the entire school district, as opposed to the constituents of one sub-district.

Representation

For three decades, the appointed Board of Education was entirely White and thus was not representative of the whole school district. The first Black member to be appointed by the judges was Homer S. Brown, a legislator and civil rights activist, in 1943.⁸ Brown remained on the Board until 1950 and was replaced by Thomas E. Barton, who served until 1959 when he stepped down and was replaced by Richard F. Jones. Barton and Jones were both Black and, like Brown, were involved as board members or presidents of Pittsburgh's NAACP branch.⁹ When one Black member stepped down, the judges appointed another Black man to take his seat.

This system began changing in the mid-1960s. In 1965, Gladys McNairy became the first Black woman on the Board. Richard F. Jones was still on the Board, so McNairy's

⁶ Board of Public Education, "Board of Public Education, School District of Pittsburgh," Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh William R. Oliver Special Collection (Collection Guide), <http://www.carnegielibrary.org/locations/oliver/archivalfindingaids/PittsburghBoardofEducation.pdf>.

⁷ Serving on the Board was a volunteer position, and most Board members held full-time jobs. Marcella DeMarco, "Magnet Programs in the Pittsburgh Schools: Development to Implementation 1977 Through 1982" (University of Pittsburgh, 1983), 58.

⁸ As a state congressman, Brown challenged the racist hiring practices in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and in 1937 paved the way for the hiring of the first known Black teacher to teach in the district since 1881. In 1957, Brown also became the first Black person elected as a judge on the Common Pleas Court. Constance A. Cunningham, "Homer S. Brown: First Black Political Leader in Pittsburgh," *Journal of Negro History* 66 no. 4 (Winter, 1981-1982), pp. 306-8.

⁹ Diane Perry, "The Coming Crisis in Pittsburgh Schools: First of a Series," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 22, 1970, p. 1; "Atty. R. F. Jones on School Board," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 21, 1959, p. 1.

appointment marked the first time more than one Black member was on the Board at once.¹⁰ Still, two members out of 15, or 13%, was an underrepresentation of Black Pittsburghers, who made up 19% of the city's population and 37% of the public school population in 1965.¹¹ As the civil rights movement was gaining momentum nationally, Black leaders in Pittsburgh pressured the judges to appoint a Board more representative of the city's population.¹²

There was also criticism from Black individuals and organizations that the Blacks appointed to the Board were politically moderate and from middle-class or wealthy backgrounds. The majority of Black people in Pittsburgh were thus not represented on the Board. Bouie Haden's Black Power publication, *The Thrust*, blamed underrepresentation on the fact that the Common Pleas Court judges appointed Board members.¹³ At a Black Power meeting of 150 Black leaders in Pittsburgh in 1967, participants agreed on seven demands, including a legal change to create an elected Board.¹⁴ Having an elected Board would give Black people who were not part of the civic elite an opportunity to run. An elected Board would not necessarily lead to more Black representation, though, and many Black leaders opposed laws proposed to change the Board's structure.

Community control of schools was a change that some Black activists proposed as an alternative to having a central Board—appointed or elected—run the school system. This philosophy gained support in New York City in 1968, when Black parents of the Ocean-Hill Brownsville neighborhood demanded control of spending, personnel, and curriculum. They

¹⁰ "NAACP to Picket School Bd. Again," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 19, 1966, p. 1A.

¹¹ James Nathaniel Upton, "Urban Violence – A Case Study in Three Cities" (PhD dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1976), p. 146; Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, "The Quest for Racial Equality in the Pittsburgh School," (Pittsburgh, 1965) p. 8.

¹² The education committees of the Urban League of Pittsburgh and the local NAACP branch co-authored a letter to the Common Pleas Court in 1966 to petition for another Black member. Ralph E. Koger, "More Negroes Are Sought on School Board," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 10, 1966, p. 1A.

¹³ "Public Schools Series," *The Thrust*, August 2, 1968, p. 2, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Main Branch, Oliver Room.

¹⁴ "Black Power Meeting for New 'Black Pride,'" *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 16, 1967, p. 1.

engaged in a conflict with a mostly White teaching staff that led to a teachers' strike in 1968.¹⁵

In Pittsburgh, several groups proposed community control, but the issue never took hold.¹⁶

Concerned Citizens, an interracial group with a Black leader, James Thomas, protested outside of many Board meetings with demands that included community control of schools.¹⁷ Carnegie Mellon professor Norman Johnson, who was Black and ran college access programs for Black high school students, also advocated for community control.¹⁸ While Pittsburgh decentralized its school district in 1970, there was never community control in which parents had powers over spending, personnel, and curriculum. Decentralization in Pittsburgh included dividing the school district into three "areas," each with an Area Superintendent who addressed local issues.¹⁹

Meanwhile, Black representation on the Board increased gradually before reaching a plateau in 1969, the first time there were five Black members. After two Black members resigned in 1970 and only one replacement was Black, there were four Black members representing a district that was now 40% Black.²⁰ In 1971, one Black member's term ended but two more were appointed, so Black representation was back to five members.²¹ When Lawrence Moncrief stepped down from the Board in 1972, there was uncertainty about how the Board would change racially and politically. Moncrief's departure left four Black members on the

¹⁵ Jerald E Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 103-109.

¹⁶ Community control may have failed in Pittsburgh because Board of Education members were not on board with the proposals. Another challenge for Black activists in Pittsburgh was that three main Black communities (Homewood-Brushton, the North Side, and the Hill District) were separated from one another by other neighborhoods and the Allegheny River.

¹⁷ *The Thrust*, September 22, 1968 (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Main Branch, Oliver Room); Alvin Rosensweet and John Moody, "Community Programs Scored, Praised," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 19, 1969, p. 29.

¹⁸ Russ Barnard, "Community Control is Called Answer to Ghetto School Ills," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 25, 1968, p. 25.

¹⁹ Edward William Schuerle, "A Study of the Administrative Decentralization in the Pittsburgh Public Schools" (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1973), pp. 64-65.

²⁰ Urban League of Pittsburgh, "Black Percentage of the Student Population: Pittsburgh Public Schools," p. 5. (HHC); James Nathaniel Upton, "Urban Violence: A Case Study of Three Cities," (PhD dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1976), p. 8.

²¹ "Two Named to School Board," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 12, 1971, p. 1.

Board and took away a pro-desegregation vote.²² To replace Moncrief, the judges appointed John Wilds, who became the fifth Black member of the Board and supported desegregation.²³ In 1973, there were still five Black members on the Board.²⁴ In the early 1970s, the Common Pleas Court judges maintained a Board with one-third Black, two-thirds White representation.

The Board was less balanced geographically than it was racially, with members coming disproportionately from the East End. After five new appointments in 1975, nine of fifteen Board members were from the East End. There were Black and White neighborhoods in the East End, but it was only one chunk of the city. The North Side, West End, and South Hills were all underrepresented. Many of the appointed members were professionals, alienating the Board from working-class residents. For instance, of the five Board members appointed in 1975, two were attorneys, one was the director of the University of Pittsburgh's affirmative action program, one was a professor, and one was the city solicitor.²⁵ Only one member in 1975 was from the South Hills, which was a point of contention for the Carrick Community Council. Carrick and other South Hills communities wanted to gain representation to make their views become policy.

The majority of the Board in 1975 was in favor of certain forms of desegregation. In December of 1975, the Board voted 10-5 to open a desegregated high school, Brashear, in the South Hills that would draw from Black and White neighborhoods. This resolution also reorganized several schools to the 5-3-4 grade structure. The vote closed Fifth Avenue Junior-Senior High School, an all-Black school in the Hill District.²⁶ Barbara Sizemore, a national

²² "Black Liberal Quits School Board Seat," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 12, 1972, p. 19.

²³ Wilds Named to School Board, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 23, 1972, p. 1.

²⁴ Tom Stokes, "Elected School Board Issue Surfaces," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 13, 1973, p. 4.

²⁵ Vince Gagetta, "5 City Residents Named by Judges to School Board," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 14, 1975, p. 1.

²⁶ Sixth and seventh grade students who would have gone to Fifth Avenue went to Herron Hill Middle School, a predominantly Black school in the Hill District. High school students went to the brand-new Brashear High School in 1976. Board of Public Education, "Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA: Minutes," *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1975-1976*, December 23, 1975, pp. 116-18 (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 7).

education leader who spent over a decade as a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, wrote that these 1975 changes showed that the Board's plan "was to abandon the African American schools and keep the schools open in White communities in order to stem the White exodus from Pittsburgh."²⁷ The opening of Brashear involved the busing of Black students into the White neighborhood of Beechview but not the busing of White students into Black neighborhoods. The Board did cater desegregation towards White parents, but it did not oppose desegregation. In February of 1976, the Board voted 10-4 against a proposal that would have instructed the Superintendent to save money "by minimizing transportation of students from their neighborhood schools."²⁸ This proposal was similar to John Conley's 1972 anti-busing resolution; over three years later, the Board was not willing to vote down the only method of desegregation that could create racially balanced schools across the district.

Legislation for an Elected Board

During the late 1960s, several groups put forth ideas about how to change the Board's structure. In 1968, the *Pittsburgh Press* reported a proposal by a group of citizens for the Board to be elected from seven city districts.²⁹ In a 1969 editorial, the *Pittsburgh Press* called for a fully elected Board with the power to levy taxes, a right that the state legislature held at the time.³⁰ Others proposed a Board with some elected and some appointed members. In 1969, the Pittsburgh Council on Public Education appointed an eight-member Select Commission to Study

²⁷ Barbara Sizemore, *Walking in Circles: The Black Struggle for School Reform* (Third World Press: Chicago, 2008), p. 141.

²⁸ Board of Public Education, "Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA: Minutes," *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1975-1976*, February 24, 1976, p. 367 (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 7).

²⁹ *Pittsburgh Press*, August 8, 1968. HHC, Maxine Aaron Papers, Box 10.

³⁰ *Pittsburgh Press*, March 13, 1969. HHC, Maxine Aaron Papers, Box 10.

the Pittsburgh School Board.³¹ The interracial Select Commission issued a report that recommended a thirteen-person Board with seven elected and six appointed members. Pittsburgh residents would vote in seven districts to choose their representatives.³² The Pittsburgh branch of the NAACP released a statement opposing this recommendation and instead proposed that the Mayor appoint a 15-member Board with a guarantee that Black representation on the Board would be at least equal to Black representation in the schools.³³ In 1970, Black Pittsburghers made up 20% of the city and 40% of students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools (see Appendices 1 and 2).³⁴ A fully elected Board would almost certainly have a lower percentage of Black members than the percentage of Black students in the school district.

It was not until the early 1970s that legislation for changing the Board's structure gained support in the state legislature. In March of 1972, legislators in the House amended a Senate bill to propose a 15-member, fully elected Board of Education in "first class A" cities (Pittsburgh and Philadelphia). The House voted against this change.³⁵ A House bill introduced in June of 1972 by Max Homer, a White Representative from a suburb of Pittsburgh, looked more like the Select Commission's recommendation. It proposed a Board with 11 elected and four appointed members, and the House passed it by a 121-69 vote before the Senate's Education Committee

³¹ These members were: Edward Eddy, Commission chairperson and president of Chatam College; William Block, publisher of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette; Carolyn Howe, neighborhood leader; K. Leroy Irvis, Representative in PA Congress; Bernard Jones, community activities advisor of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development; Harry Kramer, Common Pleas Court judge; Erwin Steinberg, Carnegie Mellon University professor; and J. Warren Watson, Common Pleas Court judge. Black, "A Historical Study," p. 246.

³² Vince Gagetta, "Vote-Appoint Plan for School Board is Asked in City," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 7, 1969, p. 1.

³³ This proposal stated that the mayor would appoint Black members from a list of "names submitted by the Black community." "Blacks Hit Politicians; Reject Board Elections," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 19, 1969, p. 1.

³⁴ Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Pennsylvania – Race and Hispanic Origin for Selected Cities and Other Places: Earliest Census to 1990," (U.S. Census Bureau: Washington, DC, February 2005), <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/PAtab.pdf>; Richard David Gutkind, "Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980: A Study of the Superintendent and Educational Policy Dynamics," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1983), p. 236.

³⁵ Pennsylvania General Assembly, Regular Session 1971-1972: Senate Bill 1357, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?syear=1971&sind=0&body=S&type=B&bn=1357>.

shot it down.³⁶ K. Leroy Irvis, a Black Representative of the Hill District who had been a member of the Select Commission in 1969, opposed Homer's bill, saying that it would under represent Black communities.³⁷

Those opposed to the elected Board mainly argued that it would decrease Black representation and that elected members would only represent a portion of the school district. One group of citizens formed the Committee for Integrated Schools and opposed Homer's 1972 bill because they believed it would have low Black representation.³⁸ After Senator Lamb proposed legislation in January of 1973 to create a 15-member Board with 11 elected and four appointed members, NAACP leader Byrd Brown (son of Homer S. Brown) said that the bill would hurt Black representation. Black representation was more than symbolic because Black representatives from Black neighborhoods would tend to advocate for Black students more than White representatives from White neighborhoods. Susan Brandt of the League of Women Voters, Reverend Donald McIlvane of the Urban League of Pittsburgh, and former Board president William Rea also spoke out against Lamb's bill.³⁹ Rea testified to the state Senate that the 11 elected officials would represent only 9% of the electorate, while an appointed Board worked to improve the entire district.⁴⁰ Some of the districts that elected Board members

³⁶ Pennsylvania General Assembly, Regular Session 1971-1972: House Bill 2328, http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/bill_history.cfm?year=1971&ind=0&body=H&type=B&bn=2328.

³⁷ John Taylor, "House Okays School Board Election Vote," *The Pittsburgh Press*, September 27, 1972, p. 1. The *New Pittsburgh Courier* had published quotes from nine Black Pittsburghers in February of 1972 about the elected Board issue. Eight interviewees were in favor of an elected Board, and the ninth said that he wanted "whatever system gives more representation to Blacks." "Pittsburghers Speak out on Elected School Bd.," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 12, 1972, p. 4.

³⁸ This Committee included representatives from the University of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh branches of the NAACP, Urban League, and ACLU; the League of Women Voters, the Pittsburgh Council on Public Education, and other community organizations. "New Coalition for Integrated Schools against Elected Bd.," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 12, 1972, p. 10.

³⁹ Tom Stokes, "Elected Board Issue Aired," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 10, 1973, p. 1.

⁴⁰ William H. Rea, "Testimony on Senate Bill 100," Pennsylvania Senate Education Committee, March 1, 1973 (HHC).

represented were opposed to desegregation, which would make it difficult to create a desegregation plan for the whole school district.

On the other hand, many residents from the predominantly White communities opposed to busing for desegregation viewed an elected Board as a way of giving their views more political power. Jean Fink, who became president of the Carrick Community Council in 1973, encouraged fellow CCC members to write letters to their elected officials encouraging them to vote for an elected Board.⁴¹ To Fink, “if you don’t understand the area, you don’t understand the problem.”⁴² Those appointing the Board did not “understand the area,” for only eight of the 35 Common Pleas Court judges lived in the city of Pittsburgh.⁴³ In Mt. Oliver, an independent borough located next to Carrick that was part of the Pittsburgh school system, Mayor Carl Patrick wrote to the state Senate Education Committee to express his support for an elected Board and neighborhood schools in Mt. Oliver.⁴⁴ A group called Stop Forced Busing drew an estimated 1,000 residents from the South Hills, Squirrel Hill, Greenfield, Swisshelm Park, and other predominantly White areas. Stop Forced Busing wanted to take away the Pennsylvania Human Relation Commission’s power over the public schools, to have an elected Board, and to desegregate without “busing.”⁴⁵ The elected Board had a large amount of White support because it would give representation to White neighborhoods that were not represented on the appointed Board. An elected Board would allow the opposition to desegregation to gain votes in the boardroom.

⁴¹ “Community Council Seeks Change to Board Appointment Policy,” *South Hills Record*, October 16, 1973, p. 1

⁴² Tom Stokes, “Elected Board Issue Aired,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 10, 1973, p. 1.

⁴³ Black, “A Historical Study,” p. 249.

⁴⁴ Nita Fandray, “Elected Board Major Concern of Local Council” *South Hills Record*, April 15, 1975, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Jack L. Palmer, “A Case Study in School-Community Conflict over Desegregation” (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1974), p. 93.

Judge Ralph Smith of the Common Pleas Court, who ruled in favor of the Carrick students who boycotted Knoxville Junior High School, was also a critic of the appointed Board. Since parents could not voice their opinions by voting for Board members, they had to resort to going through the courts.⁴⁶ Fellow Common Pleas Court judge, Henry Ellenbogen, said that he and all his colleagues – the very judges who appointed the Board – also wanted an elected Board.⁴⁷

Charles N. Caputo, a legislator involved with the push for neighborhood schools, proposed a bill regarding desegregation at the same time as the debates over whether the Board should be elected or appointed. In 1971 and 1972, the CCC supported legislation proposed by Caputo to take away the PHRC's ability to order the Pittsburgh Public Schools to desegregate.⁴⁸ Caputo lived in the neighborhood of Beechview, located west of Carrick in the South Hills. He was also a political ally of the CCC and was in attendance at a meeting in Concord Church on October 2, 1972 in which Robert Zebra and other parents made announcements about their efforts in the Knoxville boycott.⁴⁹ While Caputo's bill regarding the PHRC did not pass, it was one that would be proposed again and again for the next two decades. Caputo also wanted an elected Board and gave his support to another unsuccessful bill for an elected Board in 1973.⁵⁰ Some of the same legislators and community members advocating for an elected Board had also worked to keep their neighborhood schools by stopping recent desegregation changes.

After other proposed bills for an elected Board failed, Representative Ivan Itkin of Squirrel Hill used an alternative strategy. State Senator Jeannette Reibman was the head of the

⁴⁶ Douglas Smock, "School Officials Rip Judge Smith Knoxville Ruling," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 16, 1972, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Gabriel Ireton, "50 Pickets with Signs 'March' on Ellenbogen," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 8, 1972, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Palmer, "School-Community Conflict," p. 92.

⁴⁹ Palmer, "School-Community Conflict," p. 78.

⁵⁰ The General Assembly of Pennsylvania, House Bill No. 62, Session of 1973, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&sessYr=1973&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billType=B&billNbr=0062&pn=1650>.

Senate's Education Committee, and she was preventing these bills from reaching the Senate floor. Itkin decided that instead of proposing a bill in the House that, if passed, would proceed to the Senate's Education Committee, he would amend a bill that had already passed the Senate. That way, if the House passed the bill, it would go directly to the Senate floor.

On October 16, 1975, Ivan Itkin proposed an amendment to Senate Bill 580 to create an elected Board of Education in Pittsburgh.⁵¹ The Board would be made up of seven to 15 members, each representing a separate district. A commission of six individuals appointed by City Council, the Mayor of Pittsburgh, the Mayor of Mt. Oliver, and Common Pleas Court judges would determine the precise number of Board members and would draw district lines.⁵² The bill would also give the Board of Education power over taxing. If it passed, the bill would then create a referendum for voters in the city to determine whether they wanted an elected Board. A majority vote of "Yes" on the referendum would create an elected Board.⁵³ Voters could also vote for potential new Board members on the referendum ballot.⁵⁴

Legislators debating the bill disagreed over its popularity among Pittsburgh residents and what kind of effect it would have. Representative Itkin said that the majority of people in Pittsburgh supported an elected Board, but Representative Irvis disputed that point and added the plan would lower Black representation. Representative Caputo spoke in favor of the bill and stressed that this vote was important because it would keep the measure away from Senator Reibman's Education Committee. Senator Ronald Cowell said that the current appointed Board allowed his suburban neighbors, who voted for Common Pleas Court judges, to make decisions

⁵¹ Senate Bill 580 originally required school districts to include in their annual financial reports information about the amount and payment of bonds and other debts.

⁵² Marcella DeMarco, "Magnet Programs in the Pittsburgh Schools: Development to Implementation: 1977 through 1982," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1983), p. 59.

⁵³ Pittsburgh at the time was the only school district in the state whose taxes were controlled by the state legislature. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Legislative Journal*, Thursday, October 16, 1975, p. 3088, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/HJ/1975/0/19751016.pdf#page=63>.

⁵⁴ Patrick Boyle, "Shapp Gets Elective Board Bill," *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 25, 1975, p. 1.

for the city. Following this debate, the bill passed the House by a vote of 160-29, and the Senate approved Itkin's amendment in a 31-18 vote on November 24.⁵⁵ Governor Milton Shapp signed the bill on December 19 and said, "I cannot see how we can plausibly tell the people of Pittsburgh that although every other school district elects its school board, the people of Pittsburgh cannot."⁵⁶ It was now up to the voters of Pittsburgh to decide by referendum vote what type of Board of Education they wanted.

Appointed to Elected

The Apportionment Committee, in charge of setting the number of Board members and drawing the voting districts, decided on a nine-member Board. One goal set by the committee was to have one-third Black representation.⁵⁷ Ivan Itkin had recommended to the committee that they should aim for 29% Black representation, or two Black members on a seven-person Board. Given that Blacks made up just 20% of Pittsburgh's population, and a lower proportion of the voters, it would be more difficult to ensure that there would be three Black members on a nine-person Board.⁵⁸ The commission's nine districts included two with majority Black populations, one in which an estimated 34% of voters were Black, and six that were predominantly White.⁵⁹ In 1976, Black students made up 45% of the Pittsburgh Public Schools (see Appendix 2).

⁵⁵ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Legislative Journal*, Thursday, October 16, 1975, pp. 3092-3, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/HJ/1975/0/19751016.pdf#page=63>; Pennsylvania General Assembly, "Senate Bill 580," Regular Session 1975-1976, http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/bill_history.cfm?year=1975&ind=0&body=S&type=B&bn=580.

⁵⁶ Edward Jensen, "Shapp Okays School Board Election Vote," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 20, 1975, p. 1.

⁵⁷ The apportionment committee used the 1970 census to create the districts. Ron Suber, "Elected School Board Plan to Test Black Voters," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 17, 1976, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Ron Suber, "Elected School Board Plan to Test Black Voters," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 17, 1976, p. 1; Althea Fonville, "Candidates Must File," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 24, 1976, p. 3. These articles state that 17% of voting age people in Pittsburgh were Black.

⁵⁹ "Two Final Options Summaries," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 7, 1976, p. 19; Ron Suber, "Dist. 8 Mystery in School Race," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1976, p. 8.

Regardless of whether there would be two or three Black representatives on the Board, Black representation on the Board would fall short of the Black population in the schools.

While many Black leaders were concerned about Senate Bill 580, in Carrick the bill's passage was viewed as good news. The Carrick Community Council had been working with legislators for years to have an elected Board. While Representative Caputo's bill to strip the PHRC of its power to order school districts to desegregate had failed, an elected Board gave the community an opportunity to gain a political voice. When Shapp signed the bill in 1975, the CCC's president was Harry Readshaw. Readshaw asked CCC members to support Jean Fink in her attempt to become District 7's representative on the Board. Fink's campaign slogan was "return to the basics," and her key issues included neighborhood schools, traditional teaching, and "corporal punishment with restrictions."⁶⁰

When voters went to the polls on April 27, they had a choice to vote "Yes" or "No" to an elected Board and to vote for candidates who were running for the elected Board. The referendum question read: "Shall the apportionment plan submitted by the school district apportionment commission for the election of members of the Board of Public Education of the School District of Pittsburgh be approved?" Some opponents of the elected Board said that the referendum question could lead voters to think that an elected Board was already in place and that they were just voting to approve a redistricting plan. Local organizations pushing against the elected Board included the League of Women Voters, NAACP, Urban League, YMCA, Council of Jewish Women, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and Catholic

⁶⁰ "Fink Eyes Board Post," *South Hills Record*, February 17, 1976, p. 1.

Priests Association.⁶¹ These organizations were outspoken but did not convince the majority of voters to take their side.

On April 27, 1976, voters passed the referendum for an elected Board by a vote of 29,828 to 19,879.⁶² Fewer than 25% of registered voters voted on the referendum.⁶³ Fink won the District 7 seat by a 4-1 margin and guaranteed herself a seat on the Board by winning both the Democratic and Republican party nominations. Three other candidates—Margaret Milliones, John Conley and Evelyn Neiser— won on both parties’ tickets and became official members. Five future members only won on one party ticket in April, and voters decided those seats on Election Day, November 2.⁶⁴

Of the nine candidates officially elected to the Board on November 2, none were outspoken supporters of busing for desegregation during their campaigns. Conley (District 1), a Black professor of social work who had served on the appointed Board, had in November of 1972 proposed a resolution against “forced busing” that the Board passed. Frank Widina (District 2), a White retired truck driver and steel worker from Lawrenceville, thought that there was no need for busing if there was quality education across Pittsburgh schools.⁶⁵ Frances Vitti, who was elected to the Board in 1979, recalls that Widina called Jake Milliones, Margaret Milliones’ husband, “boy” during a Board meeting. Milliones responded, “I’m a man, Frank, not a boy” and, according to Vitti, “It didn’t phase Widina in the least.”⁶⁶ Margaret Milliones (District 3), a part-time professor of Black Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, was the only

⁶¹ Thomas P. Benic, “Elected School Board to Win, Foes Predict,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 27, 1976, p. 5; “Our School Recommendations,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 26, 1976, p. 10; “Courier Endorses Irvis, Rhodes, Says NO on School Board,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1976, p. 1.

⁶² David Assad, “Fink Ousts Cornell,” *South Hills Record*, May 4, 1976, p. 1. DeMarco (p. 59) gives the final vote as 30,780-20,686.

⁶³ Thomas P. Benic, “Elected School Board Passes by Big Margin,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 28, 1976, p. 1.

⁶⁴ “Challenges for Elected School Board,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 29, 1976, p. 8.

⁶⁵ David Nilsson, “Here’s Who in Board Race: School Spending 2nd District Issue,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 12, 1976, p. 7.

⁶⁶ Frances Vitti, interview with author, October 11, 2013.

other Black member on the Board and believed that quality education was more important than desegregation.⁶⁷ Solomon Abrams (District 4), a White former Board member, advocated for “freedom of choice” desegregation in which families chose where to send their children to school in the city or suburbs. He did not want busing for desegregation.⁶⁸ Elinor Langer (District 5), a White former teacher whose mother and grandfather had been Board presidents, advocated for “modest, voluntary” desegregation programs. She narrowly defeated Leonard Mendelson, who said that the people of District 5 feared that “busing will destroy their neighborhoods.”⁶⁹ Helen Miscimarra (District 6), a White nurse from Beechview, had been on the appointed Board and was against busing for desegregation. Fink (District 7) was outspoken against busing for desegregation. Mary Jane Jacobs (District 8), a White nurse from the North Side, won in a district that had a significant Black population, in part because two Black candidates divided Black voters. Jacobs opposed busing for desegregation. Evelyn Neiser (District 9), a White secretary and former Board member, opposed busing for desegregation.⁷⁰

On the new Board, there were two Black and seven White members. The Board had its first female majority ever, with six women and three men. Four members had previously served on the appointed Board. In December, the new Board chose Evelyn Neiser as its president over Helen Miscimarra in a 6-3 vote.⁷¹ The four even-numbered districts would be up for election in 1979, while the five odd-numbered districts would have elections in 1981.⁷²

⁶⁷ David Nilsson, “Here’s Who in Board Race: Organization Key in 3rd District Race,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 13, 1976, p. 6.

⁶⁸ David Nilsson, “Here’s Who in Board Race: Integration, Spending Issues in 4th District,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 14, 1976, p. 13.

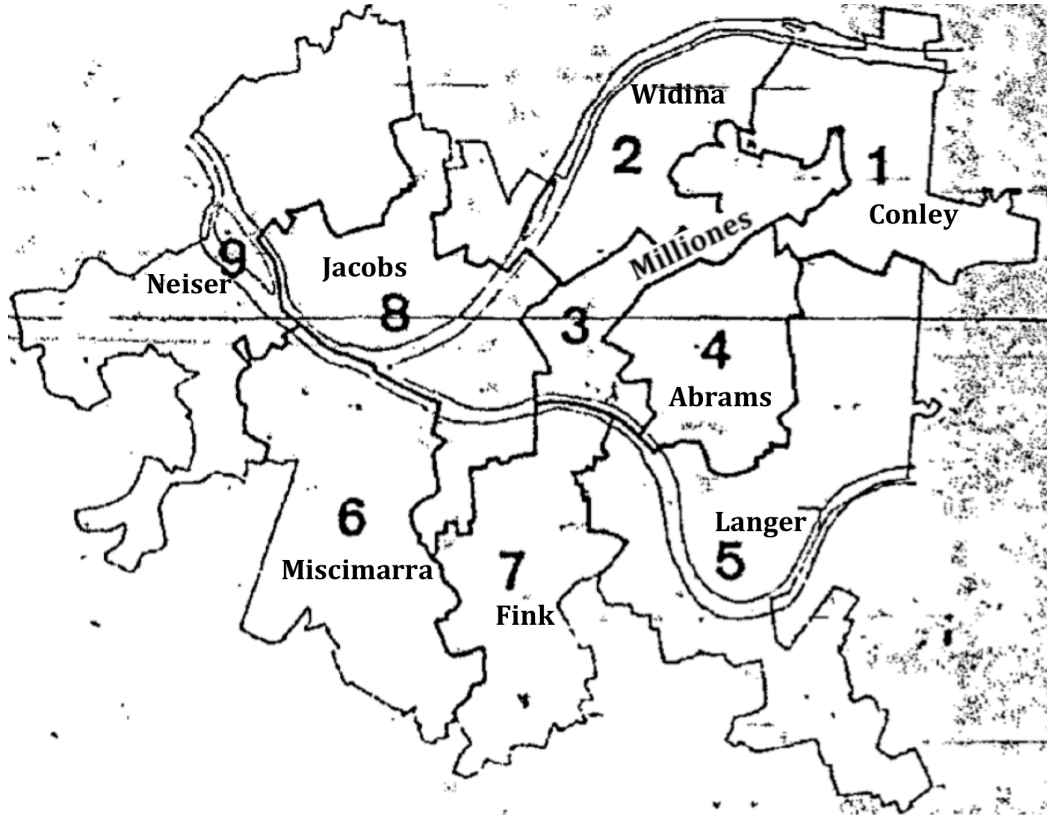
⁶⁹ David Nilsson, “Here’s Who in Board Race: 5th District Pits New Conservatives, Old Establishment,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 15, 1976, p. 9; Susan Mannella, “Langer, New School Board President, Finally in Majority,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 7, 1979, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Maddy Ross, “School Board Gets 8 Dems, 1 ‘Republican,’” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 3, 1976, p. 1.

⁷¹ “Mrs. Neiser Heads School Board,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, December 5, 1976, p. 1.

⁷² After the 1979 and 1981 elections, Board members were elected to four-year terms. “Challenge for Mrs. Jacobs,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 11, 1978, p. 8.

Figure 3.1: 1976 Voting Districts and Neighborhoods⁷³



District 1: *Homewood, Lincoln-Larimer, and Highland Park.*

District 2: *Lawrenceville, Bloomfield, Troy Hill, and Spring Garden.*

District 3: *Upper Hill District, South Oakland, and East Liberty.*

District 4: *Oakland, Shadyside, Greenfield, Squirrel Hill west of Murray Ave.*

District 5: *Squirrel Hill east of Murray Ave., Hazelwood, Arlington, and the 31st Ward (Hays, Lincoln Place, and New Homestead).*

District 6: *Brookline, Beechview, Banksville, and Mount Washington.*

District 7: *Mount Oliver, South Side, and Carrick.*

District 8: *Lower North Side, Downtown, Lower Hill District, and Beltzhoover.*

District 9: *Upper North Side, West End.*

⁷³ This map represents the districts used in Pittsburgh's Board of Education elections until 1983, when the map slightly changed. The map is from "Notice of Pittsburgh School District Apportionment Plan," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 23, 1976, p. 16. Neighborhood information is from "Our School Recommendations," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 26, 1976, p. 10.

After the election of Pittsburgh's Board on November 2, 1976, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* editorialized:

“On the new board there will be a strong contingent against busing. However understandable in terms of grassroots feelings, the challenge to the board will be how well it can work with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission on desegregation so as to keep decisions in the board's hands rather than forcing litigation which puts the matter increasingly in judicial hands.”⁷⁴

The “grassroots feelings” of White neighborhoods against busing for desegregation no longer had to rely on boycotts, sit-ins, and court cases to make their views heard because they now had political representation on the Board.

The “Conservative Faction”

A majority of the new Board sought to challenge the PHRC's desegregation order by using delay tactics and expanding neighborhood schools. While no candidate spoke in favor of busing for desegregation during the election, Millions and Langer generally voted for desegregation measures, with Conley sometimes joining them. Miscimarra, Fink, and Widina were the most opposed to busing for desegregation and in favor of neighborhood schools. Jacobs voted with them, as did Abrams on most desegregation measures. Neiser was, as Fink recalls, “on the fence.”⁷⁵ The five-member majority voted consistently against desegregation and in favor of neighborhood schools; the elected Board was a new phase in the resistance to desegregation.

A month after taking office, the Board appealed the PHRC's desegregation order to the Commonwealth Court. The PHRC had brought the case to the court in January of 1976, in part due to the appointed Board's opening of two nearly entirely Black schools, Baxter Middle

⁷⁴ “Pittsburgh School Board,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 4, 1976, p. 8.

⁷⁵ Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

School in Homewood and Herron Hill Middle School in the Hill District.⁷⁶ Pittsburgh school officials had given orders to not consider sending White students from the nearby wealthy White neighborhoods of Squirrel Hill and Point Breeze to Baxter; the district instead set aside a disproportionate number of seats for White students at Reizenstein Middle School, a brand-new facility.⁷⁷ With these recent actions in mind, on January 13, 1977, the Commonwealth Court ordered the Board to send a desegregation order by July 1.⁷⁸ The court also instructed the Board to desegregate all schools by the 1979-1980 school year.⁷⁹ In 1977, 63 of 74 elementary schools and most of the city's middle and high schools were considered racially imbalanced under the PHRC guidelines.⁸⁰

On January 19, 1977, the Board decided to challenge the Commonwealth Court's desegregation order. The 7-2 vote to appeal went against the legal advice of the school district's assistant solicitor, Persifor Oliver, who said the chances of winning were slim.⁸¹ Milliones and Langer were the two dissenters.⁸² Fink and Miscimarra then contacted the law firm of Frederick Boehm and gained the support of every Board member except Milliones to hire the firm.⁸³

⁷⁶ Richard Anliot, director of education for the PHRC, said that the opening of Baxter and Herron Hill were cases of *de jure* segregation. Thomas P. Benic, "How Pa. Views School Desegregation," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 26, 1977, p. 9; Richard David Gutkind, "Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980: A Study of the Superintendent and Educational Policy Dynamics," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1983), p. 89.

⁷⁷ Homewood parents sued the school district over the segregation of Baxter and won after Judge John Flaherty ruled that the opening of Baxter violated, among other laws, the 14th Amendment. "Hayes, et al. v. School District of Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh Legal Journal* (1976), pp. 136-7, 142.

⁷⁸ Jim Goodwin, "Little Progress Shown on Desegregation of Local Schools After Ten Years," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 18, 1978, p. 16; Louis Hoffman Mackey, "The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and Desegregation in the Public Schools of Pennsylvania," (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1978), Appendix VI, p. 8.

⁷⁹ "City Schools Told: Integrate in Fall," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 14, 1977, p. 1.

⁸⁰ See note 1 in the previous chapter for a description of the PHRC guidelines. Thomas P. Benic, "How Pa. Views School Desegregation," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 26, 1977, p. 9.

⁸¹ Thomas P. Benic, "School Board Votes Appeal on Integration," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 20, 1977, p. 4.

⁸² Langer said, "My vote was very definitely not a vote in favor of the Human Relations Commission plan which I feel is an unworkable one. I do agree with our solicitor that the right way to go is not to appeal but to work with the commission to develop a better plan." David Nilsson, "School Board Fights Race Order," *The Pittsburgh Press*, January 20, 1977, p. 2.

⁸³ Thomas P. Benic, "Paddling Ban Stays; Integration Case Lawyer Hired," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 27, 1977, p. 9.

Milliones wanted to create a desegregation plan rather than fight the court order. Several Black leaders released a statement criticizing the Board's decision to appeal for reflecting "a total disregard for the educational needs of the poor and Black communities of Pittsburgh."⁸⁴ The Commonwealth Court denied the Board's appeal on February 1, and the Board would later take the case to the state Supreme Court.⁸⁵

Another desegregation idea was to use a metropolitan plan that included the suburbs as well as the city. The previous Superintendent, Louis Kishkunas, had favored this type of metropolitan desegregation. On the Board elected in 1976, Solomon Abrams was the only member who advocated for such a plan. Abrams wanted to avoid White flight to suburban and private schools, and including the suburbs in desegregating Pittsburgh schools would address the suburbs issue.⁸⁶ When Abrams asked the attorney, Oliver, about a metropolitan plan at the January 19 meeting, Oliver responded that the PHRC had denied Philadelphia's attempt at such a plan.⁸⁷ Moreover, the U.S. Supreme Court had ordered Detroit to change its metropolitan desegregation plan to one limited to the city in a 1974 case, *Milliken v. Bradley*.⁸⁸ The Pittsburgh Board thus could not feasibly include the suburbs in its desegregation plans.

A test of the Board's new political makeup occurred when a vote came up in January about allowing schools to use paddling, a form of corporal punishment. The proposed change would permit paddling but gave parents a chance to opt out by sending a note to the principal. Neiser broke a 4-4 split by joining the opposition to this plan, even though during her campaign

⁸⁴ The authors of this letter were: Art Edmunds, director of the Urban League of Pittsburgh; Harvey Adams, president of the local NAACP branch; Phil McKain of the Herron Hill Consortium; the Reverend Winston Hill; and Sala Udin. "Hit School Bd. for Desegregate Appeal," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 19, 1977, p. 19.

⁸⁵ Goodwin, "Little Progress Shown on Desegregation," p. 16.

⁸⁶ Susan Mannella, "Board OKs Reinstating 6th Grade at 4 Elementary Schools in City," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 22, 1978, p. 2.

⁸⁷ David Nilsson, "School Board Fights Race Order," *The Pittsburgh Press*, January 20, 1977, p. A-2.

⁸⁸ Samantha Meinke, "Milliken v. Bradley: The Northern Battle for Desegregation," *Michigan Bar Journal* (September 2011), pp. 21-22.

she supported paddling.⁸⁹ This 5-4 margin was closer than the appointed Board's 9-5 vote against paddling in 1973, when all five Black members voted to uphold the paddling ban. At that meeting, Reverend Leroy Patrick, a Black Board member, cited a study that showed that students at schools in low-income communities were paddled the most. Patrick also said that Black students were disproportionately paddled.⁹⁰ Four years later, the elected Board came close to changing course on an issue that demonstrated the strength of what became known as the Board's "conservative faction."

This faction supported schools that went from kindergarten through eighth grade, rather than the 5-3-4 grade structure that sent students to separate middle schools.⁹¹ Several months into the elected Board's term, on May 4, 1977 it voted to implement a K-8 model in two schools instead of opting for the middle school model that the previous Board had supported.⁹² Superintendent Jerry Olson wanted middle schools that could be placed near Black and White neighborhoods to create an integrated student body. The Board, however, voted 5-4 to add grades 6-8 to Rogers Elementary School in East Liberty and Sunnyside Elementary School in Stanton Heights. Fink, Miscimarra, Widina, Jacobs, and Abrams – the "conservative faction" – formed this majority.⁹³ Solomon Abrams also proposed to add a sixth grade to five elementary schools, prompting John Conley to tell *The Pittsburgh Press* that "Plessy v. Ferguson is alive and well at the Board of Education."⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Thomas P. Benic, "Paddling Ban Stays; Integration Case Lawyer Hired," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 27, 1977, p. 9.

⁹⁰ "Board Upholds Abolishment of Corporal Punishment," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, May 5, 1973, p. 24.

⁹¹ As noted earlier, the 5-3-4 structure meant that students attended elementary school until fifth grade, middle school from sixth to eighth grade, and high school from ninth to twelfth grade.

⁹² A K-8 school serves students from kindergarten through eighth grade.

⁹³ The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* did not include Solomon Abrams in the "conservative faction," but his voting record on desegregation issues shows that he was part of this voting bloc. Thomas P. Benic, "Board Supports Neighborhood Schools," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 5, 1977, p. 15.

⁹⁴ David Nilsson, "School Board Rapped as 'Jim Crow,'" *The Pittsburgh Press*, May 5, 1977, p. A-4.

Later in May, Superintendent Olson proposed a desegregation plan to start in September of 1978 that used two methods: open enrollment and magnet schools. In Olson's plan, open enrollment, which the school district first used in 1963, meant that any student could apply to attend any school in the city. Schools would have to maintain certain percentages of Black and White students, which would affect which students could attend through open enrollment. Magnet schools had specialized programs that would improve educational quality while enticing parents – especially White parents – to send their children to school outside of their neighborhood but within the district. In January, the Board had given Olson the authority to create a plan to bring to the Board, which had the power to vote for or against it. The Board voted 6-3 to turn down Olson's request to put the plan on its May 25 agenda. Milliones, Langer, and Conley were the three members who wanted the proposal in the agenda. Other members opposed the racial balance requirements that the proposal would set, and Olson never got this proposal to the Board for a vote.⁹⁵

After nearly two years in office, the “conservative faction” had overwhelmed the pro-desegregation members of the Board. After under a year in office, the majority of the elected Board had shown that they would challenge the PHRC's desegregation order through resolutions and the courts.

Magnet Schools and Delay Tactics

While six Board members did not approve of Olson's plan, even those who opposed busing for desegregation were receptive to the idea of magnet schools. To Board members who were vehemently against “forced” busing, this “voluntary” desegregation program was a better

⁹⁵ Jim Goodwin, “Olson Plan Rapped,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, May 21, 1977, p. 1; DeMarco, “Magnet Programs in the Pittsburgh Schools: Development to Implementation 1977 Through 1982,” p. 85; Gutkind, “Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980,” p. 98.

alternative. Magnet schools alone, however, could not ensure that enough White and Black parents would send their children to schools outside their neighborhood to make every school “racially balanced.”

While it did not vote on Olson’s proposal, the Board took gradual steps that showed its preference for a desegregation plan centered on magnet schools. In March of 1978, the Board released 60,000 surveys to Pittsburgh residents to gauge the public’s support for magnet schools. About half of the people who responded to the survey said that they would send their child to a magnet school.⁹⁶ During its April 26 meeting, the Board approved the first two magnet schools to be opened in September: Law/Public Service at South High School and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) at Oliver High School.⁹⁷ This gradual rollout of a desegregation plan did not meet the expectations of some civic and political leaders. Urban League of Pittsburgh executive director Arthur J. Edmunds accused the Board of “despotism and dragging its feet on implementing a citywide desegregation plan.” Each member of the “conservative faction” (Miscimarra, Widina, Fink, Jacobs, and Abrams) defended their actions by speaking of the benefits of neighborhood schools, the promise of the magnet program, and the unsound nature of busing for desegregation.⁹⁸

The federal government thought the Board was “dragging its feet,” too. In May of 1977, the federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare had informed Superintendent Olson that the district would not receive a \$1.3 million grant from the Emergency School Aid Act if it did not desegregate its schools in September. The Board did not accept Olson’s desegregation

⁹⁶ The highest levels of response for the survey came from Squirrel Hill, Shadyside, and Brookline, White neighborhoods with middle-class to wealthy populations. Board of Public Education, “Magnet School Survey Results,” *News from Pittsburgh Public Schools*, March 22, 1978, p. 1, cited in Mackey, “The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and Desegregation in the Public Schools of Pennsylvania,” Appendix IX.

⁹⁷ DeMarco, “Magnet Programs in the Pittsburgh Schools,” p. 90.

⁹⁸ Ron Suber, “School Board Members Say Urban League Charges Untrue,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 5, 1978, p. 1.

plan, so the district lost its shot at this grant, which was reserved for districts undergoing desegregation.⁹⁹

The Board was proactive when it came to expanding neighborhood schools. A vote in June of 1978 added a sixth grade to four other elementary schools. Frank Widina's fourth proposal to shift these K-5 schools to a K-6 structure passed for the first time on June 21 by the typical 5-4 vote.¹⁰⁰ This resolution gave parents of sixth grade students in these schools (Friendship, Horace Mann, John Morrow, and Spring Garden) the choice of sending their children to the local elementary school or to a larger middle school.¹⁰¹ The creation of K-6 schools went against the 5-3-4 grade structure, which instead called for creating large, integrated middle schools for students in grades 6-8.

The legal fight against the PHRC continued but did little more than push back the deadline to desegregate. The Board appealed the Commonwealth Court's 1977 desegregation order to the state Supreme Court, which ruled in mid-August of 1978 by a 6-0 vote that the Board must follow the PHRC's order. The court was split 3-3, however, in determining whether the state Supreme Court should give specific instructions to the Board about when and how to desegregate. The opinion that the court considered the "majority opinion" held that the Commonwealth Court should modify the PHRC order.¹⁰² Commonwealth Court Judge Roy

⁹⁹ Among the programs cut due to the loss of funding was a camping trip designed to promote interracial cooperation. "City Schools Receive \$1 Million Ultimatum," *The Pittsburgh Press*, May 26, 1977, p. 1; Gutkind, "Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980," p. 98; John F. Soboslay, "Board Disputes Budget Editorial," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 24, 1977, p. 6; Jim Goodwin, "Time is Running Out for Local ESAA Title I Monies," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 18, 1977, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Board of Public Education, "Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA: Minutes," *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1977-1978*, June 21, 1978, p. 484 (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 8).

¹⁰¹ Of these four elementary schools, three were predominantly White (Horace Mann, John Morrow, and Spring Garden) and one was racially balanced (Friendship). Caren Marcus, "Board Meets Secretly on Baxter," *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 19, 1978, p. A2; Urban League of Pittsburgh, "Black Percentage of the Student Population: Pittsburgh Public Schools," pp. 3-5 (HHC).

¹⁰² Hugh Christensen, "City's Schools Told to Follow Integration Plan," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 12, 1978, p. 1; Lawrence Walsh, "Won Desegregation Case, City School Attorney Claims," *The Pittsburgh Press*, August 12, 1978, p. A-2.

Wilkinson, Jr. sent the Board its desegregation order on November 8. This court order enforced the PHRC order “with some flexibility” and required the Board to submit a desegregation plan by July 1, 1979.¹⁰³

Late in the summer of 1978, the tragic death of Margaret Milliones changed the makeup of the Board. On August 8, Milliones suffered a stroke and died at the age of 38. Ten days later, Mayor Richard Caliguiri appointed her husband, Jake Milliones, to fill her vacant seat on the Board. A supporter of desegregation, Jake Milliones was Black and a professor at the University of Pittsburgh.¹⁰⁴ In honor of the late Milliones, the Herron Hill Middle School became the Margaret Milliones Middle School on December 10.¹⁰⁵

Another change in the Board was the election of Mary Jane Jacobs over Elinor Langer as president in December of 1978. Jacobs was supported in the typical 5-4 split by Fink, Widina, Abrams, and Miscimarra. She took over from Helen Miscimarra, who had served as president in 1978, and continued the reign of the “conservative faction.” The following year, 1979, would see the election of four districts that made up most of this voting bloc on the Board: District 2 (Widina), District 4 (Abrams), District 6 (Miscimarra), and District 8 (Jacobs). The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* foreshadowed the upcoming election year in an editorial after Jacobs became president:

“This suggests that after the 1979 election the delicate balance on the board could be dramatically altered. It is unlikely that the conservative faction will gain and it could possibly lose. This further suggests that the conservative faction might be wise to move on a desegregation plan while it still has the votes to shape it to its satisfaction. The challenge for Mrs. Jacobs, therefore, may be to persuade her backers to move off dead center and frame a plan.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ “City Schools Get Deadline to Desegregate,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 9, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Ken Fisher, “Milliones’ Mate Fills Board Post,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 18, 1978, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ron Suber, “Milliones Middle School Dedicated,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 16, 1978, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ “Challenge for Mrs. Jacobs,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 11, 1978, p. 8.

While the “conservative faction” had not yet passed a desegregation plan, it had begun to shape one by shifting the conversation from “busing” to magnet schools.

Framing a Plan

The Board needed to approve a desegregation plan by the Commonwealth Court’s July 1, 1979 deadline, and it continued its focus on magnet schools to frame this plan. Superintendent Olson appointed a Task Force, which, along with the Magnet Advisory Committee, reported to the Board in February of 1979.¹⁰⁷ The Board also agreed, almost unanimously, on general guidelines for its magnet school desegregation plan. These guidelines stated that “desegregation will be achieved through a system of voluntary, racially desegregated magnet schools and through the limited assignment of students for programmatic purposes.” The keyword, “voluntary,” represented a victory for the “conservative faction.” Furthermore, assigning students “for programmatic purposes” was distinct from busing for desegregation purposes. Frank Widina was the only dissenter in the 8-1 vote to approve the desegregation guidelines because he wanted to ignore the PHRC order altogether.¹⁰⁸ While these guidelines did not make any concrete changes in the district, they built on the groundwork laid by earlier resolutions favorable to magnet schools.

In Carrick, residents made their opinions about desegregation heard. Carrick Community Council president Carlo Petrilli was among the leaders of a group of 400 parents and students who met with Board and PHRC officials on March 14, 1979 at Carrick High School. Members

¹⁰⁷ The Citizen’s Magnet Advisory Committee consisted of thirty-five people from various neighborhoods and met between August of 1978 and February of 1979. David Berkholz, the assistant executive director of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, chaired the committee. The thirty-five committee members represented the people who responded to letters that then-president Helen Miscimarra sent in March 1978 to a cross-section of Pittsburghers. DeMarco, “Magnet Programs in the Pittsburgh Schools,” pp. 90-4.

¹⁰⁸ Susan Mannella, “City School Integration Guidelines OKd,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 22, 1979, p. 1.

of a nearly all White audience argued against both busing for desegregation as well as against the idea that the PHRC could tell parents where to send their children to school.¹⁰⁹ One White woman said, “You ain’t busin’ my children from Overbrook and Carrick all the way across town. If you think they had it bad in Boston, you ain’t seen nothing yet.” The desegregation crisis in Boston, which erupted in violence at South Boston High School during the 1974-1975 school year, was just what Pittsburgh school officials wanted to avoid.

Unlike in 1971, when a reorganization plan had sent students from Concord Elementary School to Knoxville Junior High School, the Carrick community now had representation in Jean Fink. Fink, who attended the meeting at Carrick High School, was not willing to oppose all forms of desegregation. She knew that if the Board did not desegregate Pittsburgh’s schools, a state or federal court would. According to Frances Vitti, a “master of desegregation from Harrisburg” would create a desegregation plan if the Board did not desegregate the school district.¹¹⁰ For opponents of busing for desegregation, the real question was how and to what degree Pittsburgh would desegregate, not whether it would. The “conservative faction” viewed magnet schools as the method of desegregating that maximized school quality and minimized “forced busing.”

The Board narrowly passed a desegregation plan on March 21, 1979. The plan approved various magnet schools at the elementary, middle, and high school level. Magnets included programs in: computer science, Army JROTC, math and science, health careers, journalism and publishing, and business management. The plan cut back on Superintendent Olson’s proposal to

¹⁰⁹ The *New Pittsburgh Courier* reported that there were three Black people in the crowd, two of whom were reporters. Ron Suber, “Carrick Parents Call HRC a ‘Communist’ Agency,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 24, 1979, p. 1; Patricia Van Horn, “Carrick Parents: ‘Don’t Bus Our Kids,’” *South Hills Record*, March 20, 1979, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ Frances Vitti, interview with author, October 11, 2013.

create pairings with 47 elementary and middle schools in which the district would bus students to a building each week for interracial classes in art, music, library, and physical education.¹¹¹

The 5-4 vote in favor of this plan was slightly different than the usual ideological split. Langer voted for the proposal along with Fink, Miscimarra, Abrams, and Jacobs. Langer's support for the plan demonstrated that she would be satisfied by "moderate, voluntary" desegregation, as she had said during her campaign. Widina opposed the plan, joining Conley, Neiser and Millions in an eclectic group of dissenters. While Conley and Millions wanted a stronger desegregation plan, Widina was steadfast in his opposition to any busing of students outside their neighborhood for desegregation purposes.¹¹² Neiser, who was "on the fence" as usual, voted against the plan because some of her West End constituents wanted a stronger plan and others wanted no plan at all.¹¹³ The Urban League of Pittsburgh released a statement saying that the plan, which the organization helped develop, had become "gradually diluted."¹¹⁴ The plan the Board created was much weaker than what the PHRC demanded, since there were many Black and White segregated schools that it did not affect.

A student boycott that mainly hit two schools in the South Hills occurred on March 21, the day the Board made its decision. West Liberty Elementary School reported 19% attendance, and 27% of students came to Brookline Elementary School during this one-day symbolic gesture. Both schools had student populations that were roughly 95% White and would be affected by the pairing aspect of the desegregation plan.¹¹⁵ Miscimarra and Fink, the two Board members who

¹¹¹ Olson wanted the magnets and pairings to start in September 1979. The board instead approved magnets to start in September 1979, 20 pairings to begin in 1980, and the rest of the pairings to be spread out across 1981 and 1982. Susan Mannella, "School Board Trims Desegregation Plan," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 22, 1979, p. 1; "Making Desegregation Work," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 23, 1979, p. 6.

¹¹² Ron Suber, "Over 300 Langley Parents Show Against Busing," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 3, 1979, p. 19.

¹¹³ Mannella, "School Board Trims Desegregation Plan," p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Arlethia Perry, "Deseg Plan Riles Several Groups," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 31, 1979, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Early Kohnfelder, "Busing Boycott Strong at 2 Schools," *The Pittsburgh Press*, March 21, 1979, p. 1; Urban League of Pittsburgh, "Black Percentage of the Student Population: Pittsburgh Public Schools," pp. 2, 5. (HHC).

represented the South Hills, had constituencies that did not agree with the plan for which they voted. This plan nevertheless was a victory for the “conservative faction,” for the creation of magnet schools and the pairing of elementary schools for special subjects was a far cry from redrawing feeder patterns to desegregate every school.

Although the Board had approved and begun carrying out its desegregation plan, the proposal did not come close to the PHRC’s expectations. In late July of 1979, the PHRC rejected the plan and gave the district ninety days to submit a new one.¹¹⁶ The Board elected in 1976 had gone just about as far as it could to avoid and challenge the desegregation orders from the PHRC and Commonwealth Court. Elections for five new Board members were to be held on November 6, the day before the PHRC’s deadline for submitting another plan. Superintendent Olson eventually extended that deadline, so the next desegregation plan would come after the new Board took office.

From Conservative to Moderate

In the spring of 1979, the terms of representatives from the four even-numbered districts as well as Jake Milliones in District 3 had expired. Desegregation was even more central to this campaign than it had been in 1976. Since that first election, both the Commonwealth Court and the state Supreme Court had ordered the Board to desegregate. Moreover, the Board was on the verge of creating a new plan.

The May 16 primaries set up four races whose results seemed to change the Board’s stance on desegregation. Frances Vitti defeated Frank Widina in both the Democratic and Republican primaries in District 2.¹¹⁷ Vitti, a White woman, lived in Stanton Heights, a

¹¹⁶ Gutkind, “Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980,” pp. 113-4.

¹¹⁷ Frances Vitti, interview with author, October 11, 2013.

neighborhood that was becoming integrated.¹¹⁸ She sent her children to integrated schools, supported desegregation, and decided to enter the race for the Board after several Black community leaders asked her to run.¹¹⁹ Jake Milliones ran uncontested in the District 3 primary and secured his seat on the Board for four more years.¹²⁰ Incumbent Solomon Abrams won the Democratic nomination in District 4 but lost the Republican vote to David Engel, a White professor who favored desegregation. Helen Miscimarra cruised to victory in both primaries in District 6 to retain her seat.¹²¹ The primary in District 8 was a tight race between Mary Jane Jacobs and Reverend Jimmy Joe Robinson of Manchester. Robinson, a Black candidate, wanted a desegregation plan that “requires mandated mixing,” and he also favored the 5-3-4 school organization concept.¹²² Jacobs won the Republican primary, while Robinson won the Democratic one by 34 votes.¹²³

After the May primary, the newly formed Pittsburgh chapter of the National Association for Neighborhood Schools (NANS) showed its support for the “conservative faction.” Led by president Norene Beatty, NANS endorsed Widina for District 2, Abrams for District 4, and Jacobs for District 8. Widina and Jacobs were both members of NANS. Since Widina lost to Vitti in the primary, NANS urged voters to write him in come November.¹²⁴ Miscimarra would have gained the organization’s support, but she did not need it since she had won both primaries.

¹¹⁸ Stanton Heights was 3% Black in 1970 and 15% Black in 1980. City of Pittsburgh, *A Profile of Change: 1970-1980*, “Stanton Heights,” January 1984.

¹¹⁹ Frances Vitti, interview with author, October 11, 2013; Susan Mannella, “Widina Predicts Landslide Win in School Board Primary,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 19, 1979, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Susan Mannella, “Desegregation Proponents Take Lead in City Board Race,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 16, 1979, p. 3.

¹²¹ Susan Mannella, “School Board Contest Between Jacobs, Robinson Is Too Close to Call,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 17, 1979, p. 3.

¹²² Ernest T. Williams Jr. Memorial Center, “Election Newsletter,” p. 3. (HHC); Susan Mannella, “Incumbents Falter in School Race,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 7, 1979, p. 3.

¹²³ Mannella, “Incumbents Falter in School Race,” p. 3.

¹²⁴ Eleanor Chute, “Parents Form Group Against Forced Busing,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, March 26, 1979, p. A-2; Caren Marcus, “Board Debates Proposed Talk By Busing Foe,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, October 15, 1979, p. A-14.

All three of NANS' candidates lost the November 6 election, which marked a shift in the Board's ideological makeup. Vitti easily beat Widina, Engel edged Abrams by 37 votes, and Robinson won decisively.¹²⁵ With three Black members on the Board, there was as much Black representation in 1979 as there had been on the appointed Board in the early 1970s. There now appeared to be four votes for a desegregation plan that would include both magnet schools and busing for desegregation: Vitti, Milliones, Engel, and Robinson. John Conley and Elinor Langer could join this new group. Langer, though, had voted for the magnet school plan, and Conley was not in favor of mass redistricting. The remaining members from the previous "conservative faction" were Fink and Miscimarra, and Neiser was a swing vote. At the departing members' final monthly public hearing, members of the Homewood Committee for Direct Action gave Jacobs a cake as a mock farewell gift and played the McFadden and Whitehead song, "Ain't No Stopping Us Now."¹²⁶ The defeat of Widina, Abrams, and Jacobs was a loss for NANS but a gain to supporters of desegregation.

By taking proactive steps towards desegregation, the newly elected members appeared to have a different political leaning than the previous Board. Seven Board members – all except Fink and Miscimarra – wrote to the PHRC on November 15, 1979 expressing their intention to desegregate the schools. On December 5, the new Board passed two resolutions that committed the Board to the 5-3-4 grade structure as well as a February 29, 1980 deadline to submit a desegregation plan to the PHRC. Fink and Miscimarra voted against these two motions, but they

¹²⁵ Robinson received 5,453 votes to Jacobs' 3,389. Caren Marcus, "3 Integration Backers Elected to City Board," *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 7, 1979, p. 1.

¹²⁶ Phillip Harrigan, "School Board: No Sad Goodbyes," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 24, 1979, p. 1.

were now outnumbered.¹²⁷ The PHRC informed the Board in December that it had until March 14 to submit a plan.¹²⁸

To help the Board devise its proposal, Langer, the newly elected president, announced a Community Advisory Committee. This group of 120 citizens split into three subcommittees to make recommendations for elementary, middle, and high schools. The committee reported to the Board of Education in a meeting on February 5, 1980. While the 218-page report gave some suggestions, it did not agree on a full plan to give to the Board.¹²⁹ The day after the committee reported its findings, parents and students led another anti-busing boycott that reached all areas of the city and was especially pronounced in the South Hills schools. 35% of students were absent from city schools, compared to the normal absentee rate of 15%.¹³⁰

Despite the election of three new pro-desegregation Board members, the majority of the Board supported a moderate plan. The election of Langer over Milliones in a 5-4 vote for the presidency of the Board foreshadowed that while the “conservative faction” no longer controlled the Board, neither did the new pro-desegregation group.¹³¹ On February 12, the Board voted 5-4 against pairing schools as a means of desegregating the system. The pairing of a mostly Black and a mostly White elementary school would have meant that students from both schools would be in one building for grades 1-3 and the other for grades 4-5.¹³² Joining Fink and Miscimarra in the vote against pairing were Neiser, Conley, and Langer. The latter three Board members had

¹²⁷ Evelyn Neiser also voted against the resolution for a 5-3-4 grade organization. Mannella, “Integration Timeline Approved,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 6, 1979, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Gutkind, “Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980,” pp. 121-3.

¹²⁹ Susan Mannella, “Advisory Group Fails to Develop Integration Plan,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 5, 1980, p. 1.

¹³⁰ Susan Mannella, “Busing Boycott Skyrockets Absenteeism,” February 7, 1980, p. 1.

¹³¹ Langer defeated Milliones in a 5-4 vote for Board president at the December 5 meeting. Milliones’ votes in this secret ballot were likely Vitti (who nominated him), Engel, Robinson, and himself. Susan Mannella, “Integration Timetable Approved,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 6, 1979, p. 1.

¹³² Susan Mannella, “Pairing of Schools to Achieve Integration is Voted Down by Board,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 13, 1980, p. 3.

distanced themselves from the four pro-desegregation members (Robinson, Engel, Vitti, and Milliones).¹³³ The “conservative” faction had left the Board, and a “moderate faction” now had the balance of power.

The Board held three emotionally charged meetings before voting on the final plan in its February 27 meeting. On February 13, the Board released a proposal, and from the 18th to the 20th, the public had an opportunity to react. Hundreds of parents and community members attended these hearings, the second and third of which had to be held at Frick Elementary School instead of the Board of Education building to accommodate the crowd. Most speakers and audience members disliked the proposed desegregation plan and spoke out against redistricting, the closing of elementary schools, and one-way busing of Black students.¹³⁴

The Board passed the desegregation plan on February 27 in a vote that shows that the 1979 election did not quite change the Board’s ideology. Robinson was sick and did not attend the meeting, so the vote was 5-3 in favor of the desegregation plan with Vitti, Engel, and Milliones voting against it. Under the plan, which was set to begin in September of 1980, eleven elementary schools would completely close, and there was redistricting in twelve other elementary schools. Four K-8 schools – Arsenal, Frick, Knoxville, and Prospect – would lose their elementary component and become desegregated middle schools. All ten middle schools would be racially balanced. The plan would make 12,783 students change schools; of these students, 7,758 lived more than a mile and a half from their new school and thus would be bused.

¹³³ John Conley’s siding with Jean Fink, Helen Miscimarra, and company contributed to a comment made by Jake Milliones at a 1981 Board meeting after Conley had lost his bid for reelection. Following Miscimarra recognition of Conley’s work, Milliones said, “He was certainly not representing Homewood, the district where he resided.” Miscimarra replied, “I must remind you that you are elected by district but are elected to serve the School District of Pittsburgh.” Board of Public Education, “Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA: Minutes,” *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1980-1981*, November 25, 1981, p. 904 (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 9).

¹³⁴ Manella, “School Integration Hearing Jammed by Angry Parents,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 19, 1980, p. 12; Manella, “Parents Again Hurl Warnings, Threats at School Board over Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 20, 1980, p. 2; Ron Suber, “Two-Way Busing for Deseg or None at All,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 1, 1980, p. 22; Gutkind, “Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980,” pp. 129-32.

The Board already paid \$6.5 million a year to bus 19,700 students to school, and this plan would increase the busing cost by an estimated \$1.9 million. The racial breakdown of students to be bused was about half White and half Black. The plan also established two magnet schools that would be desegregated.¹³⁵ 40 of the city's schools would be racially balanced as defined by the PHRC.¹³⁶ An additional 13 schools would be within 10% of the PHRC guidelines, and the Board hoped to have these schools counted as "racially balanced." The percentage of students attending a racially balanced school was 27% in 1979 and would under this plan jump to over 50%.¹³⁷ The plan notably did not desegregate the high schools; high school students would "attend the high school that serves their elementary school area." Desegregating every school, according to the plan, would involve long distance busing that could increase White flight.¹³⁸

This plan was acceptable to Fink and Miscimarra but not to Milliones and his recently elected comrades. Fink liked that the plan did not affect the high schools and had only limited redistricting. While Miscimarra did not want so many middle school students to leave their communities, she said that the plan at least "provides some stability in the neighborhoods." Milliones, on the other hand, wanted to see more busing of White students to Black neighborhoods. Vitti thought the plan disproportionately affected Black students and low-income Whites.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Board of Public Education, "Amended Pittsburgh Desegregation Plan," March 14, 1980, pp. 1-5, 16-19; Mannella, "School Integration Plan is Approved," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 28, 1980, pp. 1, 3.

¹³⁶ The PHRC strayed slightly from the 30% range in its definition of a "racially balanced" school in 1980. The ranges were: 36.6-68.1% Black (elementary), 34.6-64.2% Black (middle), and 28.7-53.3% Black (secondary). Board of Public Education, "Amended Pittsburgh Desegregation Plan," March 14, 1980, p. 5.

¹³⁷ Eleanor Chute, "Brown v. Board of Education 50th Anniversary: Many Children Still Go to Schools That Are Nearly All White or All Black," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 16, 2004, <http://www.post-gazette.com/frontpage/2004/05/16/Brown-vs-Board-of-Education-50th-Anniversary-Many-children-still-go-nearly-all-White-or-all-Black-schools/stories/200405160208>.

¹³⁸ Board of Public Education, "Amended Pittsburgh Desegregation Plan," March 14, 1980, pp. 1-19.

¹³⁹ Mannella, "School Integration Plan is Approved," p. 3

The Board submitted the Amended Pittsburgh Desegregation Plan to the PHRC on March 14. Ten days later, PHRC executive director Malcolm Floyd sent Elinor Langer a letter rejecting the plan. Floyd explained that by expanding the PHRC's definition of a racially balanced school by ten percentage points, the Board had attempted to desegregate some schools without doing anything. Moreover, the Board's plan was in violation of the Commonwealth Court's 1977 order that required the district to desegregate all of its elementary schools by 1980.¹⁴⁰ The PHRC rejected the plan because it created partial desegregation, not complete desegregation.

It was back to the courts, but this time the Board won. In July, Judge Roy Wilkinson denied the PHRC's request to block the plan, saying that stopping the plan would keep "the *status quo* when all parties agree the *status quo* is unacceptable."¹⁴¹ Preventing the plan from going into effect could have led to a more complete desegregation plan, but it also could have simply kicked the can down the road. The Board had been kicking the can since the PHRC sent its initial order in 1968, and Judge Wilkinson decided that partial desegregation was better than no desegregation. The PHRC appealed first to the Commonwealth Court, then to the state Supreme Court, but it lost both appeals.¹⁴² Wilkinson's decision allowed the Board to carry out the new magnets, redistricting, and school closings.

Before the new school year began, the Board chose its next Superintendent. In an 8-1 vote on August 27, the Board hired Richard Wallace, who was White and had served as the Superintendent of schools in Fitchburg, MA. John Conley dissented because he wanted to hire one of the other two candidates, both of whom were Black.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Gutkind, "Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980," pp. 139-141.

¹⁴¹ Associated Press, "Desegregation Plan in Pittsburgh OK'd," *Wilmington Morning Star*, July 25, 1980, p. 4-C.

¹⁴² Gutkind, "Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980," pp. 150-1.

¹⁴³ Jake Milliones, who proposed an affirmative action measure in the summer of 1980 that passed the Board, criticized Conley and said, "Just because one is Black doesn't mean that one is qualified." Susan Mannella, "City's New School Chief Wins Board Approval, 8-1," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 28, 1980, p. 3.

A peaceful opening of schools in September was now the focus for Pittsburgh leaders of all political views. Civic groups like NANS, the local NAACP branch, and the Urban League of Pittsburgh all urged Pittsburghers to abide by the plan. Mayor Caliguiri, an opponent of busing for desegregation, also called for a smooth transition.¹⁴⁴ There was indeed a peaceful start to the desegregation process in September, with normal attendance and only minor complications about bus schedules.¹⁴⁵ Two policemen stood guard in front of Knoxville Middle School, but they had a quiet day.¹⁴⁶

Plan Upheld

The changes that went into effect in September of 1980 came from a desegregation plan that the PHRC had rejected. The court battles were not over, for the Board needed to amend this plan. In November of 1981, the Board approved the closing of several schools as well as changes to which schools housed magnet programs.¹⁴⁷ In April of the following year, the Commonwealth Court ruled that, although the Board had made a “good faith” attempt at desegregation, it had fallen short of the PHRC’s guidelines. The ruling noted that while the middle schools were desegregated because of changes in feeder patterns, 19 elementary schools and three high schools were still segregated.¹⁴⁸ The Board’s “conservative” and then “moderate” factions had created some desegregation but not desegregation of the entire district.

¹⁴⁴ Associated Press, “Busing Starts in Pittsburgh,” *Reading Eagle*, September 2, 1980, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Gutkind, “Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980,” p. 152.

¹⁴⁶ Mannella, “Integration Starts Calmly in City Schools,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 2, 1980, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ No Board member voted against the school closings, which would take place between 1982 and 1986 and included five elementary schools (Boggs Avenue, Holmes, Mann, Spring Hill, Woolslair), a middle school (Latimer), and two high schools (Allegheny and South Hills). Board of Public Education, “Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA: Minutes,” *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1980-1981*, November 25, 1981, pp. 839-46 (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 8).

¹⁴⁸ “Pittsburgh School District Told Plan Not Good Enough,” *Observer-Reporter*, April 21, 1982, p. A-5. With this order, the Court exempted 13 other elementary schools and three other high schools that fell outside the PHRC’s

Following this ruling, the Board submitted a desegregation plan in the fall of 1982 that built off its 1980 position. This revised plan added the closing of three racially imbalanced elementary schools and changed feeder patterns to redistrict five other elementary schools. Eight elementary schools would remain segregated, including five in the Hill District. At the high school level, the plan set up three magnet programs at Schenley High School, a predominantly Black school. These “magnets” were meant to attract White students at a rate of 115 per year until the school was “racially balanced.” The Board passed this desegregation plan by a 5-4 vote on October 25, 1982. By this time, two new members had joined the Board: Reverend Elmer Williams (District 1) and David Brownlee (District 5).¹⁴⁹ Williams, a Black representative from East Liberty, joined Jake Millions, Reverend Jimmy Joe Robinson, and Frances Vitti in opposing the plan.¹⁵⁰ Brownlee, a White representative from Point Breeze, voted for the plan along with Jean Fink, Helen Miscimarra, Evelyn Neiser, and David Engel.

Voting divided almost completely along racial lines. In 1982, Black students represented about 50% of the Pittsburgh Public Schools; the Board, on the other hand, was one-third Black and two-thirds White. The five votes for the 1982 plan came from five White members, while three of the four votes against it were from Black members, with Vitti as the lone exception. Millions and Vitti wanted to change feeder patterns to desegregate Schenley High School rather than create magnet programs. Millions said, “Fifth Avenue was closed and youngsters from the

definition of “racially balanced.” Eleanor Chute, “City School Desegregation OK’d,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 17, 1982, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Mayor Richard Caliguiri appointed Brownlee to the Board to replace Elinor Langer, who had announced she would be leaving town. Williams defeated Conley, who said before the general election that he would have resigned even if he had won due so he could pursue building housing for people with disabilities. Millions, Langer, Fink, and Neiser had won both primaries in the 1981 primary. Carmen Marcus, “School Board’s Conley to Quit Even if Elected,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, October 16, 1981, p. 1; Carmen Marcus, “Williams Wins City School Seat,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 4, 1981, p. C-1; Susan Mannella, “Brownlee Named to School Board,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 13, 1982, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ “Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA: Minutes,” *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1981-1982*, October 25, 1982, pp. 753-55 (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 8).

area were bused to Brashear so I don't see why they can't bus the students from South [High School] and South Hills [High School] to Schenley.”¹⁵¹ As in 1980, the dissenters to the 1982 plan did not think it went far enough. While Engel had sided with Millionses and Vitti to vote against the 1980 plan, this time around he voted with the more conservative White group. *The Pittsburgh Press* reported that Engel viewed the 1982 additions “as responsive to the court’s direction and as helping desegregation.”¹⁵²

A month later, on November 16, the PHRC approved this plan, ending a 14-year battle between the Board and PHRC.¹⁵³ The Board made a few final changes in December, including a resolution to develop “a program for improvement of educational quality” for each “low achieving Black-segregated elementary school” that the desegregation plan did not desegregate.¹⁵⁴

Resistance to desegregation by Board members had created a 1980 desegregation plan and subsequent amendments that did not meet the initial orders of the PHRC or Commonwealth Court. The desegregation plan was not a complete desegregation plan, according to the PHRC requirements or the demands of those who advocated for desegregation. The shift to an elected Board brought to power five members who pushed for magnet schools over large-scale redistricting. In the early 1980s, Jean Fink and Mayor Caliguiri both sent children to the magnet middle school, Sterrett Classical Academy. Those opposed to the redistricting portion of the 1980 plan, like Fink and Caliguiri, viewed it as a compromise but not a victory. The battle over desegregation would pick up again a decade later with some new faces and many familiar issues.

¹⁵¹ Diane R. Powell, “Wallace Deseg Plan Lacks Community Input,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 14, 1982, p. 1.

¹⁵² Eleanor Chute, “City School Desegregation OK’d,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 17, 1982, p. A-20.

¹⁵³ Eleanor Chute, “City School Desegregation OK’d,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 17, 1982, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ “Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA: Minutes,” *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1982-1983*, December 22, 1982, p. 83 (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 8).

Chapter 4: Neighborhood Schools and Resegregation

PHRC Stripped

In 1979, while the Board of Education was creating a desegregation plan, Mike Dawida was working on legislation to take power from the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. The PHRC had been ordering the desegregation of the Pittsburgh Public Schools since 1968, and diminishing its power would remove the pressure on the Board to desegregate.

Dawida's involvement in the movement against busing for desegregation had begun in 1971, when he was a senior at the University of Pittsburgh and volunteered to teach the Carrick students who boycotted Knoxville Junior High School.¹ In 1978, Dawida took office as a state Representative of Carrick after defeating the incumbent, Charles Caputo.² Dawida's proposed bill to prevent the PHRC from sending desegregation orders came several months before the Board of Education passed its desegregation plan in February of 1980.³ It could have changed the course of desegregation in Pittsburgh; without a PHRC order, the magnet schools plan may have remained, but busing for desegregation would have met far more opposition.⁴

Dawida's bill drew criticism that it preserved a racist school system by restricting desegregation. Representative K. Leroy Irvis of the Hill District and president of the Pittsburgh NAACP branch, Harvey Adams, both were against this bill. Irvis said that "White-controlled

¹ Mike Dawida sent his children to the Pittsburgh Public Schools. His son attended Knoxville Middle School, the site of the 1971 boycott. Dennis B. Roddy, "Mike Dawida Has Taken on the Odds – and Won," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 19, 1995, p. A1; Michael Dawida, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

² Virginia Linn, "Dawida Opens Drive to Unseat Romanelli," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 14, 1987, p. 5.

³ This legislation was not new. Dawida's predecessor, Charles Caputo, had proposed a similar bill but it did not become law. Three bills to take away the PHRC's power to order school districts to desegregate had passed the state House and Senate from 1974 to 1976, but Governor Milton Shapp vetoed all three. Shapp was not a proponent of busing for desegregation, but he thought that if the PHRC could not make desegregation orders, the federal government would. Jack L. Palmer, "A Case Study in School-Community Conflict over Desegregation" (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1974), p. 92; Senate of Pennsylvania, "Senate Wrap-Up for the 1975-1976 Legislative Session," 1976, http://www.pasenate.com/Archives/WrapUp/LegisWrapUp_1975-1976.pdf.

⁴ Jake Milliones said that if the bill passed, "then there will not be a plan" for desegregation. Susan Mannella, "Vote on Anti-Busing May Prove Roadblock," Susan Mannella, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 13, 1979, p. 3.

systems have been unfair in the distribution of opportunities to Black children.” To Irvis, busing for desegregation was important not because “a Black child must sit next to a White child” but instead because it could create a more equitable system.⁵ Dawida disagreed that the Pittsburgh Public Schools needed to redistrict in order to create equity. He wrote in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in 1979, “Predominantly Black or White schools are not necessarily evil or lacking in the ability to produce high-quality education.”⁶ Dawida recalls other dissenting opinions about his bill: “I remember having the debate on the floor of the State House and one of the Philadelphia Black legislators, who is a friend of mine, questioned me as to whether all the people who agreed with me were racist. And I said pretty much what I said to you, ‘I don’t think so.’”⁷ The disagreement over the bill came about because it would create more segregated schools without ensuring a fair “distribution of opportunities to Black children.”⁸ Dawida’s bill passed the House but did not get through the Senate.⁹

Dawida went on to become a state Senator, and in 1994, Harry Readshaw took office as Carrick’s state Representative. Like Dawida, Readshaw was a resident of Carrick and a Carrick High School graduate.¹⁰ He also had served as the president of the Carrick Community Council in 1976, the year Jean Fink was elected to the Board of Education.¹¹ Readshaw worked with fellow state Representative Frank Gigliotti of Brookline, a neighborhood west of Carrick in the

⁵ “House Bans Busing for Integration, Final OK Lags,” *Beaver County Times*, December 11, 1979, p. A13.

⁶ Michael Dawida, letter to the editor, “Against Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 20, 1979, p. 6.

⁷ Michael Dawida, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

⁸ “House Votes to Ban Forced Busing to Integrate Schools,” *Observer-Reporter*, December 11, 1979, p. A-5.

⁹ Edward Jensen, “Filibuster Blocks Legislation,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 11, 1979, p. 3; Michael Dawida, interview with author. Ivan Itkin, who had proposed the bill to create an elected Board of Education, opposed the bill because he did not think it would pass the Senate. He instead wanted legislation that would eliminate busing for desegregation at the elementary school level. Dennis B. Roddy, “Mike Dawida Has Taken on the Odds – and Won,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 19, 1995, p. A1.

¹⁰ Mark Belke, “Voters Have No Choice in Many State House Races,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 29, 2002, p. B7.

¹¹ Harry Readshaw, interview with author, January 2, 2014; “Past Officers Honored at Carrick Council,” *South Hills Record*, May 16, 1985, p. 9.

South Hills, to draw up legislation that would curb the PHRC's powers. Both Readshaw and Gigliotti were White.

Though Fink was not on the Board at this time, she did not stop fighting busing for desegregation. She, along with all the incumbents in the 1993 Board election, had lost largely because they had voted to increase taxes to gain more money for the schools. During Fink's only absence from the Board between 1976 and 2013, she worked for City Council member Joe Cusick, a White Beechview native who supported the Readshaw-Gigliotti legislation. Through her work with Cusick, Fink researched the Board's history with the PHRC and sent her findings to Readshaw.¹²

In 1995, Readshaw and Gigliotti introduced legislation to prevent the PHRC from ordering a school district to assign students to any school other than the school of the appropriate grade level nearest to their home.¹³ This bill was the starting point in the mid-1990s of a movement against the redistricting that the 1980 desegregation plan had created.

Pittsburgh and its Schools

The city's population had been declining since the 1950s, well before the Board began implementing desegregation plans (see Table 4.1). Pittsburgh's loss of steel factories and manufacturing jobs, as well as suburbanization, were key contributors to this population loss.¹⁴

¹² Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013; Dennis B. Roddy, "Cusick Takes it on the Chin in Latest Bout," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 21, 1997, p. A21.

¹³ Harry Readshaw, interview with author, January 2, 2014; The General Assembly of Pennsylvania, "House Bill No. 1689," Session of 1995, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=1995&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billType=B&billNbr=1689&pn=2014>

¹⁴ Between 1950 and 1987, Pittsburgh lost 75,000 jobs in the steel industry. Between 1979 and 1988, Pittsburgh lost 100,000 manufacturing jobs and gained only 35,473 jobs in the service sector. Barbara Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine: Neighborhood Politics in Chicago and Pittsburgh* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), pp. 29, 126.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools' student population was also declining, though this population loss began in the late 1960s, after the city's population started declining (see Table 4.2).

White flight and desegregation contributed to the White population loss. Throughout the 1970s, the Board implemented minor desegregation plans that met resistance, mostly from White communities. In areas like Carrick that were on the edge of the city, residents could move down the street and be in a different school district.¹⁵ Representative Readshaw of Carrick said of desegregation, "Many people who I recall, whether they be my neighbors or people from the area, said they were moving out of the city because of those laws that were going to be enforced."¹⁶ Darlene Harris, who served on the Board in the 1990s, remembered, "When they were closing schools I watched the whole street, everybody pick up on a street except for like three residents that had children."¹⁷ There was significant White flight during the 1970s and some from 1980 to 1985.

While some neighborhoods became more integrated, Pittsburgh, as a whole, remained segregated in the 1990s (see Appendices 6 and 7). According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, over 75% of White city residents lived in neighborhoods that were at least 90% White in the mid-1990s.¹⁸ The city in 1990 was still heavily White and Black, with a small Asian American population and even smaller Latino/a and Native American populations. In 1995, the year Gigliotti and Readshaw introduced their bill, the school district's student population was 55.3% Black, 42.9% White, 1.4%, "Asian," .4% "Hispanic," and under .1% "American Indian."¹⁹

¹⁵ Carrick bordered Brentwood, which had its own school district, and Baldwin and Whitehall, which had a unified school district. Harry Readshaw, interview with author, January 2, 2014.

¹⁶ Harry Readshaw, interview with author, January 2, 2014.

¹⁷ Darlene Harris, interview with author, February 10, 2014.

¹⁸ David L. Michelmore and Carmen J. Lee, "Busting Busing," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 11, 1995, p. A1.

¹⁹ Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of October 3, 1995," (November, 1995) p. 38.

Table 4.1: Pittsburgh Population by Race, 1950-2000

Year	Total Population	White	Black	% Black	“Asian and Pacific Islander”	“Hispanic origin (of any race)”
1950	676,806	593,825	82,453	12.2	367	No Data
1960	604,332	502,593	100,692	16.7	656	No Data
1970	520,117	412,280	104,904	20.2	1,418	2,818
1980	423,938	316,694	101,813	24.0	2,596	3,196
1990	369,879	266,791	95,362	25.8	5,937	3,468
2000	335,000	226,000	90,750	27.1	9,306	4,425

Table 4.2: Pittsburgh Public Schools Student Population, 1945-2000

Year	Total Population	% Black
1945	76,147	18.8
1955	70,760	25.9
1965	77,008	36.7
1970	72,722	39.9
1975	62,342	44.0
1980	45,907	49.9
1985	40,038	52.2
1990	39,661	52.0
1995	39,761	55.6
2000	38,560	57.6

White flight to private schools did not increase after the 1980 desegregation plan. In 1970, 67% of students who attended kindergarten through 12th grade and lived in the city went to public schools. In 1980, 71% of K-12 students living in the city attended public schools, and in 1998 the figure was about 76%.²⁰ The percentage of K-12 students attending public schools was highest in predominantly Black neighborhoods (see Appendices 8 and 9).

In some White neighborhoods in the 1990s, though, most parents sent their children to private school. In Squirrel Hill, for example, only 19% of elementary school students went to the neighborhood school, Colfax Elementary School; the rest attended private schools or magnet schools.²¹ The 1980 desegregation plan was largely a middle school plan, creating ten racially balanced middle schools, but in certain areas, over half of the White students attended private middle schools.²² The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported in 1995: “Fifty-eight percent of the non-Black East End students assigned to Reizenstein Middle School go to private schools; 54 percent of those assigned to Arsenal go to private school and about half of those assigned to Milliones and Gladstone opt out of the system.”²³ Middle school students from Brookline, Beechview, and Banksville – White neighborhoods that Gigliotti represented – were assigned to Milliones, which was located in the predominantly Black Hill District.²⁴ A neighborhood school in that part of the South Hills would change this feeder pattern, which had been set in the 1980 desegregation plan.²⁵

²⁰ City of Pittsburgh, *A Profile of Change: 1970-1980*, “(Pittsburgh Neighborhoods),” January 1984; Eleanor Chute, “Race Still Major Factor in Redistricting,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 12, 1998, p. B1.

²¹ Eleanor Chute, “Race Still Major Factor in Redistricting,” p. B1.

²² See Introduction, note 3 for the PHRC’s formula for determining whether a school was racially balanced.

²³ David L. Michelmore and Carmen J. Lee, “Busting Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 11, 1995, p. A1.

²⁴ David L. Michelmore and Carmen J. Lee, “Busting Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 11, 1995, p. A1.

²⁵ Board of Public Education, “Amended Pittsburgh Desegregation Plan,” March 14, 1980, Appendix 2, p. 1.

“Neighborhood Schools” Debates

Schools in 1995 were more integrated than they had been before the 1980 desegregation plan began. In 1995, 59% of students attended desegregated schools, as defined by the PHRC, compared with 27% in 1979.²⁶ Of high school students, 65% attended desegregated schools in 1995, versus 30% in 1979. Middle schools created the most racially balanced student bodies, with almost 80% of students attending desegregated schools in 1995, versus about 50% in 1979. Elementary schools were the least desegregated; about 40% of elementary school students attended desegregated schools in 1995, compared with under 20% in 1979.²⁷ The creation of more neighborhood schools would, given the segregation of Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods, re-segregate much of the school district.

As the state legislature debated the Readshaw-Gigliotti bill that would remove the PHRC’s desegregation powers, the main opposition came from Black leaders who thought that the legislation would decrease equity in the school system. Lou Venson, a Black member of the Board of Education, questioned the bill, as did Alex Matthews, also a Black member of the Board who was concerned about resource distribution in neighborhood schools. Matthews said, “The resources given to certain schools are better than others, and some of the best teachers go to certain schools and not others.”²⁸ Liz Healey, a White Board member and the Board’s president in 1995, also spoke of some Black Pittsburghers’ concerns that a return to neighborhood schools would lead to schools in high-income neighborhoods getting better resources than schools in low-income neighborhoods.²⁹ The Pittsburgh branch of the NAACP voted on June 20, 1995 to

²⁶ Eleanor Chute, “Race Still Major Factor in Redistricting,” p. B1. A different article put these figures at 65% and 30%, respectively. David L. Michelmore and Carmen J. Lee, “Busting Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 11, 1995, p. A1.

²⁷ David L. Michelmore and Carmen J. Lee, “Busting Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 11, 1995, p. A1.

²⁸ Sonya M. Haynes, “Back to the Future: Neighborhood Schools,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, May 27, 1995, p. A4.

²⁹ Frank Reeves, “New Bill to Stop School Busing: Two Legislators Say Racial Integration Effort Doesn’t Work,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 30, 1995, p. C1.

oppose the attempt to end busing for desegregation.³⁰ City council member Sala Udin, who is Black, attended this NAACP meeting and said that segregated schools would lead to “underachievement for African-Americans.”³¹ PHRC executive director, Homer Floyd, a Black man, also spoke against the bill.³²

Another argument against the neighborhood schools bill was that desegregation improved the racial climate in the city. In a letter to the editor in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, a Greenfield resident wrote, “When I purchased my home, I chose to remain in the city because of its schools’ cultural diversity and the magnet-school options available.”³³ This reasoning was less about distributing resources in an equitable way and more about students from different racial and cultural backgrounds learning together. Alice Carter of the Urban League of Pittsburgh had spoken from this point of view on a KDKA-TV program in 1980 regarding the desegregation plan. She said, “The benefits that I see are that they would get a chance to interact with people who are different than they are on a continuous basis.”³⁴

The bill gained support mainly from White Pittsburghers who did not want their children to leave their neighborhoods for school. On October 26, 1995, a group of 45 residents travelled to Harrisburg to tell legislators that they were fed up with their children riding a bus to other neighborhoods. Among this group were Cusick and fellow White City Councilman Dan Onorato, who thought that the neighborhood schools model would prevent the city from losing

³⁰ “NAACP Opposes End to School Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 21, 1995, p. B3.

³¹ Mark Belko, “Class Actions: Council Members, School Board Air Views on Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 29, 1995, p. B1.

³² Frank Reeves, “Busing-Curb Measure up in House,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 29, 1996, p. B1.

³³ Nancy Seibel, “My Sons Think It Would Be a Bad Idea to End Busing in Pittsburgh,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 8, 1995, p. A6.

³⁴ On this KDKA-TV program, Board member Elinor Langer used a similar argument: “If rich children and poor children and Black children and White children go to school together, children of different religions go to school together, I think the experience is much richer for everyone.” KDKA-TV, “Eyewitness Newsbreak: Children’s Edition,” (Pittsburgh: Westinghouse Broadcasting Co., August 25-28, 1980), accessed through Univ. of Georgia, Peabody Awards Collection.

its “tax base.”³⁵ White City Council member Gene Ricciardi of the South Side also joined Cusick in supporting the bill.³⁶ Mayor Tom Murphy, who was White, was outspoken in his support for the legislation and wanted an end to the PHRC’s power over the Board.³⁷ Murphy had been a state Representative in 1979 when the Board was considering its desegregation plan, and former Board member Frances Vitti recalled him as a “vocal opponent” of redistricting.³⁸ According to Liz Healey, who served on the Board during the 1990s, then-Superintendent Louise Brennan reported to the Board that “Tom Murphy had told her that the school board should defy the deseg order and just give people the schools they wanted.”³⁹ Mayor Murphy’s spirit of fighting the desegregation order for “people” who wanted neighborhood schools is reminiscent of Mayor Pete Flaherty’s more outspoken opposition to busing for desegregation in the 1970s.

On January 31, 1996, the state House debated the final passage of the Readshaw-Gigliotti bill. Mayor Murphy had sent a letter in support of the bill to each state Representative. The House voted, 166-34, to pass it. Dissenting opinions came mainly from Philadelphia, as Readshaw remembers and the transcript of the House debate confirms. Curtis Thomas, a state Representative from Philadelphia, opposed the bill in part because he thought that taking powers from the PHRC would move desegregation issues from the state to the federal courts. Representative Anthony Williams from Philadelphia also opposed the bill, saying that the issue in education was “not about whether they travel on something yellow across town. It is whether

³⁵ “Neighborhood School Boosters Take Case to Harrisburg, Tell Legislators What They Hope for,” *The South Pittsburgh Reporter*, November 7, 1995; David L. Michelmore and Carmen J. Lee, “Busting Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 11, 1995, p. A1.

³⁶ Jon Schmitz, “3 City Council Members Endorse End Forced School Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 1, 1995, p. C6.

³⁷ “Murphy Urges End to School Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 2, 1995, p. A1.

³⁸ Frances Vitti, interview with author, October 11, 2013.

³⁹ Liz Healey, interview with author, February 25, 2014.

green dollars follow them across the city or across your county.”⁴⁰ Over 80% of Representatives voted for the bill, though, and the belief that students should attend school near home won over counterarguments that schools would become resegregated and inequitably funded. The bill went to the state Senate’s Education Committee on February 7 for its consideration.⁴¹

Redistricting Redefined

The Readshaw-Gigliotti bill was still in the Senate Education Committee in late February when school officials released a proposal that would both assign students to school closer to their homes and resegregate part of the district. In 1996, the majority of the Board, which consisted of three Black and six White members, favored this measure.

Board members from odd-numbered districts had been elected in 1993. Valerie McDonald won District 1 but would be replaced in late 1994 by Lou Venson after she won a seat on City Council.⁴² Venson was an educational consultant and had been a standout principal at Beltzhoover Elementary School from 1968 to 1981. He also was part of the Equity Coalition, created in 1981 to form a desegregation plan that would be more equitable for Black students.⁴³ Jake Millions had passed away on January 2, 1993, leaving his District 3 seat open in that year’s election.⁴⁴ Filling this vacancy was Alex Matthews, a Black sales executive for Aetna Insurance who lived in Stanton Heights. Matthews was most concerned about the “achievement

⁴⁰ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, “Legislative Journal,” January 31, 1996, pp. 72-4, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/HJ/1996/0/19960131.pdf#page=30>; Readshaw, interview with author, January 2, 2014.

⁴¹ Pennsylvania General Assembly, “Information – History: House Bill 1689,” Regular Session 1995-1996, http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/bill_history.cfm?year=1995&ind=0&body=H&type=B&bn=1689.

⁴² Lou Venson was appointed by mayor Tom Murphy to complete the term of Valerie McDonald, who became the first Black woman to serve on Pittsburgh’s City Council. Sandy Hamm, “History Made in Pittsburgh,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 26, 1994, p. 1.

⁴³ The Equity Coalition proposed a plan that would have paired 44 elementary schools and two high schools. The Board rejected this proposal. Barbara Sizemore, *Walking in Circles: The Black Struggle for School Reform* (Third World Press: Chicago, 2008), pp. 138-140, 143.

⁴⁴ Sizemore, *Walking in Circles*, p. 155; Rick Adams, “Creating Political Unity in the Black Community,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 6, 1993, p. A7.

gap”⁴⁵ and disproportionately high suspension rates for Black students.⁴⁶ He also wanted to maintain busing for desegregation. District 5 voters elected Maggie Schmidt of Squirrel Hill. Schmidt, a White education and training specialist at Allegheny General Hospital, supported neighborhood schools but did not want an end to desegregation.⁴⁷ In District 7, Phyllis Bianculli, an assistant director of the Women’s Center and Shelter and a Carrick resident, defeated Jean Fink by a close vote.⁴⁸ Like Fink, Bianculli, who was White, supported neighborhood schools. In District 9, Evelyn Neiser of Sheraden reclaimed her seat that she had held from 1975 to 1985. Neiser, who had voted in favor of the 1980s desegregation plan, remained an “on the fence” vote.⁴⁹ Matthews, Schmidt, Bianculli, and Neiser all defeated incumbents, who lost in part because the Board had recently raised taxes.⁵⁰

Board members from even-numbered districts were elected in November of 1995, which also featured a special election for District 1. In District 1, Lou Venson of Homewood-Brushton won in an unopposed race. Darlene Harris, a White community activist from Spring Hill won the District 2 seat, and she wanted students to attend school in their communities. Harris recalls that she represented a “very diverse district” in which both Black and White students “were being bused away from the schools in their own neighborhoods.”⁵¹ Harris’ critique of busing was that, in her district, it was not leading to any more desegregation than would have existed

⁴⁵ The “achievement gap” refers to the disparities in educational outcomes between students of different racial groups, especially Black and White students. In the Pittsburgh Public Schools, students were eligible to participate in extra-curricular activities if they had a “C” average or higher. In 1993, 74% of White women, 63% of White men, 52% of Black women, and 38% of Black men were eligible. Ed Davis, “Are City Schools Pushing Black Males Toward Gangs?,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, October 13, 1993, p. A1.

⁴⁶ Anthony Todd Carlisle, “Matthews Seeks School Board Seat,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 13, 1993, p. A1.

⁴⁷ Carmen J. Lee, “3 in Race, 2 Views of City’s Schools,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 7, 1993, p. B4; “City Schools: Desegregation Request Uncertain,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 12, 1996, p. C9; Frank Reeves, “Pushing Neighborhood Schools,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 20, 1997, p. C2.

⁴⁸ Carmen J. Lee, “Time is Essence in School Election,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 8, 1993, p. B5.

⁴⁹ Carmen J. Lee, “2 in School Race Urging Change,” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, May 10, 1993, p. C6;

⁵⁰ Carmen J. Lee, “Challengers Win Support for Change in School Board Elections,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 19, 1993, p. A8; Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013.

⁵¹ Darlene Harris, interview with author, February 10, 2014.

with neighborhood schools. Liz Healey of Squirrel Hill won in District 4 and was a White education advocate for Arc-Allegheny who criticized the Readshaw-Gigliotti bill that would restrict desegregation.⁵² Jean Wood, a White insurance claim adjuster from Brookline in District 6, was in favor of neighborhood schools and won in Helen Miscimarra's former district.⁵³ Ron Suber of Manchester had represented District 8 on the Board since 1985 and ran unopposed. Suber, who was Black, supported the NAACP resolution against efforts to end busing for desegregation and also said the district should create neighborhood schools when possible.

The Board in 1995 was poised to support neighborhood schools and thus reel back the 1980 desegregation plan. Of the Board's three Black members, two (Matthews and Venson) wanted to continue busing for desegregation to ensure that the Board distributed resources equitably. Suber, the third Black member, was more of a moderate. Of the Board's six White members, four (Harris, Wood, Bianculli, and Neiser) were supporters of neighborhood schools. Schmidt, like Suber, took a middle ground on the desegregation issue. Healey leaned towards the position of Matthews and Venson. All three men on the Board were Black, and all six women were White. After a 9-0 vote, Ron Suber became the Board's president on December 4, 1995.⁵⁴

This Board would remain intact until the November 1997 elections. Its political views were in between those of the 1976 and 1979 Boards. In 1976, a five-member majority shut down plans in favor of busing for desegregation. The 1979 Board had two members strongly against busing for desegregation, three moderate members, and four members who favored a district-

⁵² "Around the Rivers: News from Your Neighborhood," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 1, 1995, p. C-3; Carmen J. Lee, "Two District Races Contested: Incumbents Wood, Wilson Challenged by Harris, Jenkins," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 8, 1995, p. B3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Sonya M. Haynes, "Ron Suber Elected City School Board President," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 6, 1995, p. A1.

wide desegregation plan. In 1995, six members were, to varying degrees, in support of neighborhood schools.

One of the Board's first orders of business in early 1996 was to create a redistricting plan. The meaning of "redistricting" had changed since the late 1970s, for it now symbolized a move to neighborhood schools that would replace busing for desegregation. On February 28, the Board released a redistricting plan for public review. The Board did not vote on this proposal, which was a starting point to be debated at public forums. The proposal created nine "clusters" around the district's nine high schools. Students would attend elementary and middle schools in the cluster nearest to their home and could still enroll in magnet schools outside of their neighborhood.⁵⁵

Neighborhood schools would create resegregation, or a return to segregated schools, because of the segregation of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods. For example, Black students in the Hill District would go to Schenley High School in the Hill District rather than Brashear High School in Beechview. White students from Beechview, Brookline, and Banksville would go to a new South Hills Middle School rather than Milliones Middle School in the Hill District.⁵⁶

Representatives from several Black political organizations criticized this proposal for resegregating the district. Esther Bush, president of the Urban League of Pittsburgh, referenced the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case that declared "separate but equal" to be constitutional when she said that the 1996 redistricting plan "is setting us back literally 100 years."⁵⁷ Bush was speaking at a meeting in Pittsburgh's NAACP office that Matthews, state Representative Joseph Preston of

⁵⁵ There were magnet schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The Board provided transportation to magnets for students living over 1.5 miles from the school. Carmen J. Lee, "Reinventing the City Schools," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 29, 1996, p. 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Jane Zemel, "Redistricting Plan Assailed," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 16, 1996, p. B1.

East Liberty, former Board member Leroy Patrick, and representatives from organizations including the Advocates for African-American Students also attended.⁵⁸

Across the Monongahela River, the battle against busing for desegregation was familiar for some Carrick residents. Jackie Dalrymple lived in Carrick, and her sister had been part of the boycott of Knoxville Junior High School in the early 1970s in which parents of Concord Elementary School students demanded that the Board send their children to Overbrook School instead of Knoxville. A generation later, Dalrymple supported the 1996 redistricting plan because it could allow her daughters at Concord Elementary School to go to Overbrook Middle School rather than Knoxville Middle School.⁵⁹

Pittsburghers expressed their points of view at eight forums at schools across the city held in March and April of 1996. The Board also held four public hearings at Schenley High School.⁶⁰ The terms that people used to describe the redistricting proposal reflected their political views. “Neighborhood schools” was the rallying cry for those in favor of the plan, while those against it believed that “resegregation” was unacceptable. Before a March 18 public hearing at Schenley High School, for instance, there was a rally of about 200 people protesting the redistricting proposal with signs like “(Re)segregation is not an option” and “My neighborhood is not my world.”⁶¹ There were also concerns from parents in East Hills, a Black

⁵⁸ Sonya M. Haynes, “Community Groups Join NAACP in Opposing School Redistricting,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 16, 1996, p. A1; Carmen J. Lee, “Camps Form Over School Redistricting,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 11, 1996, p. C1.

⁵⁹ Patti Murphy, “Possible End to Busing a Surprise to Some Parents,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 1, 1996, p. B1.

⁶⁰ The public hearings were originally scheduled to be held at the Board’s headquarters in Oakland but took place at Schenley High School on March 19, 20, 21, and April 8. The eight schools hosting forums were: Peabody High School, Allderdice High, South High, Carrick High, Westinghouse High, Schenley High, Greenway Middle School, and Allegheny Middle. “Forums on Proposed Redistricting Plan Set,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 1, 1996, p. A13; Board of Public Education, “Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA Minutes,” *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1995-1996*, May 30, 1996, p. 492 (Univ. of Pittsburgh ASC, Box 10).

⁶¹ Carmen J. Lee, “Friends, Foes of Board Plan Clash Noisily,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 19, 1996, p. B1. The Board held continuations of this hearing on the 19th and 20th of March. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* shows Jean

neighborhood, who said that neighborhood rivalries would result in violence if the Board transferred East Hill students from Allderdice in Squirrel Hill to Westinghouse in Homewood.⁶² These public debates were similar to those held in the 1970s, when Alma Fox of Pittsburgh's NAACP chapter criticized opponents of busing for desegregation like Mayor Pete Flaherty.

Following the hearings and forums, the Board revised the redistricting proposal into a more gradual plan that would keep some busing for desegregation. In a 7-2 vote on April 30, the Board approved the revised plan, which created three neighborhood schools for the 1996-1997 school year: South Hills Middle School as a wing of Brashear High School, a middle school in Arlington, and an elementary school in Morningside. Mifflin, an elementary school in Lincoln Place, would become a K-8 school by adding a grade a year for three years, starting in the 1996-1997 school year. This plan did not stop sending students from the Hill District to Brashear, as the original proposal would have. The plan also made changes for the 1997-1998 school year, including a new middle school on the North Side.⁶³ Starting in 1997-1998, North Side students would no longer cross the Ohio River to attend Langley High School in the West End and would, instead, go to Oliver High School. The revised redistricting plan was more costly than the February proposal, which would have saved, according to the Board's estimates, "\$3.8 million in the first year and \$1.6 million each year thereafter." The revised plan would cost an estimated "\$1.8 million the first year and around \$4 million each year thereafter."⁶⁴

A month later, the Board voted 8-1 to slightly revise the plan again. At its May 22 meeting, the Board came to a consensus to allow "open enrollment," which meant that students

Fink in a photo taken outside the public hearing on March 20. Lee, "Slamming the Plan," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 21, 1996, p. B1.

⁶² Michael Newman, "Angry Parents Confront Board Members – Again," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 22, 1996, p. C3.

⁶³ Part of this resolution was to, by June 1996, define the term "neighborhood preference."

⁶⁴ Board of Public Education, "Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA Minutes," *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1995-1996*, April 30, 1996, pp. 492-96 (Univ. of Pittsburgh ASC, Box 10).

could choose which school they would attend depending on the school's racial makeup and space available. Because of PHRC requirements, schools could only add students who would not take the school out of racial balance. Darlene Harris voted against open enrollment because it did not give students full choice to attend the school closest to their home.⁶⁵ Open enrollment did not create major changes; only 40 spots in three schools were available when it began in June of 1997.⁶⁶

Dissent against the 1996 redistricting plan was weaker than it had been against the 1980 desegregation plan. In 1980, three Board members had voted against the desegregation plan because it did not go far enough, and a fourth member would have voted against it but was absent from the meeting.⁶⁷ Lou Venson and Alex Matthews were the only two dissenters in 1996 and voted against the redistricting plan because it increased segregation in the district without ensuring that there would be an equitable distribution of resources. Ron Suber, Liz Healey, and Maggie Schmidt, moderates on the issue, all voted in favor of the plan, joining four members more solidly in favor of neighborhood schools. The votes of these three moderate members with the majority harkened back to the votes cast by John Conley, Elinor Langer, and Evelyn Neiser with the remaining two members of the "conservative faction" in 1980.

"Closest to the Student's Home"

As the Board debated the 1996 redistricting plan, an attempt by state legislators to ensure equity in neighborhood schools failed. The budget that Governor Ridge put forth in 1996 did not include a measure that would make all schools have a certain amount of per pupil spending. The

⁶⁵ Carmen J. Lee, "Schools Plan Altered to Let Some Choose," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 23, 1996, p. A21.

⁶⁶ These three schools were Morningside Elementary School, Mifflin Elementary School, and South Hills Middle School. Carmen J. Lee, "Attendance Option Unveiled," *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, June 4, 1997, p. A13.

⁶⁷ Jimmy Joe Robinson was ill at the meeting on February 27, 1980.

state House defeated an amendment to this budget that would have required \$5,000 per pupil for every school in Pennsylvania.⁶⁸ Representative Bill Robinson of Schenley Heights, a section of the Hill District, was an initial sponsor of the Readshaw-Gigliotti bill but withdrew his support. He wrote in an article in the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, “Without requiring that all students in the state receive at least a minimum amount of sustainable funding, forcing everyone into neighborhood schools is bound to be unfair.”⁶⁹

On June 27, the state Senate passed the neighborhood schools legislation that Readshaw and Gigliotti had proposed over a year earlier. There was a minor amendment to the bill dealing with housing for the elderly, but the “neighborhood schools” part of the legislation that stripped power from the PHRC remained.⁷⁰ The House approved the amended bill in a 159-40 vote, and the legislation went to the desk of Governor Tom Ridge on June 2.⁷¹ A key part of the bill’s neighborhood schools provision read:

Neither the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission nor any local human relations commission nor any court, as part of its review of any commission or local commission action or any complaint filed pursuant to this act, shall impose, upon the Commonwealth, any school district or other school entity, or any governing body, officer or employe of any of the foregoing, any requirement that pupils be assigned to attend any public school other than the school of appropriate grade level that the pupil qualifies to attend closest to the student’s home and shall not impose any other obligation or responsibility with respect to pupil school assignment or pupil transportation related to pupil assignment unless...⁷²

The restrictions marked by “unless” prevented a district from violating the 14th Amendment, and

⁶⁸ Nathaniel K. Wilkes, “Will Anti-Busing Bill Hurt City,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 17, 1996, p. A1; “Schools Taxed,” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, February 19, 1996, p. A8.

⁶⁹ Bill Robinson, “A Return to Jim Crow and ‘Separate but Equal,’” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 19, 1996, p. A7.

⁷⁰ The General Assembly of Pennsylvania, “House Bill No. 1689,” June 26, 1996, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&sessYr=1995&sessInd=0&billBo dy=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=1689&pn=3873>.

⁷¹ “PA. House Approves Measure to End Forced Busing of Students,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1996, p. B3; Pennsylvania General Assembly, “Information – History: House Bill 1689,” Regular Session 1995-1996, http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/bill_history.cfm?year=1995&sind=0&body=H&type=B&bn=1689.

⁷² The word, “employe,” is in the bill’s text. The General Assembly of Pennsylvania, “House Bill No. 1689,” June 26, 1996, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&sessYr=1995&sessInd=0&billBo dy=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=1689&pn=3873>.

it allowed districts to use busing for desegregation if they chose to do so.⁷³

Governor Ridge, a White man from Erie, Pennsylvania, supported the legislation and signed it in a symbolic fashion. On July 12, 1996, Ridge arrived at Concord Elementary School to meet a crowd of supporters. The Concord Elementary School, up the street from Readshaw's home, represented the 1971 boycott of Knoxville Junior High School, for most of the students who had boycotted Knoxville in 1971 had attended Concord the previous year. For residents of Carrick, this legislation was bringing the issue of busing for desegregation full circle. Jean Fink remembers the bill's success as a "home run."⁷⁴ At Concord, Ridge delivered a speech in which he spoke of how neighborhood schools would retain the "tax base" and "improve education by making it easier for parents and residents to get involved." Busing for desegregation was "a well-intentioned but failed experiment." The local politicians standing by Ridge on the auditorium stage were both Democrats and Republicans, and all were White men.⁷⁵

This new law had no immediate effect in Pittsburgh. Although the PHRC could no longer enforce desegregation, the Board continued to maintain some busing patterns that had been created for desegregation purposes. In the mid-1970s, Governor Milton Shapp had vetoed three bills similar to the one Ridge signed.⁷⁶ This time around, the legislation supporting neighborhood schools and the ideology behind it was dominant in each level of the power structure: the Governor, most of the state Congress, the Mayor, and a majority of the Board of Education supported an end to busing for desegregation. There was in the mid-1990s, as there had been in the 1970s, opposition to this position from Black legislators and Board members alike. The White-dominated legislature, Board, and executive offices, however, won this battle.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Jean Fink, interview with author, December 23, 2013; Harry Readshaw, interview with author, January 2, 1996.

⁷⁵ Those on the stage included Harry Readshaw, Frank Gigliotti, Mike Dawida, and mayor Tom Murphy. Carmen J. Lee, "Ridge Signs Neighborhood Schools Bill," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 13, 1996, p. B1.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 4, note 3.

1996 Redistricting Plan in Action

The start of the 1996-1997 school year featured the opening of three new schools created by the redistricting plan. The middle school in the South Hills was celebrated in Banksville, Beechview, and Brookline, all predominantly White neighborhoods that supported neighborhood schools. One Brookline parent said the feeder pattern that had sent students from the South Hills to Millions Middle School had been “like an open sore in the community for 20 years.”⁷⁷ In 1995, Millions had been 65% Black because students from the South Hills had ridden buses across the Monongahela River to the Hill District.⁷⁸ A year later, the student population at South Hills Middle School was 5% Black in 1996, while Millions Middle School in the Hill District was 91% Black. The creation of South Hills Middle School kept students closer to home and resegregated schools in both the South Hills and the Hill District.

Another middle school in the South Hills, Arlington Middle School, opened because of the redistricting plan. Arlington Middle School had a 35% Black student population in the fall of 1996.⁷⁹ Arlington would not have been a racially balanced school by PHRC guidelines because its Black student percentage was more than 15 percentage points below the citywide rate for middle schools, which was 56% in 1996. Students who attended Arlington in 1996 came from Arlington Elementary School (44% Black in 1996) and Phillips Elementary School (11% Black), according to the feeder patterns in the Pittsburgh Public Schools’ “Street Directory.” The previous school year, students from these two elementary schools had attended Gladstone Middle School in Hazelwood or Prospect Middle School in Mt. Washington.⁸⁰ The total student

⁷⁷ Carmen J. Lee, “Reinventing the City Schools,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 29, 1996, p. A12.

⁷⁸ Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 1, 1996,” (November, 1996) p. 12.

⁷⁹ Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 1, 1996,” (November, 1996) p. 12.

⁸⁰ “Pittsburgh Public Schools Street Directory,” 1995-1996 (PPS); “Pittsburgh Public Schools Street Directory,” 1996-1997 (PPS); Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 1, 1996,” (November, 1996) pp. 10-12. One student interviewed by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* said that if Arlington had not opened in September

population of Gladstone declined, with more White students leaving than Black students. Gladstone's Black population increased from 62% Black in 1995 to 73% Black in 1997.⁸¹ With the addition of the two new middle schools, the number of students attending middle school in the South Area of the school district rose from 1,456 in October of 1995 to 1,914 in October of 1996.⁸² The population of middle school students in each of the three other Areas dropped, while the total number of middle school students in Pittsburgh remained the same.⁸³

In Morningside, a new elementary school opened. Morningside Elementary School was located in Darlene Harris' district, and she supported the redistricting plan as well as the Readshaw-Gigliotti legislation. As she remembers, "My district that I represented was already diverse, where you were busing students just to bus." Harris recalls in her district, "you'd talk to poor parents in an African American setting and they felt no different than White parents. They wanted their children close to home."⁸⁴ When Morningside Elementary School opened in 1996, its student population was 55% Black.⁸⁵ The original feeder pattern for Morningside, though, would have made the school predominantly White by drawing students mostly from the Morningside neighborhood, which was 4% Black in 1990 and 10% Black in 2000. Demands to push the cutoff line for Morningside Elementary School were successful, and school officials

of 1996, he would have been assigned to Knoxville Middle School. Carmen J. Lee, "Neighborhood Schools Open," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 4, 1996, p. C1.

⁸¹ Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of October 1, 1996," (November, 1996) p. 12; Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of September 29, 1997," (November, 1997) p. 12.

⁸² The borders of the South Area were Mt. Washington to the west, the Monongahela River to the north, and Arlington to the east. Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of October 1, 1996," (November, 1996) pp. 10-11.

⁸³ The other three Areas were: North/West Area, East/Central Area, and East Area. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸⁴ Darlene Harris, interview with author, February 10, 2014.

⁸⁵ Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of October 1, 1996," (November, 1996), p. 11.

moved it to Black Street so that the feeder pattern would include parts of East Liberty and Garfield, both predominantly Black neighborhoods.⁸⁶

The three schools created during the first phase of the 1996 redistricting plan moved the district to a neighborhood schools model and increased segregation in the district. The construction of two predominantly White middle schools in the South Hills led to the resegregation of Milliones and also pushed Gladstone out of the “racially balanced” category. Morningside Elementary School may not have opened as a racially balanced school if there had not been demands for a change in the feeder pattern. Because Morningside Elementary School was close to both Black and White neighborhoods, the school district could create a racially balanced neighborhood school there. In segregated parts of the city like the South Hills and Hill District, however, neighborhood schools and desegregation were incompatible.

The following year, the second phase of the 1996 redistricting plan kicked in. For the 1997-1998 school year, the plan created Arthur J. Rooney Sr. Middle School,⁸⁷ Banksville Elementary School, and Woolslair Elementary School.⁸⁸

Rooney was located on the North Side and opened in 1997 with a student body that was 41% Black. Students at Rooney would have previously attended Greenway Middle School or Allegheny Middle School. Greenway’s Black student population decreased from 49% in 1996 to 44% in 1997. The percentage of Black students at Allegheny increased from 65% in 1996 to 76% in 1997 to 83% in 1998. The total student population at Greenway and Allegheny declined

⁸⁶ Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine*, p. 25; Pittsburgh Department of City Planning, *Census: Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, 2000), p. 63, http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/cp/assets/census/2000_census_pgh_jan06.pdf; Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Member, interview with author, February 25, 2014. This person served on the Board during the 1990s and requested to not be named.

⁸⁷ In 1933, Art Rooney Sr., a North Side native, spent \$2,500 for a National Football League franchise that became the Pittsburgh Steelers.

⁸⁸ Board of Public Education, “Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA Minutes,” *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1995-1996*, April 30, 1996, pp. 495-96 (Univ. of Pittsburgh ASC, Box 10).

by 150 and 186 students, respectively.⁸⁹ In the 1996-1997 school year, Allegheny would have no longer been a racially balanced school by PHRC standards; Rooney and Greenway would have been just within the PHRC guidelines.⁹⁰

Banksville Elementary School gave Banksville residents their second neighborhood school in two years. In 1997, Banksville had a student body that was 16% Black, Woolslair Elementary School was 29% Black when it opened, and South Hills Middle School remained 5% Black in its second year of existence.⁹¹ The redistricting plan also shifted attendance patterns for Oliver High School and Langley High School, which contributed to a slight decrease in the percentage of Black students at Langley (45% in 1996 to 42% in 1997) and an increase of the Black population at Oliver (55% in 1996 to 61% in 1997). Mifflin Elementary School was now a neighborhood K-7 school, a change that affected the feeder pattern to Gladstone Middle School, where the 1980 desegregation plan had sent Mifflin students.⁹² Gladstone would have lost its “racially balanced” marker in the 1997-1998 school year. Most of the White 6th and 7th grade students who would have gone to Gladstone now went to Mifflin, and three of the four other elementary schools that fed into Gladstone were predominantly Black schools.⁹³

⁸⁹ Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of September 29, 1997,” (November, 1997), p. 12; Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 7, 1998,” (December, 1998), p. 50.

⁹⁰ In the 1997-1998 school year, Black students made up 56.3% of the district’s middle school population. By the PHRC formula (see Introduction, note 3), middle schools between 41.3% and 71.3% Black would have been racially balanced. Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of September 29, 1997,” (November, 1997), p. 12.

⁹¹ Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of September 29, 1997,” (November, 1997), pp. 10-12.

⁹² Board of Public Education, “Amended Pittsburgh Desegregation Plan,” March 14, 1980, Appendix 2, p. 1.

⁹³ See note 90. Mifflin’s 6th and 7th grades were 13% Black, while Gladstone’s 6th and 7th grades were 81% Black. Gladstone’s 8th grade, which would in 1997-1998 include 8th grade students who had attended Mifflin Elementary School, was 60% Black. Some students who attended Arlington Middle School (34% Black in the fall of 1997) would have also otherwise gone to Gladstone. The four schools besides Mifflin that fed into Gladstone were: Burgwin, Crescent, Greenfield, and Minadeo. Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of September 29, 1997,” (November 1997), pp. 12, 19, 23; Carmen J. Lee, “Neighborhood Schools Open,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 4, 1996, p. C1; “Pittsburgh Public Schools Street Directory,” 1995-1996, p. 9b (PPS); “Pittsburgh Public Schools Street Directory,” 1997-1998, p. 7b (PPS).

From 1995 to 1997, the percentage of students attending racially balanced schools decreased from 59% to 52%.⁹⁴ With the opening of South Hills Middle School, Arlington Middle School, Rooney Middle School, and changes in other feeder patterns, the 1996 redistricting plan had led to this trend. Neighborhood schools were, in some areas, resegregated schools.

The Board was able to make these changes in part because it was no longer under a court order to desegregate. By around 1996, according to Liz Healey, school officials had determined that the Commonwealth Court's desegregation order lasted only for a period of time and that it had expired.⁹⁵ Advocates for neighborhood schools now had an open lane without the PHRC or Commonwealth Court pressuring the Board to maintain a level of desegregation.

“One-Two Punch”

Towards the end of the 1996-1997 school year, Pittsburgh voters made a decision in a referendum that showed their views about neighborhood schools. This referendum vote came from a bill proposed by Frank Gigliotti, who had co-sponsored the neighborhood schools legislation along with Harry Readshaw. The state House passed the bill to create the referendum in a 170-30 vote on May 8, just a week after the Board had passed the redistricting plan. Gigliotti, Readshaw, and their political allies disapproved of the Board's plan because they did not think it created enough neighborhood schools. Gigliotti's referendum asked voters in the May 1997 primary: “Do you favor the neighborhood school concept as a necessary part of our

⁹⁴ Steve Thomas, “Desegregation and Resegregation,” cited in Eleanor Chute, “*Brown v. Board of Education* 50th Anniversary: Many Children Still Go to Schools That Are Nearly All White or All Black,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 16, 2004, <http://www.post-gazette.com/frontpage/2004/05/16/Brown-vs-Board-of-Education-50th-Anniversary-Many-children-still-go-nearly-all-White-or-all-Black-schools/stories/200405160208>

⁹⁵ Liz Healey, interview with author, February 25, 2014.

public school system?”⁹⁶ The referendum was a public opinion poll that would not, by itself, create any changes in the district.

The neighborhood schools concept did not guarantee that each school would be well resourced. Just as Matthews had challenged the redistricting plan, Black state Representatives Joseph Preston of East Liberty and Bill Robinson argued that simply creating more neighborhood schools would advantage students in White neighborhoods and disadvantage students in Black neighborhoods. Preston said in the House debate that with the referendum, “You are only promoting racism.” Robinson instead proposed a referendum question that would have asked voters whether they favored equally funded neighborhood schools, but the House voted this proposal down 162-38.⁹⁷ This vote was a precursor to the House’s rejection of Robinson’s proposal in June to ensure that each school received a minimum amount of funding. After the state Senate passed the legislation, Gigliotti said that the referendum and the neighborhood schools bill “makes a one-two punch in favor of neighborhood schools.”⁹⁸

On the May 20 primary, the referendum question was one of several important local decisions Pittsburgh voters made. Seats for the five odd-numbered districts were up for election on the Board of Education. There was also a mayoral primary and because of the Democratic Party’s dominance in Pittsburgh, the primary was the election.⁹⁹

The referendum passed by a 3-1 margin, and the results varied greatly by neighborhood. In working- and middle-class White neighborhoods such as Hays, Lincoln Place, and neighborhoods in the South Hills, the referendum passed overwhelmingly. For example, the 19th

⁹⁶ Frank Reeves, “House Votes No on Forced Busing,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 29, 1996, p. C2.

⁹⁷ Frank Reeves, “School Referendum Gets House Support,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 9, 1996, p. B-6.

⁹⁸ Keith Reed, “Neighborhood Schooling Bill Passes Overwhelmingly,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 6, 1996, p. A4.

⁹⁹ In the Board of Education election, though, the Republican primary did matter, and Board candidates typically registered in both the Democratic and Republican primaries.

Ward, comprised of Brookline, Mt. Washington, and Beechview, voted “Yes” by nearly a 7-1 margin. Middle school students from the 19th Ward were attending South Hills Middle School for the first time that school year. In predominantly Black neighborhoods, such as the Hill District, Homewood, and Manchester, the referendum lost by a close margin. In affluent White neighborhoods like Squirrel Hill and Point Breeze, the referendum passed 2-1.¹⁰⁰

The Board of Education primary elections decided four of five Board positions but did not change the racial or political makeup of the Board. In District 1, Lou Venson did not seek reelection. Randall Taylor, a Black man who lived in Point Breeze and chaired the Pittsburgh NAACP’s Education Committee, won the Democratic primary but lost the Republican one. Taylor wanted to maintain desegregation measures and went on to easily win the election in November. Alex Matthews won both primaries in his District 3 reelection bid. The closest race came in District 5, pitting Maggie Schmidt, a moderate on redistricting who had supported the 1996 redistricting plan, against neighborhood schools advocate Richard Kleppick, who was also White. Kleppick had the support of Frank Gigliotti and the Citizens for Neighborhood Schools, but Schmidt narrowly defeated him in both primaries. A familiar face reemerged on the Board in District 7. Phyllis Bianculli did not run for reelection, and Jean Fink won the seat. While Bianculli supported neighborhood schools, she did not have the same deep-rooted connection to the issue as Fink. Finally, in District 9, voters reelected Evelyn Neiser.¹⁰¹ New members did not take office until early December of 1997.

¹⁰⁰ Mackenzie Carpenter, “School Vote Fails to Yield Busing Defeat,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 22, 1997, p. A1.

¹⁰¹ Gary Rotstein, “Randall Taylor is Front-Runner for School Board Seat,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 5, 1997, p. C4; Carmen J. Lee, “Schmidt Defeats Kleppick to Retain District 5 School Board Seat,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 21, 1997, p. A23. See p. A26 for primary elections results.

Gigliotti was disappointed after this election because Kleppick in District 5 could have been the fifth vote for a sweeping neighborhood schools plan.¹⁰² He said after the referendum vote and the election of Schmidt in District 5, “Sure, she won, but the 14th Ward gets everything they want, the best schools, and their kids aren’t bused anyplace. There’s nobody bused to the North Side or Hazelwood, just the people of the South Hills, who’ve been punished for the past 14 years.”¹⁰³ Schmidt represented much of the 14th Ward, which included Squirrel Hill and Point Breeze. These neighborhoods were part of the feeder pattern to Reizenstein Middle School, but Reizenstein was much closer to the 14th Ward than Milliones was to the South Hills. Moreover, Reizenstein was predominantly Black because, as previously mentioned, the majority of non-Black parents in 14th Ward sent their children to private middle schools.

After the 1997 Board elections, there were still four members (Wood, Harris, Fink, and Neiser) strongly in favor of neighborhood schools. Two members (Taylor and Matthews) wanted to continue busing for desegregation. Three members (Healey, Suber, and Schmidt) were in the middle. In the Mayoral election, Tom Murphy, who supported neighborhood schools over desegregation, won 30 of 32 wards to retain his position.¹⁰⁴

Another political change in 1997 was the Board’s search for a new Superintendent, a process whose racial implications were particularly strong because of previous hiring decisions. Louise Brennan had been Superintendent since 1992, when the Board chose her over Loretta Webb, a Black candidate.¹⁰⁵ In 1992, Liz Healey was the chair of the Superintendent Search

¹⁰² Mackenzie Carpenter, “School Vote Fails to Yield Busing Defeat,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 22, 1997, p. A1.

¹⁰³ Mackenzie Carpenter, “School Vote Fails to Yield Busing Defeat,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 22, 1997, p. A11.

¹⁰⁴ James O’Toole, “Murphy Renominated,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 21, 1997, p. A1.

¹⁰⁵ Mackenzie Carpenter, “New Superintendent Will Face a Contentious Board,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 13, 1997, p. A6. Ron Suber voted against the appointment of Brennan, and Alex Matthews’ campaign in 1993 included a criticism of Brennan’s appointment. Carmen J. Lee, “Brennan Contract Extended 2 Years,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 27, 1995, p. B1.

Committee. She remembers that during executive sessions, some Board members were making comments like, “Pittsburgh isn’t ready for a Black Superintendent. We can’t consider that candidate.” White Board member Healey recalls that “the majority of the Board members wound up dismissing from the search some of the best qualified candidates.”¹⁰⁶ After the Board’s selection of Brennan, the Advocates for African-American Students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, a grassroots community organization, filed a lawsuit against the district. This legal challenge consisted of five claims of racial discrimination, including the hiring of Brennan over more qualified Black candidates. The Commonwealth Court’s ruling in this case, however, stated that the Advocates did not have “standing” to challenge the Superintendent hiring because they were not “directly affected,” even though they were parents of Pittsburgh Public Schools students.¹⁰⁷

In 1997, there were five finalists for the Superintendent position. A fifteen-member Community Input Committee had given ratings of “highly recommended” to two candidates, “recommended” to two others, and had offered a fifth name to the Board without a recommendation. Of the candidates, two were Black, two were White, and one was Native American.¹⁰⁸ On June 4, the Board announced the selection of Dale Frederick, a Native American candidate and the former Superintendent in Warren, Ohio, as Brennan’s successor. His many previous positions as an educator included “desegregation counselor” in the Tucson

¹⁰⁶ Healey recalls that the Board dropped the most qualified candidate, Carl Cohn of San Diego, who was Black, during the selection process. Liz Healey, interview with author, February 25, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ The Advocates for African-American Students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Statement by Advocates for African-American Students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools,” <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/Page/926>; Wanda Henderson, email with author, April 19, 2014; Wanda Henderson, “Statement on Behalf of The Advocates for African-American Students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools,” (Pittsburgh Board of Education, Education Committee Meeting, March 6, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ Carmen J. Lee, “City School Leader Chosen,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 4, 1997, p. A1; “Community Input Committee Pittsburgh Superintendent Search,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 13, 1997, p. A6.

School District.¹⁰⁹ The Community Input Committee had not given Frederick a rating because the school district of Warren had fewer than 8,000 students, compared with Pittsburgh's almost 40,000 students, and also had low scores on state tests.¹¹⁰ Board members, however, spoke favorably of Frederick after the hiring. According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Alex Matthews supported Frederick's involvement with Black and Greek Orthodox ministers in Warren, Darlene Harris called him "dynamic," and Evelyn Neiser said that he "didn't dilly-dally" when answering questions.¹¹¹

Gigliotti's "one-two punch" only partially landed in 1997. The Board of Education election in District 5 featured a moderate, Maggie Schmidt, winning over Richard Kleppick, who may have created another "conservative faction." The pro-neighborhood schools referendum gave ammunition to the Board members who supported the redefined version of "redistricting." While the Mayor did not have power over the school district in Pittsburgh, Tom Murphy remained in office and was opposed to busing for desegregation. Superintendent Frederick did not favor the swinging of the pendulum towards neighborhood schools, but he also did not publicly oppose the movement. The 1997 elections did not alter the political leaning of the Board, but the referendum was a modest victory for the neighborhood schools camp.

Limited Redistricting

During the 1997-1998 school year, a new round of the battle over desegregation, neighborhood schools, and resegregation began. In December of 1997, Randall Taylor and Jean Fink were sworn in as new Board members, and the Board elected Alex Matthews as its next

¹⁰⁹ Deepak Karamcheti, "Frederick Selected as School Superintendent," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 7, 1997, p. A1.

¹¹⁰ Deepak Karamcheti, "Board Selection Criticized," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 11, 1997, p. A1.

¹¹¹ Carmen J. Lee, "School Pick 'Dynamic,'" *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 5, 1997, p. 1.

president. Along with his own vote, Matthews received votes from Taylor, Liz Healey, Evelyn Neiser, and Maggie Schmidt to defeat Ron Suber.¹¹² The support for Matthews as Board president did not, however, translate to support for continued busing for desegregation.

In early June of 1998, officials in the Pittsburgh Public Schools presented a new redistricting proposal for the Board to consider. This proposal would create more small neighborhood schools, close other schools, and redraw attendance lines to send students to school closer to their home. Under the proposal, the percentage of students attending racially balanced schools would drop from 52% in 1997 to 47% in 1998.¹¹³ The proposal would cost \$32 million but would also create \$22 million in savings.¹¹⁴ Alex Matthews called it a “resegregation plan,” while Jean Fink countered that there was still an “achievement gap” after “busing kids around this city for 18 years.”¹¹⁵

After hearing comments from the Board and the public, school officials revised the plan and submitted a new one to the Board on June 11. Superintendent Frederick privately disliked the initial plan, according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and “wanted to make sure we don’t completely isolate kids in the school system.” He advocated for the revised plan.¹¹⁶ Frederick also said that redistricting “does not mean the same thing to everybody. It means to some people attending the school closest to their home. To some people, it means resegregation.”¹¹⁷ This statement is reflective of how Board members, Pittsburgh residents, and legislators were often talking past one another when discussing “redistricting.”

¹¹² Carmen J. Lee, “School Board Cuts 94 Jobs,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 2, 1997, p. C4.

¹¹³ Torsten Ove, “Redistrict Plan Coolly Received by Board,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 4, 1998, p. B8.

¹¹⁴ Eleanor Chute, “School Redistricting is Work in Progress,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 9, 1998, p. D2.

¹¹⁵ Torsten Ove, “Redistrict Plan Coolly Received by Board,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 4, 1998, p. B8.

¹¹⁶ Mackenzie Carpenter, “Rough Start for School Chief,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 30, 1998, <http://old.post-gazette.com/school/19980830dale.asp>.

¹¹⁷ Eleanor Chute, “On Eve of School Vote, Board, Parents Split,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 24, 1998, p. B1.

Under the revised, six-year plan, 51% of students would attend racially balanced schools in 1998.¹¹⁸ The plan called for 99 schools in 87 buildings, a change from the 91 schools in 88 buildings that existed in the 1997-1998 school year (see Appendix 10). This shift would address overcrowding in elementary schools. Gladstone Middle School, which was 75% Black in 1997, was scheduled to close in 2001. Students from Homewood who had attended Gladstone would go to Reizenstein Middle School. Students from Greenfield would go to Greenfield Elementary School, which would become a K-8 school. Another part of the plan changed the feeder pattern at Prospect Middle School in the South Hills by transferring students, most of whom were Black, to Knoxville Middle School and Millions Middle School who had previously attended Prospect. Students living in the Lower Hill District, a Black neighborhood, now had the option of attending Millions or travelling across the Monongahela River to go to Prospect.¹¹⁹

The Board passed the plan 6-3 with dissenting votes from Matthews, Healey, and Taylor. Darlene Harris said the plan would help keep families in the district, while Taylor said, “This plan is full of racism.”¹²⁰ Liz Healey put forth a motion that included removing the closing of Gladstone, but she only got four of the necessary five votes to pass the amendment.¹²¹ The Gladstone closure was a point of contention to Matthews, as shown by the following exchange that took place at the Board meeting on June 24 between Matthews and John Barry, the director of student information management:

Mr. Matthews: Please explain why, if the concentration is on neighborhood schools you have Gladstone shutting down and the feeder pattern jumping over schools.

Mr. Barry: I think there are other factors besides the number of students.

Mr. Matthews: Is that race?

¹¹⁸ Ann Belser, “Improved Racial Balance in Plan,” City Schools Officials Present Revision,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 12, 1998, p. B1.

¹¹⁹ Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, “Pittsburgh Public Schools: Attendance Area Realignment and Facilities Utilization,” *Board of Public Education Minutes*, June 24, 1998, pp. 692-95 (Univ. of Pittsburgh ASC, Box 11).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 704.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 700

Mr. Barry: No, it isn't race and I take offense to that comment.
Mr. Matthews: I'm glad you do because I take offense at this plan.¹²²

The tensions on the Board at this meeting were a continuation of those expressed over the 1996 redistricting plan and boiled down to a conflict between those pushing for neighborhood schools and those pushing against resegregation.

The changes in 1998 that affected Greenfield, Gladstone, Prospect, and Milliones all contributed to an increase in both neighborhood schools and resegregation. Greenfield became a predominantly White K-8 school as Gladstone's Black student population increased each year until it closed before the 2000-2001 school year. Greenfield's student population decreased from 61% Black in 1998 to 26% Black in 2001. At Prospect Middle School, changes in the feeder pattern contributed to a decrease in the school's Black student population from 59% in 1997 to 27% in 2000. At Milliones Middle School, which had become resegregated after the construction of South Hills Middle School in 1996, the Black student population increased from 90% in 1997 to 98% in 1999. Over 100 new Black students enrolled, some of whom likely used to attend Prospect, and only a dozen White students remained.¹²³ Meanwhile, the Black student population at Arlington Middle School had declined from 35% when it opened in 1996 to 19% in 2000 before closing after the 2000-2001 school year. In 2001, the Board opened another middle school in the South Hills in 2001, South Brook Middle School, and it opened with a Black student population of 10%.¹²⁴

These changes show a reeling back of the aspect of the 1980 desegregation plan that had created the most desegregation, which was making all ten of the district's middle schools racially

¹²² Ibid., p. 701.

¹²³ Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of September 29, 1997," (November, 1997), p. 12; Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of October 2, 2000," (February, 2001), p. 12.

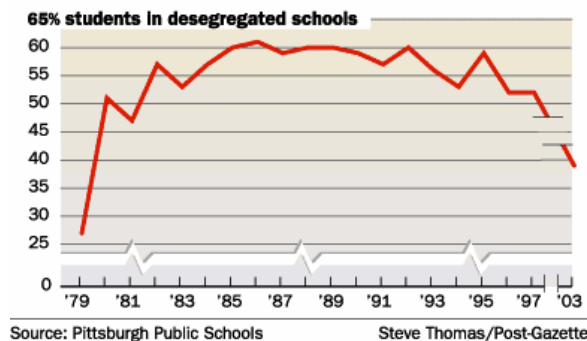
¹²⁴ Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of September 29, 1997," (November, 1997), p. 12; Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of October 7, 1998" (December 1998), p. 12; Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of October 3, 2001," (January, 2002), p. 12.

balanced. In 1995, 13 of the district’s 15 middle schools would have been racially balanced by PHRC guidelines. In 1999, after the redistricting changes of 1996 and 1998, the district had nine racially balanced middle schools out of 20.¹²⁵

Figure 4.1: Desegregation and Resegregation

Desegregation and resegregation

Before the Pittsburgh Public Schools began its major desegregation plan in 1980, 27 percent of its students were in desegregated schools. That percentage more than doubled after the plan took effect, but now has dropped to 39 percent. The earlier figures come from “racial compliance reports” which the district once was required to file with the state Human Relations Commission. That documentation is no longer required, and district officials had no reports beyond 1997.



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Neighborhood schools and desegregation in the 1990s were, for the most part, mutually exclusive in Pittsburgh because of the segregation of neighborhoods. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* editorialized on May 8, 1995 that a neighborhood school “is a laudable goal as long as racial integration is not abandoned.”¹²⁶ This position was valid for pockets of Pittsburgh, but not for the city as a whole. A neighborhood school in the Hill District or the South Hills, for

¹²⁵ Using the 30 percent range, a “racially balanced” middle school in the 1995-1996 school year had a Black student population in the 40.7% to 70.7% range. In the 1999-2000 school year, the range was 44.2% to 74.2%. As stated before, the PHRC used a range of roughly 30 percent and sometimes adjusted the range up or down a few percentage points. Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 3, 1995,” (November, 1995), p. 12; Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 6, 1999,” (December, 1999), p. 13.

¹²⁶ “School Board Choices,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 8, 1995, p. A8.

instance, would necessarily be a segregated school. The push for neighborhood schools was strongest in the South Hills, and that area gained more neighborhood schools than any other.

The passage of the second redistricting plan, after the state legislature and Governor stripped the PHRC of its desegregation powers, demonstrated that the neighborhood schools ideology had partially defeated what was already a limited desegregation plan. Mayor Tom Murphy and Governor Tom Ridge were supporters of neighborhood schools and, because there was no longer a threat of a federal court order, there were no vetoes by the Governor against legislation to weaken the PHRC like there had been in the 1970s.¹²⁷ Demands for students to attend school closer to home were stronger in number and political clout than those who wanted to continue busing for desegregation. Attempts by state Representatives to ensure equitably resourced neighborhood schools failed. During the peak of desegregation in Pittsburgh, 60% of students attended schools that the PHRC considered to be “racially balanced.” In 2003, due in part to the redistricting plans of 1996 and 1998, 39% of students attended “racially balanced” schools.¹²⁸ The 1980 desegregation plan had desegregated some, but not all, of the district, just as the redistricting plans of the 1990s resegregated some, but not all, of the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

¹²⁷ See Chapter 4, note 3.

¹²⁸ Steve Thomas, “Desegregation and Resegregation,” cited in Eleanor Chute, “*Brown v. Board of Education* 50th Anniversary; Many Children Still Go to Schools That Are Nearly All White or All Black,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 16, 2004, <http://www.post-gazette.com/frontpage/2004/05/16/Brown-vs-Board-of-Education-50th-Anniversary-Many-children-still-go-nearly-all-White-or-all-Black-schools/stories/200405160208>.

Conclusion

From 1971 to 1998, resistance to desegregation moved from the grassroots to the Board of Education and the state legislature. A key factor in this movement was the change in 1976 from an appointed Board to an elected one. This shift led to the election of a Board that, from 1976 to 1979, had a five-member majority committed to fighting the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and Commonwealth Court desegregation orders. By mounting legal appeals, expanding neighborhood schools, and breaking out of the 5-3-4 grade structure, the “conservative faction” delayed and scaled back desegregation. These efforts met strong opposition only from Margaret Milliones, who was one of two Black Board members at the time and wanted to desegregate the entire system. The 1979 Board elections led to a slight change as three members of the “conservative faction” lost and a “moderate faction” took power. This second elected Board passed a partial desegregation plan in 1980 that the Commonwealth Court and PHRC eventually accepted in 1982 after a few amendments. Four members of the Board were committed to a stronger desegregation plan, but they were unable to gain a fifth vote. As Frances Vitti said in 1980, “That’s the name of the game on this Board, counting five votes.”¹²⁹ The next generation of resistance to desegregation scaled back the 1980 plan and, in the state legislature, stripped the PHRC of its power. The rise of neighborhood schools meant a fall of parts of the desegregation plan.

Some Black supporters of neighborhood schools argued that desegregation had negative consequences for Black students. In Pittsburgh, desegregation did threaten to tamper with the gains made by some predominantly Black schools. Barbara Sizemore, who was a professor at the University of Pittsburgh from 1977 to 1992 in the Department of Black Community

¹²⁹ Susanna Mannella, “Langer Re-elected to Head City School Board,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 2, 1980, p. 9.

Research, said that with desegregation, “We accepted the assumption that anything that was all Black was all bad. I spent a lot of time in Pittsburgh trying to disprove that theory.”¹³⁰

Sizemore’s research on the success of predominantly Black elementary schools in Pittsburgh indeed disproved any notions that “all Black was all bad.” In her study of Beltzhoover Elementary School, Madison Elementary School, and Vann Elementary School, Sizemore identified a number of reasons for what she called the “abashing anomaly” of high achieving predominantly Black elementary schools. These three schools, along with Westwood Elementary School and McKelvy Elementary School, were the only five out of 21 predominantly Black elementary schools that were high achieving in the 1979-1980 school year, as measured by students’ math and reading standardized tests scores.¹³¹ The success of these schools was partly due to the effectiveness of principals who “believed that poor Black students could and would learn.” Sizemore argued that two principals, Doris Brevard at Vann and Lou Venson (the future Board member) at Beltzhoover, decentralized the school district in the spirit of “community control” by defying the system when necessary.¹³²

Neighborhood schools in Black communities could provide opportunities that desegregated schools could not. In June 1997, for instance, the Board approved a plan to create an Afrocentric curriculum at Miller Elementary School in the Hill District.¹³³ The group, Grass Roots Association to Strengthen African Students and Parents, proposed this curriculum with the

¹³⁰ Eleanor Chute, “Brown vs. Board of Education, 50th Anniversary,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 16, 2004, <http://www.post-gazette.com/frontpage/2004/05/16/Brown-vs-Board-of-Education-50th-Anniversary-Many-children-still-go-nearly-all-White-or-all-Black-schools/stories/200405160208>.

¹³¹ Barbara Sizemore, *Walking in Circles: The Black Struggle for School Reform* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2008), pp. 155, 248.

¹³² For example, principals demanded “the use of materials that prove functional for elevating achievement when such are not approved by the Board of Education, especially in the areas of phonics, Black history, culture and literature, mathematics, and word problems.” Sizemore, *Walking in Circles*, pp. 158-59.

¹³³ Bill Schackner, “Pupils to Look Back to Africa,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 29, 1997, p. A1.

support of Board member Lou Venson.¹³⁴ Miller's student population was 99% Black in 1997.¹³⁵ Demands by Black activists that Black students in Pittsburgh learn Black history and culture in school have deep roots and were part of many student protests during the late 1960s. Such a change would have met White resistance at a "racially balanced" school. Sizemore, who was married to former Board of Education member Jake Millions for over a decade, explains this point in her book, *Walking in Circles: The Black Struggle for School Reform*. Sizemore and Millions raised four children who attended Pittsburgh Public Schools, and she wrote that when it came to Black studies, "teachers mainly wanted to suppress discussions about these topics, considering them divisive in an integrated school."¹³⁶ At a predominantly Black school, "divisiveness" was less of an issue.

But while Beltzhoover, Vann, and Madison were high achieving, 16 of the 21 predominantly Black elementary schools in the district were "low achieving," and some were likely the schools that district officials and the Board created as "dumping grounds," as Jean Fink said. Desegregation was an attempt to address a separate and unequal school system. Milton Street, a Black state Representative from Philadelphia who opposed Mike Dawida's 1979 bill that would have taken power from the PHRC, said, "The question is not busing for racial balance, but busing for equal education."¹³⁷ To Street, the goal of desegregation was not students of different racial groups being in a building together. Desegregation was instead a way to make sure that school districts, which White officials controlled, gave equal opportunities to Black students. As Commonwealth Court Judge Roy Wilkinson said in 1980, not desegregating would keep "the *status quo* when all parties agree the *status quo* is unacceptable."

¹³⁴ Nikki Coffee, "African-Centered Education Available at Miller School," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 28, 1997, p. A1.

¹³⁵ Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Membership Report as of September 29, 1997," (November, 1997), p. 11.

¹³⁶ Sizemore, *Walking in Circles*, pp. 144-45.

¹³⁷ "House Votes to Ban Forced Busing to Integrate Schools," *Observer-Reporter*, December 11, 1979, p. A-5.

Mike Dawida would agree with Barbara Sizemore that the theory that “all Black was all bad” is a fallacy. The legislation proposed throughout the 1970s and passed in the 1990s to strip the PHRC of its desegregation powers, however, did not offer an alternative means to improving the school system for Black students. If this had been the goal, the legislature in 1996 would not have voted against measures aimed at ensuring that each school had a baseline amount of funding. As the 1997 referendum vote shows, redistricting for neighborhood schools met the demands of a predominantly White constituency. In every White neighborhood, and especially in working- and middle-class White neighborhoods that desegregation had disproportionately affected, the majority of voters wanted neighborhood schools. Black Pittsburghers were split roughly 50-50 on this issue but did not have the political power on the Board or in the state legislature to maintain desegregation or to make a shift to neighborhood schools benefit Black students.

Class differences in Pittsburgh’s White neighborhoods shaped how desegregation affected them and how they responded. Pete Flaherty, who was Mayor from 1970 to 1977, criticized people in “intellectual circles” for calling Whites against busing for desegregation “bigots.” The 14th Ward (Squirrel Hill and Point Breeze), as Frank Gigliotti explained, “gets whatever they want, the best schools, and their kids aren’t bused anyplace.” The 14th Ward is close to Homewood, a low-income Black neighborhood. Taylor Allderdice High School in Squirrel Hill and Westinghouse High School in Homewood were both racially imbalanced schools, but the Board did not pair them in the 1980 desegregation plan or in any of its subsequent amendments. There was busing, however, between the South Hills, a working- and middle-class White area, and the Hill District, a Black and predominantly low-income area.

There was a more covert pushback against desegregation in “intellectual circles.” One person I spoke with who was involved in a lawsuit against the Pittsburgh Public Schools said that White parents in the 14th Ward knew that Allderdice would be “protected.” The “protection” of Allderdice from becoming predominantly Black or from 14th Ward students being bused to Homewood is an example of those in “intellectual circles,” or White elites, contributing to the “unraveling” of desegregation. In the 1990s, the majority of Squirrel Hill parents did not send their children to the schools “closest to their home,” which were Colfax Elementary School and Reizenstein Middle School. Private schools were one destination of White flight that made it difficult to sustain desegregation. White flight to the suburbs also contributed to the decline in the Pittsburgh Public Schools’ White student population. This demographic change made John Conley’s claim in the 1970s that “there just weren’t enough little White faces to go around” ring true in the 1990s.

Although the drive behind desegregation was to improve the Pittsburgh school district for Black students, in reality it was often catered towards White students. School officials and both the appointed and elected Boards geared Reizenstein Middle School towards the predominantly White neighborhoods of the 14th Ward rather than the almost entirely Black neighborhoods of Homewood, Lincoln-Lemington, and Larimer. Of the students attending the 24 elementary schools that fed into Reizenstein, well over 50% were predominantly Black, but the Board reserved 58% of the spaces at Reizenstein for White students. This ratio was not necessary for Reizenstein to be racially balanced. When Reizenstein opened in 1976, Baxter Middle Grade Center in Homewood was a nearly all-Black segregated school with facilities and programs

inferior to those at Reizenstein.¹³⁸ After Black parents sued the school district, Judge John Flaherty ruled in the case *Hayes, et. al v. School District of Pittsburgh*:

Because defendants' actions of devoting greater attention and resources to Reizenstein are contrary to sound educational policy and because defendants have offered no reasonable explanation for such actions, this Court finds that such actions have occurred because Reizenstein has a majority-White integrated student body while Baxter has an all-Black student body.¹³⁹

Desegregating Baxter was not plausible because White 14th Ward parents would have sent their children to private schools before sending them to school in a predominantly Black neighborhood. Perhaps pouring resources into Baxter, rather than Reizenstein, would have been the most effective way to combat racial disparities.

Desegregation through magnet schools kept some White students in the school district, but it at times came at a cost to low-income Black students. For instance, the Board set up magnet programs at Schenley High School with the explicit goal of attracting 115 White students per year.¹⁴⁰ As Schenley became racially balanced and White and Black middle-class families began sending their children there, Peabody High School in East Liberty became racially imbalanced. Peabody was 54% Black in 1980 and 79% Black in 1997, and it did not have the international studies and International Baccalaureate programs that made Schenley into an acclaimed school. Board member Ron Suber said in 1998 that Schenley's success "killed Peabody."¹⁴¹

Retaining the "tax base" was part of the justification for neighborhood schools in the 1990s, which again led to redistricting catered towards Whites. In 1995, 55% of the students leaving the school district were Black and one-third were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch,

¹³⁸ "Hayes, et al. v. School District of Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh Legal Journal* (1976), pp. 137-8, 142.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁴⁰ "Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA: Minutes," *Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Minutes, 1981-1982*, October 25, 1982, pp. 753-55 (Univ. of Pittsburgh, ASC, Box 8).

¹⁴¹ Eleanor Chute, "Race Still Major Factor in Redistricting," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 12, 1998, p. B-1.

an indicator that a family is low-income. Of the students entering the Pittsburgh Public Schools, 73% were Black and two-thirds were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The neighborhood schools created in the 1990s, such as South Hills Middle School, Arlington Middle School, and the expansion of Greenfield Elementary School to a K-8, led to some resegregation while combating the loss of the “tax base.” Desegregation’s dependence on keeping the “little White faces” in the system placed the focus of desegregation plans on retaining Whites in the city rather than improving education for Black students. Tracey A. Reed wrote in her dissertation, “The Politics of School Desegregation: The Case of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1965-1980,” “The problem of racial inequality became defined as White absence in schools and attention to other conditions that may have contributed to racial inequality in the schools diminished in importance.”¹⁴² These “other conditions” included an inequitable distribution of resources, White teachers’ racism, the tracking of White students into honors classes and Black students into remedial classes, a lack of Black studies in the curriculum, and the creation of certain magnet programs to attract White students rather than to better serve Black students.

A roadblock to aiming desegregation, or some other means of achieving racial equity in the school system, towards the interests of Black students was a White majority on the Board of Education. During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Black Pittsburghers were underrepresented on the Board. While the city of Pittsburgh had a White majority throughout the process of White flight, the school district had become majority Black by the mid-1980s. In 1995, Black students made up 56% of the public schools, but Black representation on the Board remained at 33%. There was a relationship between the racial identity of Board members and their political stance on desegregation. The Board members on the elected Board who advocated most strongly for

¹⁴² Tracey A. Reed, “The Politics of School Desegregation: The Case of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1965-1980,” (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1997), p. 261.

desegregation measures were: Margaret Milliones, Jake Milliones, Jimmy Joe Robinson, Frances Vitti, David Engel (until 1980), Alex Matthews, Randall Taylor, and Lou Venson. Six of these eight members were Black. The strongest advocates against desegregation and for neighborhood schools – including Jean Fink, Helen Miscimarra, Frank Widina, Mary Jane Jacobs, and Darlene Harris – were all White. A Board with more Black members representing the predominantly Black neighborhoods in which many Pittsburgh Public Schools students lived would have likely passed a stronger desegregation plan.

The switch to an elected Board created a system in which Board members often fought for the interests of their voting district rather than those of the entire school district. Moe Coleman, who served on the appointed Board, said that the elected Board “ensures politicking by board members anxious to provide patronage and other favors for their constituents.”¹⁴³ Helen Faison, a longtime leader in education in Pittsburgh, said that the elected Board “tends to have members who see themselves as representing a slice of the city.”¹⁴⁴ This dynamic was especially pronounced given that Pittsburgh is, as the 1980 desegregation plan put it, “a city of mini-Pittsburghs.”¹⁴⁵ Most of the “mini-Pittsburghs” were White neighborhoods in which parents wanted to send their children to neighborhood schools, which made it difficult for the Board to desegregate the entire district.

The “unraveling” of desegregation was almost inevitable with an elected Board whose members were advocating for the concerns of their constituents. Only a stronger court order would have likely increased desegregation in Pittsburgh. Even then, the suburbs and private schools offered outlets to the mostly White opponents of busing for desegregation. An alternative to desegregation could have been a plan to end a system that maintained “dumping

¹⁴³ Robert Peebles, *School Desegregation: A Shattered Dream?* (New York: Vantage Press, 2007), p. 30.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁴⁵ Board of Public Education, “Amended Pittsburgh Desegregation Plan,” March 14, 1980, p. 1.

grounds” by redistributing resources and attempting to replicate the success of Beltzhoover, Madison, and Vann in other predominantly Black schools. But pressure from activists, courts, and the state led the Pittsburgh Public Schools down the path of desegregation, which reached its peak with partial desegregation in the 1980s. This effort met resistance from opponents who mounted an “unraveling” that began on the streets, gained power on the Board of Education, and continued through the period of neighborhood schools and resegregation in the 1990s.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Pittsburgh Population by Race, 1900-2000¹

Year	Total Population	White	Black	% Black	“Asian and Pacific Islander”	“Hispanic origin (of any race)”
1900	321,616	304,421	17,040	5.3	155	No Data
1910	533,905	508,008	25,623	4.8	265	No Data
1920	588,343	550,261	37,725	6.4	340	No Data
1930	669,817	614,454	54,983	8.2	341	No Data
1940	671,659	609,236	62,216	9.3	168	380
1950	676,806	593,825	82,453	12.2	367	No Data
1960	604,332	502,593	100,692	16.7	656	No Data
1970	520,117	412,280	104,904	20.2	1,418	2,818*
1980	423,938	316,694	101,813	24.0	2,596	3,196
1990	369,879	266,791	95,362	25.8	5,937	3,468
2000	335,000	226,000	90,750	27.1	9,306	4,425

¹ This table excludes the categories, “American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut” as well as “Other race.” 1980 was the only year that either of these two categories surpassed .3% of the city’s total population. Statistics from 1900-1990 are from Gibson and Jung, “Pennsylvania – Race and Hispanic Origin for Selected Cities and Other Places,” <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/PAtab.pdf>. This source had no data for “Hispanic origin (of any race)” in several years. Statistics from 2000 are from Pittsburgh Department of City Planning, *Census: Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, 2000), p. 10, http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/cp/assets/census/2000_census_pgh_jan06.pdf.

*The 1970 “Hispanic origin (of any race)” population is based on a 15% sample of the total population.

Appendix 2: Pittsburgh Public Schools Student Population, 1945-2001²

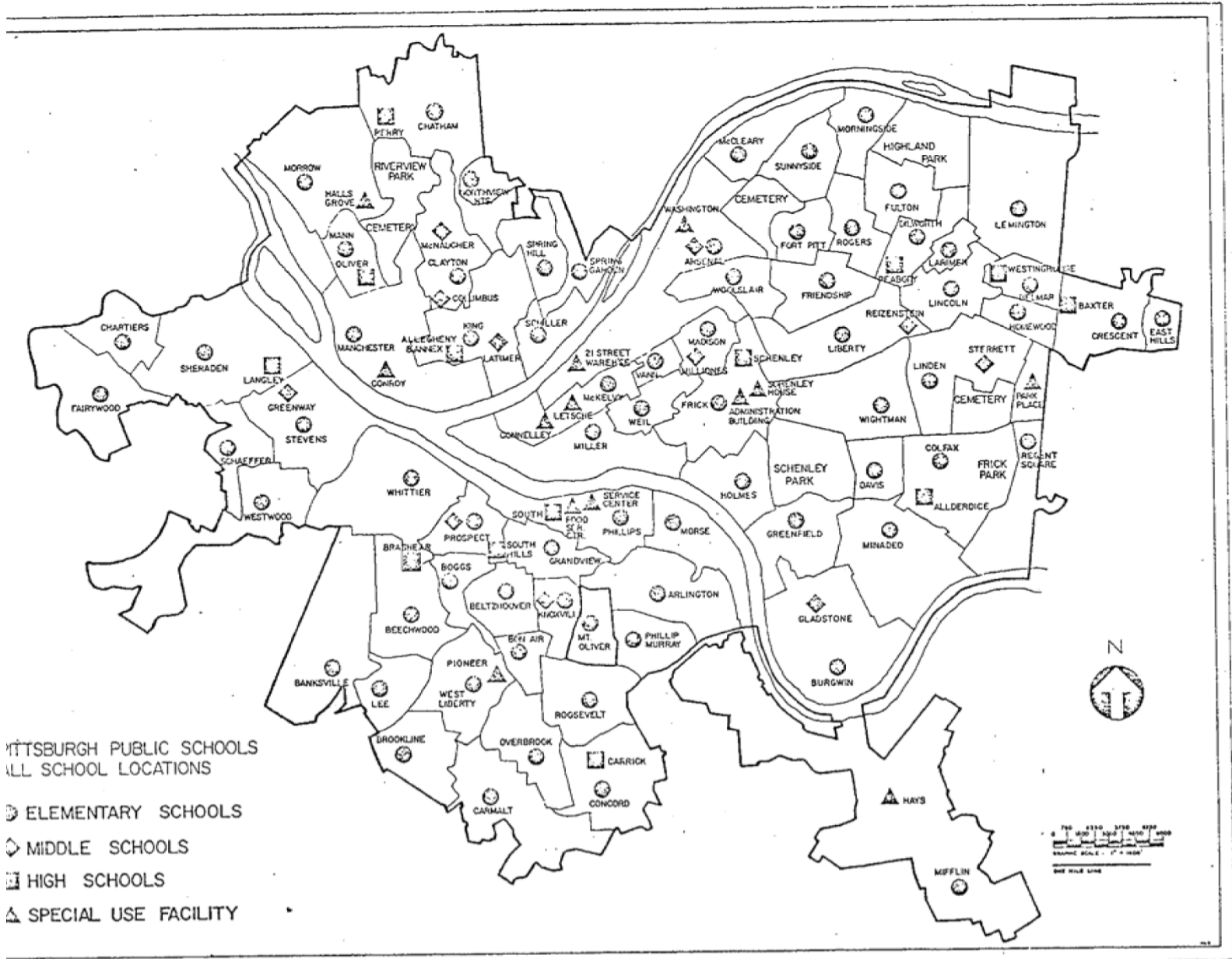
Year	Total Population	% Black*	Year	Total Population	% Black*
1945	76,147	18.8	1985	40,038	52.2
1955	70,760	25.9	1986	39,901	52.3
1965	77,008	36.7	1987	39,672	52.2
1970	72,722	39.9	1988	39,549	52.0
1971	70,537	40.6	1989	39,308	51.8
1972	69,667	41.2	1990	39,661	52.0
1973	67,455	41.8	1991	40,137	52.1
1974	65,036	42.3	1992	40,445	52.6
1975	62,342	44.0	1993	40,167	53.0
1976	59,022	45.4	1994	39,728	54.2
1977	55,211	46.8	1995	39,761	55.6
1978	51,734	47.8	1996	39,955	55.6
1979	48,796	48.4	1997	40,181	55.9
1980	45,907	49.9	1998	39,603	56.4
1981	43,164	51.0**	1999	38,846	56.9
1982	42,252	49.4**	2000	38,560	57.6
1983	41,262	49.8**	2001	37,612	58.0
1984	42,057	49.9			

² Statistics for 1945, 1955, and 1965 are from Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, “The Quest for Racial Equality in the Pittsburgh Public Schools,” (Pittsburgh, 1965), p. 7. Statistics for 1970-1980 are from Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of September 29, 1980,” cited in Gutkind, “Desegregation of Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1968-1980,” pp. 234-6. Statistics for 1981-1989 are from Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 2, 1989,” pp. 6, 27-9. Statistics for 1990-1995 are from Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 3, 1995,” pp. 6, 35. Statistics for 1996-2001 are from Pittsburgh Public Schools, “Membership Report as of October 3, 2001,” pp. 6, 48.

*Membership Reports include the six-year change in membership of Black students and “Other” (Asian American, Latino/a, Native American, and White) students.

**Black % for 1981-1983 is estimated from the graph on page 27 of “Membership Report as of October 2, 1989.”

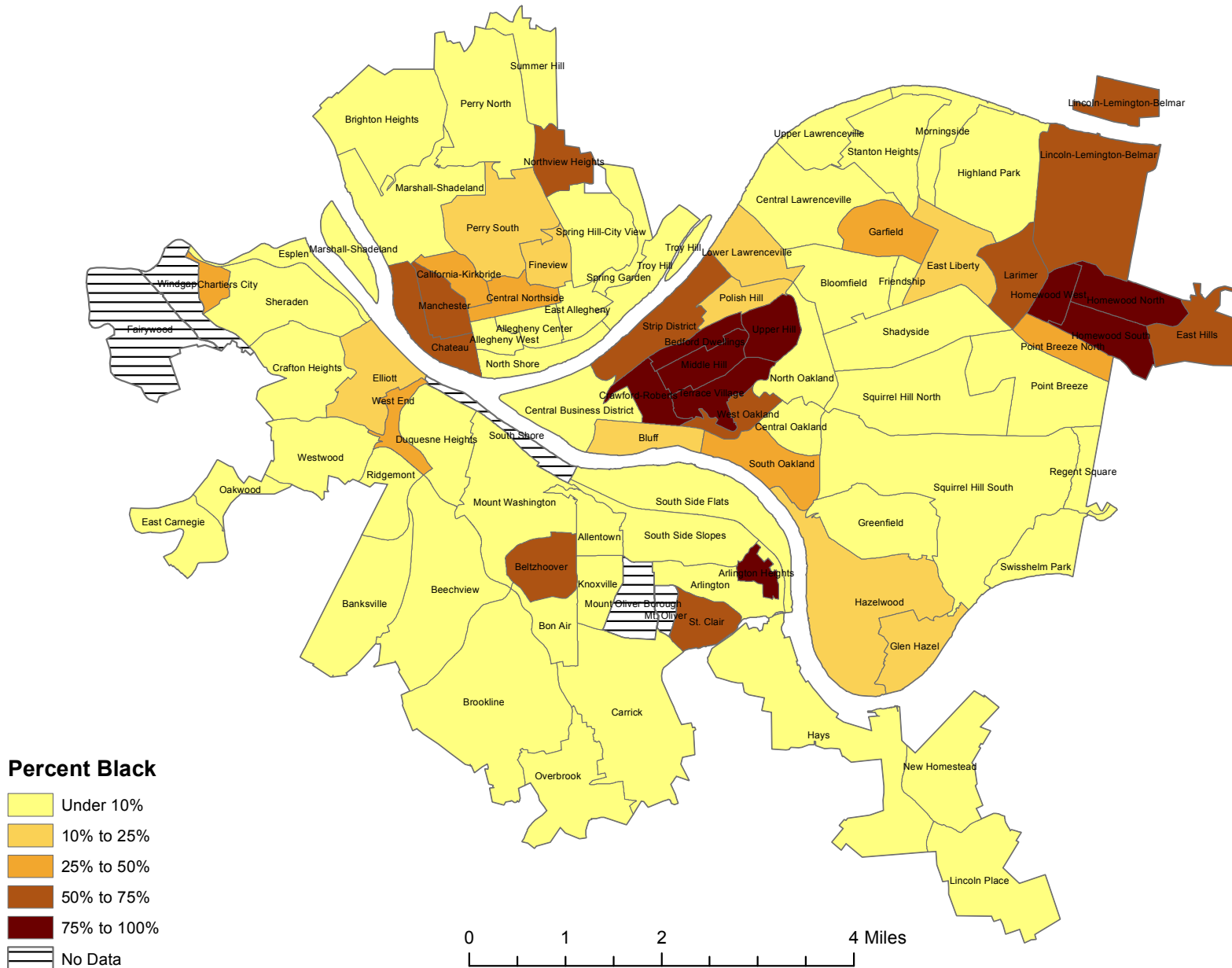
Appendix 3: Pittsburgh Public Schools Map, ~1979³



³ This map is likely from 1979 because it includes Margaret Milliones Middle School, which got its name in August 1978, as well as the schools that were closed under the 1980 desegregation plan.

Appendix 4⁴

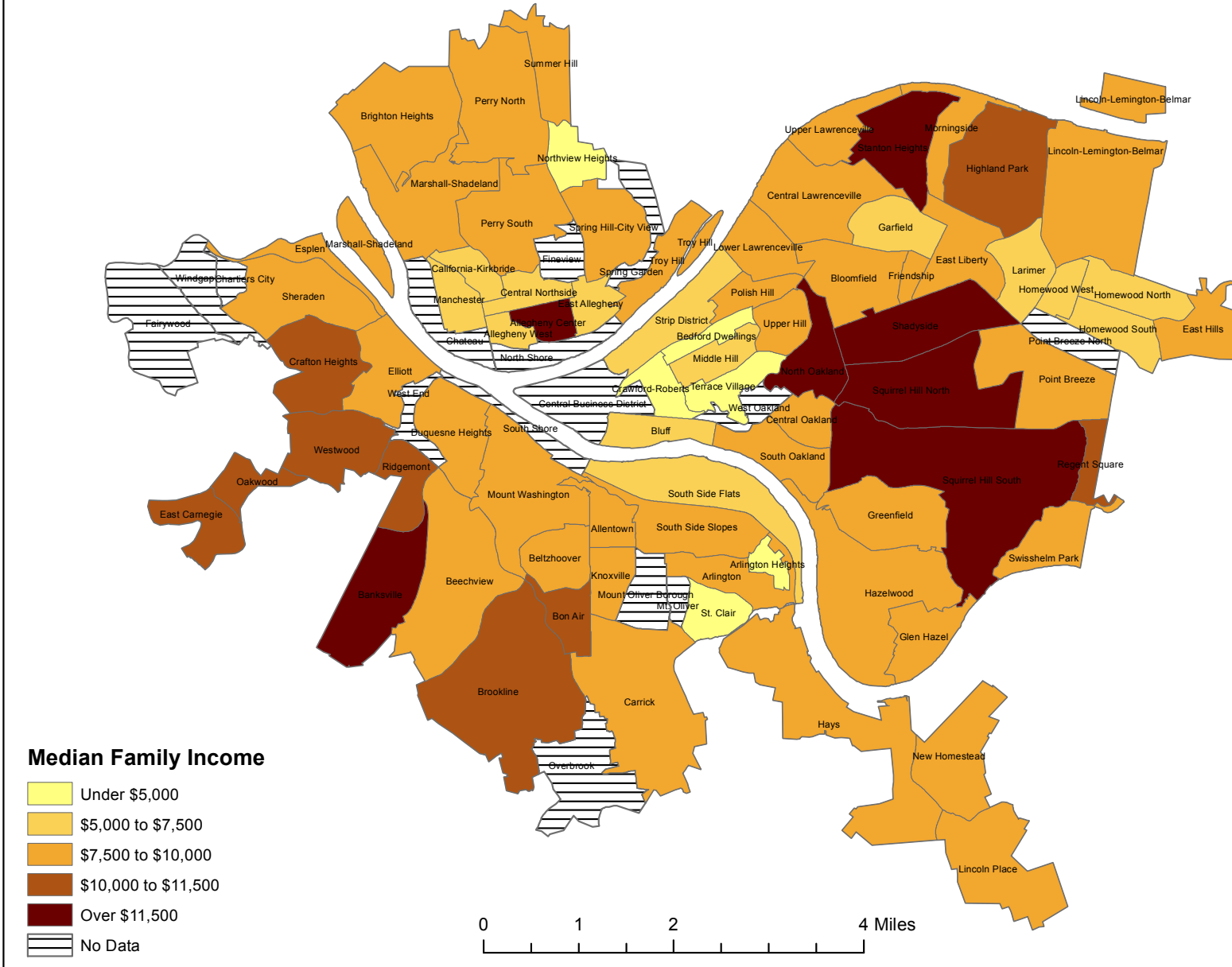
Pittsburgh Neighborhoods by Black Population, 1970



⁴ I created the maps of Appendices 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9 at the GIS Center in the Tisch Library at Tufts University. In these Appendices, I map data onto a 2000 neighborhood map. Some neighborhood names and boundaries have changed from 1970 to 2000. Data for Appendix 4 is from City of Pittsburgh, *A Profile of Change: 1970-1980*, "(Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)," January 1984. These *A Profile of Change* booklets are available at Carnegie Mellon University's Hunt Library.

Appendix 5⁵

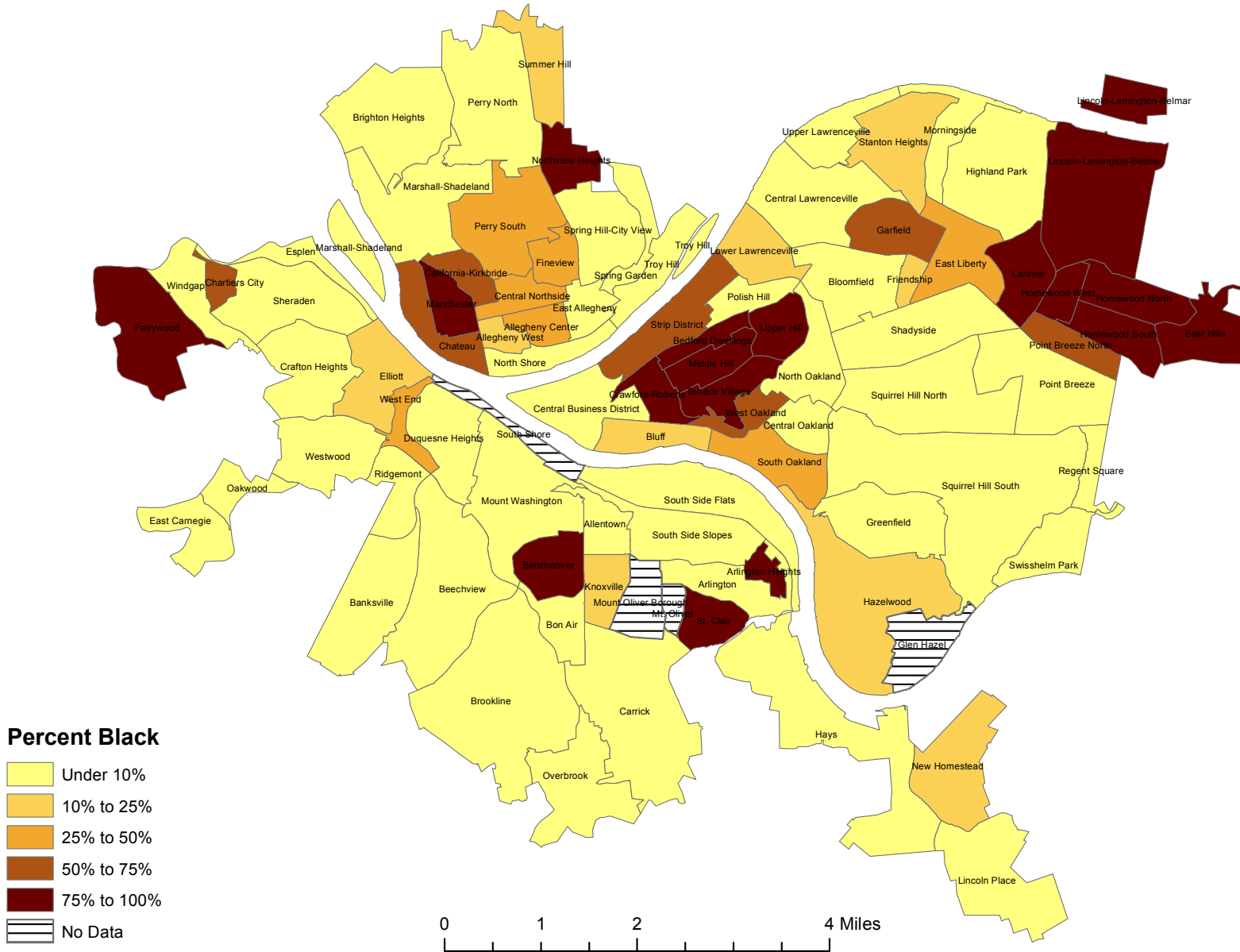
Pittsburgh Neighborhoods by Median Family Income, 1970



⁵ Data from Department of City Planning, *A Community Profile of... (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)*, “A Community Profile of (Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)” (Pittsburgh, August 1974).

Appendix 6⁶

Pittsburgh Neighborhoods by Black Population, 1980



⁶ Data from City of Pittsburgh, *A Profile of Change: 1970-1980*, "(Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)," January 1984.

Appendix 7: Pittsburgh Neighborhoods by Black Population, 1990*

24

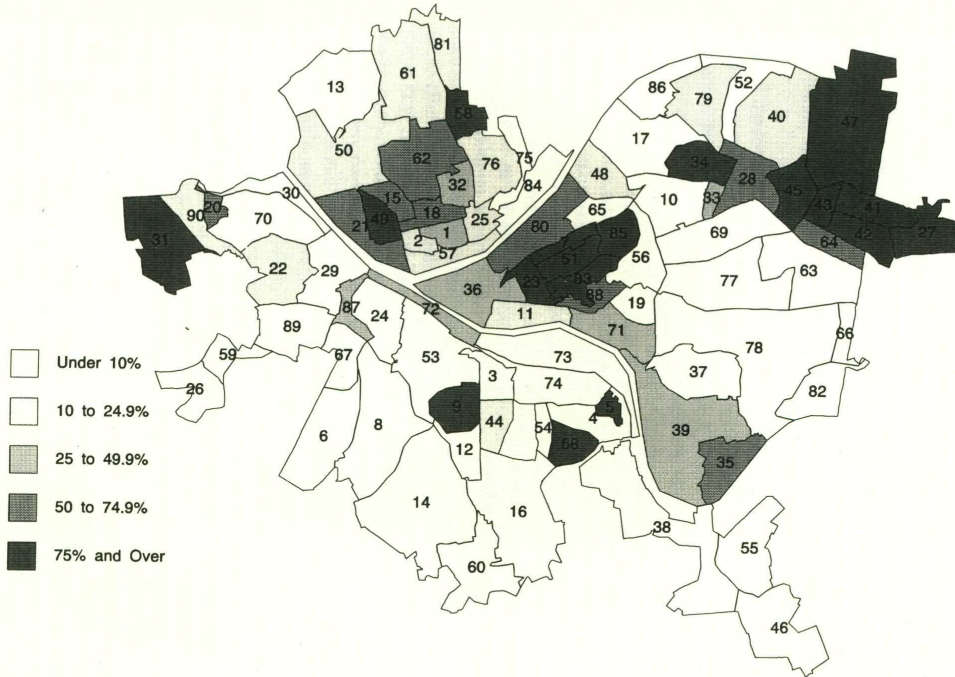


Figure 2.1. Neighborhood Map by Race, Pittsburgh. (Source: Social Science Data Library, Temple University, 1990 U.S. Census data, Summary Tape File 1.)

KEY TO PITTSBURGH NEIGHBORHOOD MAP

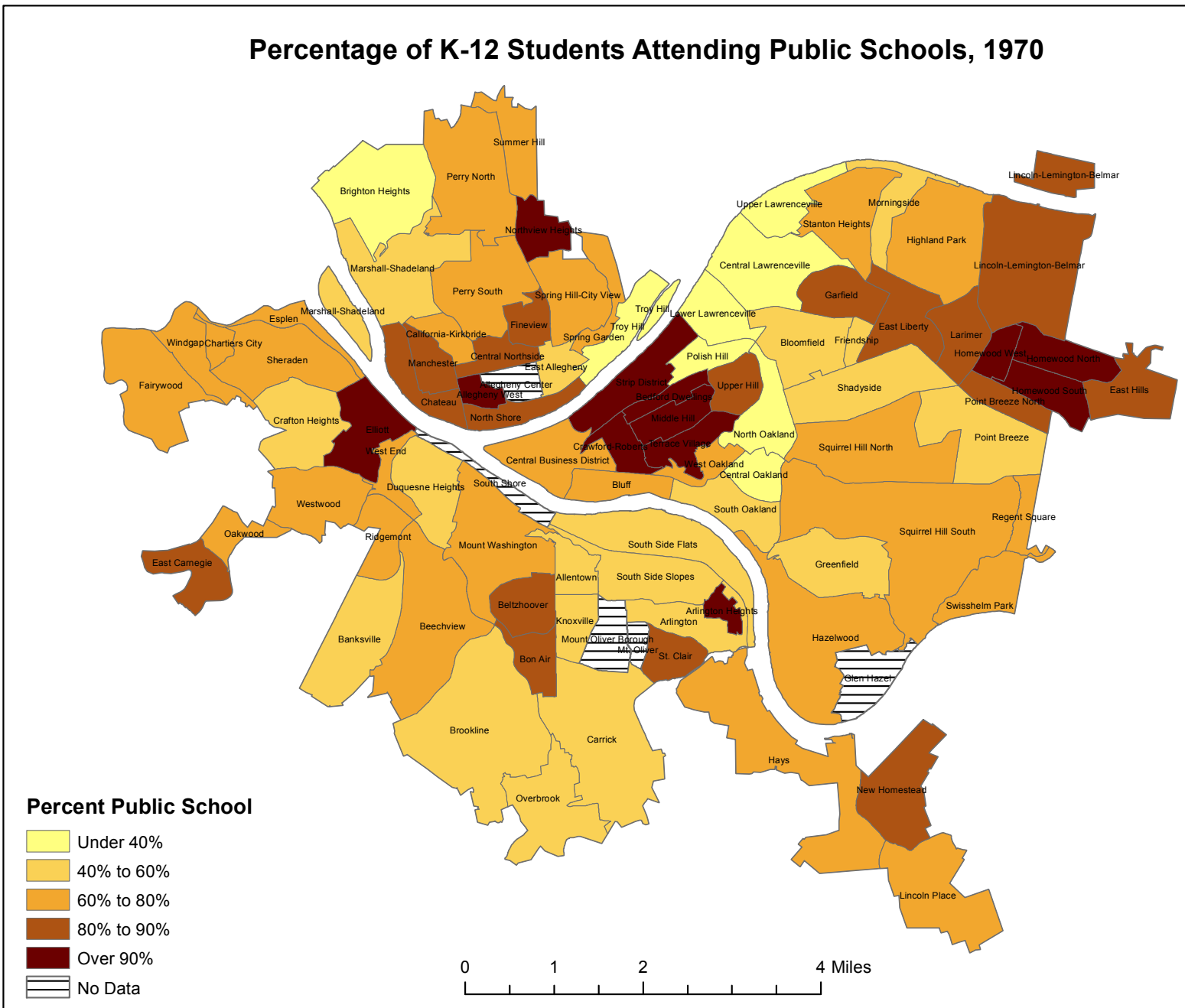
Neighborhood	Total Population	Percent Black	Neighborhood	Total Population	Percent Black
1 Allegheny Center	1,262	35.02	46 Lincoln Place	3,841	0.00
2 Allegheny West	654	22.63	47 Lincoln-Lemington-Belm	6,644	87.13
3 Allentown	3,600	8.25	48 Lower Lawrenceville	2,650	13.96
4 Arlington	2,210	4.89	49 Manchester	3,077	85.54
5 Arlington Heights	1,497	92.92	50 Marshall Shadeland	7,903	17.70
6 Banksville	4,769	2.66	51 Middle Hill	2,829	98.59
7 Bedford Dwellings	2,317	97.37	52 Morningside	3,973	4.20
8 Beechview	9,323	3.53	53 Mount Washington	10,700	3.30
9 Beltzhoover	3,338	82.38	54 Mount Oliver Neighborhood	620	6.45
10 Bloomfield	10,405	6.17	55 New Homestead	1,008	9.92
11 Bluff	3,220	19.78	56 North Oakland	10,836	9.40
12 Bon Air	1,006	1.49	57 North Shore	273	13.55
13 Brighton Heights	8,580	3.32	58 Northview Heights	2,746	95.70
14 Brookline	15,441	0.98	59 Oakwood	1,099	3.09
15 California Kirkbride	1,156	67.73	60 Overbrook	4,456	0.79
16 Carrick	11,625	0.66	61 Perry North	4,927	12.42
17 Central Lawrenceville	5,867	2.57	62 Perry South	6,303	50.36
18 Central Northside	3,723	55.63	63 Point Breeze	5,909	4.45
19 Central Oakland	5,406	6.68	64 Point Breeze North	2,513	67.77
20 Chartiers City	569	69.95	65 Polish Hill	1,610	9.88
21 Chateau	9	55.56	66 Regent Square	1,090	0.83
22 Crafton Heights	4,558	12.77	67 Ridgemoor	590	0.17
23 Crawford-Roberts	2,459	95.40	68 Saint Clair	1,960	88.83
24 Duquesne Heights	2,786	1.47	69 Shadyside	13,385	7.81
25 East Allegheny	3,088	11.53	70 Sheraden	6,654	7.24
26 East Carnegie	605	9.26	71 South Oakland	3,368	34.23
27 East Hills	4,505	95.01	72 South Shore	44	25.00
28 East Liberty	7,973	58.21	73 South Side Flats	6,177	2.75
29 Elliott	3,009	6.88	74 South Side Slopes	5,672	1.59
30 Esplen	518	7.14	75 Spring Garden	1,753	0.68
31 Fairview	2,951	88.28	76 Spring Hill-City View	3,288	16.48
32 Fineview	1,907	44.31	77 Squirrel Hill North	11,500	3.66
33 Friendship	1,976	33.81	78 Squirrel Hill South	14,968	2.91
34 Garfield	6,327	76.51	79 Stanton Heights	5,085	22.50
35 Glen Hazel	793	63.68	80 Strip District	275	66.91
36 Golden Triangle/Civic Arena	3,785	30.17	81 Summer Hill	1,203	13.55
37 Greenfield	8,485	2.11	82 Swisshelm Park	1,540	0.45
38 Hays	537	0.74	83 Terrace Village	5,073	98.29
39 Hazelwood	6,456	26.44	84 Troy Hill	2,742	0.04
40 Highland Park	7,029	16.94	85 Upper Hill	2,590	84.44
41 Homewood North	5,331	97.52	86 Upper Lawrenceville	3,328	0.87
42 Homewood South	4,811	97.67	87 West End	441	44.90
43 Homewood West	1,369	97.52	88 West Oakland	1,938	67.75
44 Knoxville	4,971	22.91	89 Westwood	3,282	2.50
45 Larimer	3,992	83.62	90 Windgap	1,603	17.03

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*Map and table from Barbara Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine: Neighborhood Politics in Chicago and Pittsburgh* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), pp. 24-5. Reprinted with permission from author.

Appendix 8⁷

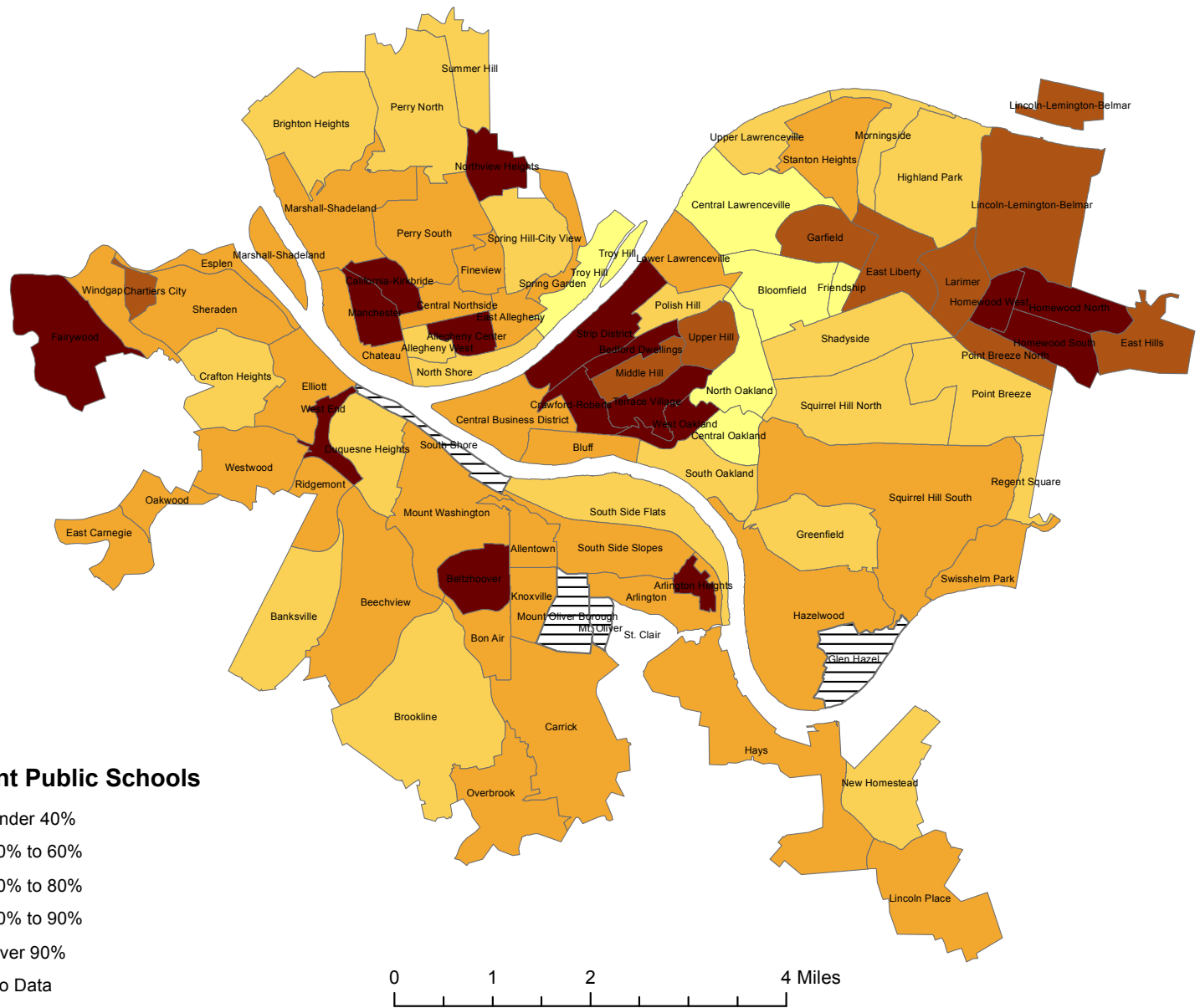
Percentage of K-12 Students Attending Public Schools, 1970



⁷ Data from City of Pittsburgh, *A Profile of Change: 1970-1980*, "(Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)," January 1984.

Appendix 9⁸

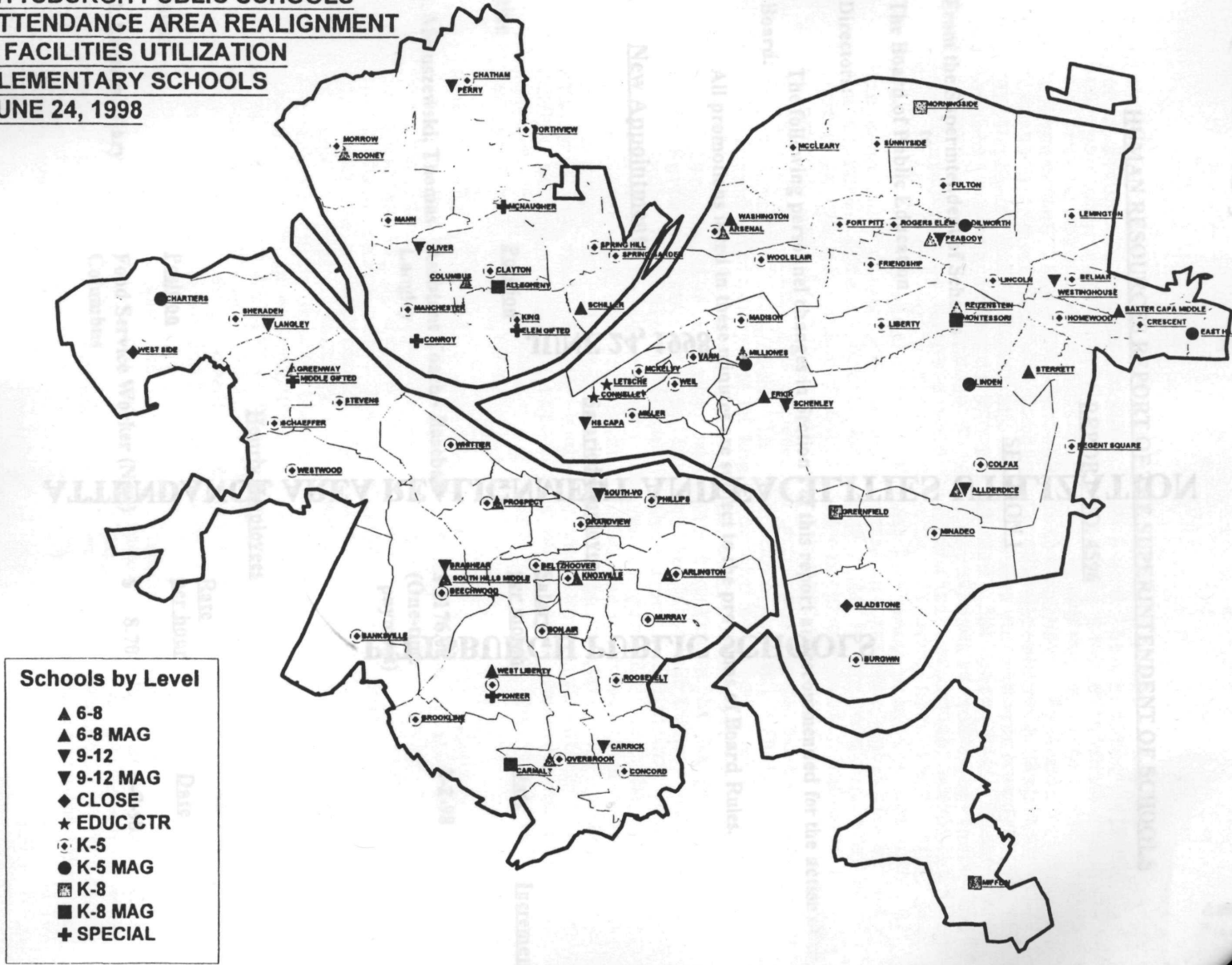
Percentage of K-12 Students Attending Public Schools, 1980



⁸ Data from City of Pittsburgh, *A Profile of Change: 1970-1980*, "(Pittsburgh Neighborhoods)," January 1984.

Appendix 10: Pittsburgh Public Schools Map, 1998⁹

**PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATTENDANCE AREA REALIGNMENT
& FACILITIES UTILIZATION
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
JUNE 24, 1998**



⁹ Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, "Pittsburgh Public Schools: Attendance Area Realignment and Facilities Utilization," *Board of Public Education Minutes*, June 24, 1998 (Univ. of Pittsburgh ASC, Box 11).

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